

DEDICATION CEREMONY FOR BRENDAN GRANT MEMORIAL FIELD

221 CONCORD AVE., BELMONT, MA ----- SATURDAY 11 MAY 2024

Order of Events

PRE-CEREMONY	
9:00 - 9:30	Homerun Fun Run (3rd to 8th Grade)
9:30 - 10:30	Wiffle Ball Games (Youth)
9:30 - 10:30	How Fast Can You Throw? (All Ages)
10:10 - 10:20	Team Warm-Up on Field (Belmont)
10:20 - 10:35	Team Warm-Up on Field (Arlington)
10:30	Color Guard Assembles (& LL players)

CEREMONY	
10:35 - 10:45	Color Guard Marches In
10:45 - 10:55	Remarks (Rick Freeman & Casey Grant)
10:45 - 10:55	Ceremonial 1st Pitch (Sean Noone & Nolan Kelleher)
10:55	National Anthem (Al Gledhill)

BASEBALL GAME	
11:00	Play Ball! High School Baseball - Arlington @ Belmont

1) COLOR GUARD MARCHES IN

Emcee: Welcome and good morning. In a moment we will have the Color Guard marching in.

And a special thanks, and salute, to the Belmont Fire and Belmont Police Color Guard... and all emergency responders, military, veterans, and all who protect us and keep us safe!

2) REMARKS

Emcee: My name is Rick Freeman, and I'm honored to be your emcee for this field dedication. I'm thankful to have been the voice of Brendan's Home Run thru the years, and close friend of the Grant Family, the BGF, & BYBS.

Now, I would like to introduce Casey Grant, Brendan's Father, and President of the Brendan Grant Foundation and past Secretary of the Board of Belmont Youth Baseball/Softball.

Casey Grant: Good morning, and welcome to the Re-Dedication of the Brendan Grant Memorial Field. On behalf of all who work so hard supporting both The Brendan Grant Foundation and Belmont Youth Baseball/Softball, I want to thank you for joining us here today.

How did we get from there, to here? How did we get from that perfect blue-sky evening on the 27th of June 2001, to this “here and now” moment in time? It has been a long journey indeed. It was a summer league game between Belmont and Arlington, much like today. Welcome Arlington, we’re glad you’re here. You have been part of this journey with us.

In the weeks and months that followed Brendan’s departure from us, the idea arose from among Brendan’s teammates, and especially those who were out on our field with him on June 27th 2001, to name this ball field in his honor. About 2½ months later, on the 24th of September 2001, we held a ceremony and the field was officially named. As some of you recall, it was just days after the turbulent events of September 11th, 2001. Our entire world was upside down.

At that ceremony the Boston Red Sox provided a generous donation of \$50,000, hand delivered by Red Sox General Manager Dan Duquette. That got us started with upwards of *‘one million dollars’* worth of direct, in-kind and volunteer improvements that followed for the re-building of our old field. This proceeded from 2001 into 2007 resulting in a magnificent facility built on sweat equity, at no cost to the local taxpayers. Our website www.BrendanGrant.org provides this pictorial history of this enormous volunteer effort.

Fast forward to around 2018, and the massive Belmont Middle and High School Building project began in earnest. We were swept up in this effort, requiring that the baseball field be moved from its old location and re-built at its present location (it was previously near the current front entrance of the new high school). For this project the baseball field was the first component to go and the last to return. During these last several years the Belmont High School Baseball team has been wandering elsewhere without a home field. Well... welcome home Belmont Baseball, you finally made it. Welcome home!!

So, “how did we get from there, to here”? Within the confines of this brief ceremony, today we’re here to salute the incredible effort of the countless individuals and organizations that contributed to this noble venture over more than the past two decades.

It is of course virtually impossible for me to ever adequately thank everyone that has assisted. The contributions occur continually, even today, both on and off this field. Behind the curtain there is incredible machine of volunteerism.

And, of course, this field has been the host site since 2005 for our annual high school varsity baseball tournament on Memorial Day weekend, and prior to that, in 2002 and 2003, we hosted two college baseball games played on this field between American International College (AIC), Brendan's college team where he was the starting third baseman, and Merrimack College.

Why Merrimack College in addition to AIC? Here is the bat signed by the entire 2003 Merrimack College Baseball Team, including Brendan's High School teammate Rocco Mastrangelo, another individual who does so much good, then and today. Rocco, at the conclusion of this ceremony, I ask that you be the caretaker of this bat into perpetuity.

It is especially poignant that today we have with us the young people of this community and beyond. This is ultimately your field. Please take care of it.

But with the passing years, now more than two decades, we've had others join Brendan in the great beyond, a place we will all be some day. All of us; there are no exceptions. In today's program we've included a picture of the 2001 team that was Brendan's last team, taken approximately one month after Brendan's departure. Sadly, and painfully, we've had to say goodbye to others.

From that picture, and that team, we have had to say goodbye to Chris Diozzi who left us suddenly and tragically 8 years ago in 2016. Similarly, we have likewise said goodbye 4 years ago in 2020 to Scott Masse, our first scholarship recipient from the Brendan Grant Foundation. Losing both Chris and Scott, teammates from that 2001 summer team, and both with wonderful futures, has been heartbreaking and we miss them dearly. Do not regret getting old, it is a privilege denied to many.

And in that same picture, Coach Dan Kelleher departed 6 years in 2018, and Assistant Coach Jim O'Shaughnessy left us 17 short days ago. Yes, 17 days ago. I am heartbroken.

And there are too many others to mention, but for all of us our beloved live today in the deepest corners of our hearts. Each of us carries this with us. Sometimes I can make sense of it, like for those of us who are older, but sometimes I cannot, like every time it is someone younger. Paul, you are one example of this; Paul Bonfiglio, another of Brendan's teammate's, lost his young 8 year old son Robbie. It is a pain that pierces my heart, and our collective hearts. Similar stories among you, are many. I tell you, the slings and arrows of this outrageous planet are not composed of broken bones and torn flesh and spilled blood, but broken spirits and torn souls and spilled innocence.

In closing, approximately a quarter century ago, I used to regularly come down to this now re-located field with Brendan and I would pitch to him, hundreds of pitches at a time, and he would methodically swat majestic shots. My arm is still sore. We loved that activity, and it is one that I truly miss.

With blissful purpose I recall watching (my son) Brendan play baseball on our old ballfield, and all seemed proper with the world. Hardly could I ever imagine that I would be standing out here today, years later, speaking to all of you as I am now. As I've already said, do not regret getting old, it is a privilege denied to many.

Yet here I am, and here you are. This is our reality. Welcome to your life; there is no turning back. The game of baseball, like the game of life, has many lessons. Our lesson is this: Life is fragile... life is fleeting... life is precious.

On Brendan's behalf, my family and I, and all of Brendan's many friends and teammates, are deeply appreciative for this tribute. It is an honor that, based on his absolute commitment to this marvelous sport, is all together fitting and entirely appropriate.

But in a higher sense, this is an honor that transcends my, or anyone else's, limited ability to add or detract. The collective spirit that's embodied here, in this field, this 'living tribute', makes a statement that we can touch only with our hearts.

The ultimate lesson here should be clear to all. We will all face challenges in this world; it is a prerequisite for being a mortal. Some of these challenges will test you in ways you cannot begin to imagine.

But the secret to life, which is symbolized so vividly by this refurbished baseball field, is that you must persevere. We have, collectively, proven that good things can come from things that seem otherwise. We have taken a negative and made it a positive. We have turned a "bad" into a "good". We were face down in the mud, but we got up. Do not underestimate the good that we have accomplished here. Do not be blind to the intangibles beyond the physical improvements to this ballpark. The outcome of this effort, is... without question... *'profound'*.

Someone told me once that the "Field of Dreams" is in Iowa, --- Iowa. But, I can tell you, if you want to see the "Field of Dreams" you don't have to go to Iowa.

In a few minutes when the umpire yells "Play Ball!", take a deep breath, and allow your dreams to come forth out upon this field. Join, in spirit, with the talented young people out here today, who indeed, are playing out their dreams.

Enjoy ... and God bless...

3A) PRESENTATION TO BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL COACH

Emcee: We now want to turn our attention to the symbolic "passing of the bat".

Casey Grant: Brendan had an engraved bat with his name on it, which in those early tumultuous days after his passing, became a symbol of strength for all of us. That bat could often be found at the various events in those first weeks as we were trying to understand our identity and engage a better vision of our ultimate direction.

Today I have a replica of that bat. It has Brendan's signature burned into the barrel, and it's a specialized creation from the Louisville Slugger factory in Louisville Kentucky.

Much like the proverbial "passing of the key to the city" so too we want to symbolically "pass the bat" to signify our hand-off of all that has been done at this field. And to underscore that this field genuinely belongs to the young people who use it, past, present and future. Therefore, as President of the Brendan Grant Foundation, I hereby turn this bat over to you, (Coach Jim Brown),

and Belmont Athletic Director Adam Pritchard, the Belmont School system and Town of Belmont, to symbolize the formal dedication of our decades-long significant effort, to improve this baseball facility to make it worthy of the distinct honor it now holds.

PASS THE BAT...

3B) CEREMONIAL 1ST PITCH

Emcee: And as we head down the home stretch with today's dedication, we now turn our attention to the ceremonial "1st Pitch".

Casey Grant: Today we re-dedicate this baseball field, on behalf of all the players - past, present and future - to whom it truly belongs. We've decided we want members of today's high school baseball team to throw and catch the ceremonial first pitch, and we bestow this honor on Pitcher Sean Noone and Catcher Nolan Kelleher.

Sean and Nolan are directly connected to Brendan. Sean's Dad, Pete Noone, was the Belmont High School Baseball Coach when Brendan was a Senior Captain (the graduating class of 2000). Today, Coach Pete and his entire family are unparalleled contributors to Belmont sports and youth.

Nolan is the grandson of Dan Kelleher, an icon among the great coaches of this community. Coach Dan was Brendan's Baseball Coach for the 2001 Babe Ruth Summer Team on which he last played (and as shown in today's program).

Both the Noone and Kelleher families have done so much for Belmont Baseball, Belmont sports, and Belmont youth. We're honored to have them inaugurate this field with the ceremonial first pitch. Gentlemen...

FIRST PITCH

Emcee: Let's hear it for Sean and Nolan, who represent the past, present and future of those who use these hallowed grounds...

4) NATIONAL ANTHEM

Emcee: Before we turn our attention to the National Anthem, we want to hear one more brief remark from Casey Grant.

Casey Grant: One item we're still working on at this field complex is a flagpole, which is forthcoming. One of our 2001 teammate, Charlie Synnott, proudly served our country as a Medevac Helicopter Command Pilot in Iraq. This flag I'm holding was provided by Charlie and it flew over Iraq during that campaign. It was given to the Brendan Grant Foundation in 2011 in salute to our 10-year anniversary. We flew it every year on the old flagpole at Brendan's Home Run 5K Road Race. Now, going forward, we look to fly this flag once again at this field on special

occasions. Meanwhile, and until we get our new flagpole installed, we're eternally grateful to the Color Guard to present our colors.

Emcee: Ladies and gentlemen, we ask that you all please rise, kindly remove your hats, and direct your attention to the American flag located on the field.

Al Gledhill, longtime friend of Belmont sports, and the never-aging voice of Belmont football, will lead us in the singing of the National Anthem.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Emcee: And a special thanks, and salute, to the Belmont Fire and Belmont Police Color Guard... and all emergency responders, military, veterans, and all who protect us and keep us safe!

We now hand activities over to our umpires, to Play ball!