

## Dalton's Story

Dalton Weise was born February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 in Charleston, SC. He lived in the Moncks Corner area and was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Berkeley High School. He took his life September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

From the time he was born we were always told there was something special about him. We knew it, but when other people saw it from even brief encounters it was confirmed he was destined for something great. He started combat sports at the age of 6. He trained in mixed martial arts at Blackforce MMA. He was always the smallest guy but that never stopped him from achieving his goals. He went on to be one of the top team members there. This wasn't because he was able to win. It was because of how humble he was and how hard he worked. When taking pictures on the podium after a tournament he never wanted the other kids to stand on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place mounds. He would always pull them up to stand with him. He also wrestled in middle and high school and won the lower state championship as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader.

As he grew older, he got into bull riding and bare back bronc riding. He was a member of the South Carolina High School Rodeo Association along with several others. There he made lifelong friends and was a 2-year running state bare back riding champion and reserve bull riding champion. He would practice for hours on a bucking barrel at home and worked out in the gym with his dad doing weightlifting. If for some reason, he didn't make it to the gym I would find him in the garage with his headphones working out on his own. He made his way to the Youth Bull Riding world finals in Abilene, Texas and finished 9<sup>th</sup> in the world! Dalton never had to be told or asked to work on his crafts. He had a deep drive and determination at such a young age and knew that to be the best he had to train the best. We traveled all over the southeast to compete and spent nearly every weekend on the road for a rodeo.

Not only was Dalton a talented athlete. He was brilliant. He made straight As and was a member of the junior Beta club. He had dreams of being a professional Bull rider, but he also wanted to go into the Navy and be a fighter pilot. He wasn't just a kid with dreams. He made a plan and set goals to achieve them. He was supposed to start flying lessons the month he passed. He told his dad that he knew with his grades and wrestling accolades

that he would get into the Naval Academy and that if he was a pilot when he graduated, he would definitely be accepted to the Navy flight school after college. I had never known a kid that knew exactly what he wanted for his life. He was kind and compassionate. He made friends with everyone he met. He stood up for others. He was helpful at home, he even learned how to help cook dinner on nights when his sister had practice. He was the best brother. He was hilarious and apparently a class clown. He was responsible.

Dalton wasn't bullied; he wasn't depressed. He always had a smile on his face. As his parents we can tell you he wasn't hiding a deep pain that we couldn't see.

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Dalton went to youth group. We received a call from his youth pastor that he was not in class, and they were unable to find him. We later learned that he left church with a friend. He was eventually found in the parking lot of the church, and we were asked to come pick him up. His pastor had a talk with him before leaving. Once we got home, we talked about the decision he made to leave, and I asked for his phone. His father and I decided that we needed to go through the phone. As parents we felt we just needed to know exactly what was going on, so we knew how to address this moving forward. Being in "trouble" was a foreign concept to Dalton. I noticed a change in his behavior when asking for the pin to unlock his phone. He sat there that night picking his dinner. When I asked him what was wrong, he said a word I never heard him use before. He said, "I'm just really anxious". He also said he was ashamed and embarrassed that everyone at church thought he was missing and had to look for him. Ultimately, he was told to go take a shower and go to bed. His dad and I stayed on the phone for a few minutes just trying to figure out how to best address the situation. To us, this wasn't a huge deal. Just a teenage boy growing up. I cried at the fact that my baby wasn't a baby anymore. In the next few moments, I heard a sound. The sound of shot gun racking. As my brain began to process what I thought it heard I immediately tried to talk myself out of it. There could be no possible way that sound was a gun. I yelled for Dalton while still on the phone with his dad downstairs. I asked him what he was doing. The last thing I ever heard him say was, I'm just getting in the shower momma. What seemed like forever was only a few seconds. His dad said for some reason I think I know what you think you heard. As I ran upstairs, we heard the blast of the gun.

Impulsive suicide. We are sharing Dalton's story to bring awareness. We hope to remind kids and young adults that often what they see as the end of the world is something that

can be easily overcome. We truly believe that if he had thought about it for one more second, we wouldn't be here today. Just a couple hours before he passed away, he was googling a new pair of wrestling shoes. He wanted to be here, he wanted to achieve his dreams, and he was well on his way. For the parents reading this story, talk to your kids. Even the ones that you don't think you have to. The thought of having this kind of conversation with our kids never crossed our minds. Why would it? Dalton's story is the epitome of it can happen to anyone. A single solitary moment of anxiety that to him was overwhelming. Enough so that he thought he thought he couldn't get through it, and he made the tragic impulsive decision to end his life. We will forever wonder if we had done even just one thing differently that night or had a different conversation if it would have made a difference.

To the kids and young adults reading this story, we hope to inspire you to live the way Dalton did. We as his parents choose to focus on exactly that! The way he lived, the amazing things he accomplished, the lives that he touched in just 14 years. We only had him with us for 5,335 days but what he did in those days is nothing short of extraordinary. He understood without ever being told that to achieve great things you must first put in the work. This mentality will take you as far as you are willing to go. Be fearless, work hard, train, be kind and LIVE LIKE DALTON. Remember in the moments when life gets you down or it just feels like too much that you are so loved and just STAY.