



The Erin Smith Story

On Wednesday July 18, 2018, a fellow racer, Erin Smith, was killed while operating an all-terrain vehicle in Pepin, Wisconsin. Erin and her family are an important part of the Coffee Mill Ski Team and the Coffee Mill Ski Area. Her brother, David, was our teammate. Her dad, Burt, oversees the Ski Hill Operations and makes snow every winter so we can ski and race for Coffee Mill. Her grandparents, David and Jane, are always nearby ensuring that Erin and David got to practice and our races. Her Uncle, Brian, is one of our Ski Patrollers at Coffee Mill. She is also related to the Johnson crew (Cole, Theo, Orion, and their parents Becky and Ted).

Erin had an episode in gym class in 2016 and nearly died. She spent weeks in a coma and eventually regained her sight and hearing, but not all her motor skills. She was never quite the same physically. Despite that massive challenge, she had the courage to join our ski team. She wanted to continue to do one of the things she and her family always loved to do, ski. Despite the abilities she was robbed of two years earlier, she never used that as an excuse. Instead, she always did her best to live her life like a champion.

Erin gave the head coach, Dave, the proudest moment as a coach. At the Championship race at Welch Village in 2018, she had a horrific crash in her first slalom run. Coach Dave assumed Erin would simply call it a day after a crash like that, but she didn't. About an hour later, she was in the start gate prepared for her second run of the afternoon. This made Coach Dave feel very proud to have a racer willing to get back up after falling down.

Erin may not have been the best skier, but she was determined to do her best. She had the bravery to join the ski team and try something she might not be able to do. She worked really hard at every practice and gave 110% at every race. Erin set an example for all of us to do your best no matter what. Don't quit even if life isn't fair. Look out for your family and your teammates, and ski with your family and friends as much as you can.

We created the Erin Smith Award in her honor. The coaches give this award to a racer that displayed Erin's character and courageousness throughout the ski season.