



For those of you who don't know I am Stevie Halls and I represent Gala Cricket Club where Rowan's immediate and extended family are very prominent members. In these sad times I am honoured to be asked by Dave and Elaine to say a few words in memory of Rowan who was and will remain an extraordinary and special wee boy.



Rowan touched the hearts of many people from many different places, near and far and the tributes and comments I have heard since the tragic events of Monday are absolutely incredible and hopefully I will be able to relay some of these in the coming minutes.

Rowan was a son, a brother, a grandson, a nephew, a cousin, and clearly much loved by all his family. That love did not stop there because he was also a classmate, a pupil, a friend, a team-mate and a playmate who was loved by one and all.

Despite our obvious age differences I was privileged to regard Rowan as a friend as will many in here today. Although Rowan had many other interests, much of what I will say relates to cricket. I make no apologies for this because his passion was for cricket and indeed Meigle Park, where many will know, he spent his last moments.

Rowan was not just a player in the junior section but, despite his young years, was as much a member of the whole club as any one of the adults, senior players or committee. No other person at Gala Cricket Club young or old crossed the age divide, such was his personality, kindness, good humour and passion.

In preparing this tribute I tried to think of many words to describe Rowan. I will probably use a lot of them, but the one word I kept coming back to is SPECIAL.

The dictionary tells us the word special is better, greater or otherwise different from what is usual. It also tells us that a special person is - exceptional, unusual, notable, noteworthy, remarkable, outstanding and unique. Every one of those words was made for Rowan Boland. These and many other words have been used to describe Rowan and when they are added to memories, that is when we start to understand what Rowan meant to everyone who knew him.

Each and every person who was fortunate enough to have Rowan in their lives will have memories and without exception these memories will be of a happy, talented and brilliant wee boy.

In the many years I have known Rowan I have never seen him down, grumpy or sad and I have never met anyone who has. Having seen some drawings and writings his school mates at Balmoral primary school have done, it is clear I am not alone.

It is difficult for adults to comprehend the passing of Rowan let alone the many kids affected but I would like to read out some small remarks made by his classmates which are said with innocence, honesty and truthfulness and simplify who Rowan was.

"Rowan, I will never forget you, and me and you have got a lot of memories, I loved playing with you after school"

"He had lots of friends and knew how to get into a laugh. I always loved playing with him"

"The only reason he was took so young was because he was an angel and this world is bad for angels so he went to a better place"

"He was the politest boy I ever knew, he never said anything bad about anyone"

"Rowan was a really good friend and I will miss him a lot. He was always nice to other people and never said anything bad to anyone. He always had a smile on his face"

"Rowan was the nicest boy you would ever get a chance to meet. I will miss him a lot and I remember all the brilliant things he did. He will be getting totally looked after by the angels, he is a boy I will never forget"

These are just a snapshot of the words his friends have used but there is a common theme amongst them all which is the fondness they remember him by.

The whole school has been devastated because he was such an influential character in the class, the corridors and the playground. Having spoken to Mrs Andrew from the school, I'm sure she won't mind me repeating some of her comments :-

"Rowan was always the first person to offer a hand. You could never wish to teach a nicer lad. If all the world were made of Rowan's what a lovely place it would be. A very special person who will always make me smile". Mrs Andrew also reflects "these are not just remembering the good points, there were no bad ones".

Another common theme running through the kids comments is "He was a brilliant cricket player".

Now I'm sure these comments will have been heavily influenced by Rowan himself who will have told his classmates this on many occasions and if I'm right then he should have shouted it from the roof tops in his big loud voice because it was true.

Rowan loved cricket, he loved being at Meigle Park, he loved jumping into his Dad's car and heading off for away matches. He took great pride in the successes of the Gala team and in the performances of his Dad, but most of all he loved to be in the thick of the action with bat or ball in hand.

To us he was another member of our team, always there, joining in with training, and generally keeping an eye on what we did.

Gala Cricket Club is a real family club and there was nothing better than when stumps were drawn at the end of the senior and Rowan and his pals would invade the pitch and take part in their own match, which lasted as long as light would allow, and I might add was often much more thrilling than anything we could have produced.

Rowan studied the game and when he talked cricket he knew what he was talking about. He wanted to do the things that we did in matches. He wanted to do what his Dad did in matches and he wanted to do the things he saw on TV.

Just last week at the season's first Junior training session his uncle George said how chuffed he was that he had pulled off a reverse sweep, and in catching practise he demanded that Graeme challenge him by hitting the ball higher than anyone else was getting.

Inevitably the catch was taken and the imaginary batsman was on his way back to the pavilion probably with a cheeky wee comment to take with him. Make no mistake Gala Cricket Club was Rowan's club. The ease with which he engaged with everyone at the club, from juniors, to youths, to seniors was remarkable. As I mentioned earlier he took great pride in the success of the first team last season and particularly the performances of his Dad, but he also displayed the same pride and determination when getting the opportunity to represent his club and his town, in Under 10 Festivals or playing Under 13 league matches.

His cricketing talents had already brought him personal success as a member of the Gala Under-13s team, winners of 2009 Border Under-13s League. This success earned him a nomination for Borders Area Under-11s winter training and he quickly established himself as a leading member of this Borders wide representative squad.

When the Borders Under-11s team was invited to the Lothian Indoor Under-11s tournament during the early months of this year, Rowan was an automatic pick and the fact that the team reached the final having beaten many big Edinburgh clubs was mainly due to Rowan's aggressive batting and accurate bowling. Unfortunately they were pipped at the post by Grange, another big Edinburgh club.

The photo of the Under 13 squad getting presented with last season's Border League trophy, with Rowan's beaming smile positioned front and centre, will forever bring a tear to the eye but also a smile to the face.

Such was his passion for cricket, I recall one dark and snowy February night bringing him, Robbie and Kerr back from an indoor training session. Rowan shouted from the back seats "Hallsy, when are you putting the nets up?". He was referring to the outdoor training nets at Meigle Park. I said to him "Rowan it won't be for a while because the ground is covered in snow and its freezing". Not satisfied with this answer he said "Aye but we could put our wellies and gloves on."

We did recently put the nets up and guess who has practised in them the most. As I arrived on Monday night and walked down, Rowan was batting in the net next to his dad and doing what he loved.

I must confess to a sense of achievement, happy that we had got the nets up so Rowan could practice outdoors but when I was leaving the club an hour or so later I got another one of Rowan's shouts, "Hallsy, where are you going?". Off to a meeting with Neil Cameron, says I. Neil is the local cricket development officer. Rowan then shouted "ask him when the indoor training is starting".

Thinking he was a wee bit confused I said "but Rowan its summer and the indoor stuff is just for winter". "Aye" he says "but I want to beat that Edinburgh lot this time". He was far from confused about his cricket and I'm sure given the chance he would have beaten "that Edinburgh lot" time and time again.

In recent months Gala Cricket Club have mourned the loss, and celebrated the life of two former players in Dunc Paterson and Malcolm Davidson. Both were outstanding sportsmen blessed with great talent that they used to maximum effect and lived life to the full getting the most out of every day.

Rowan will never get the chance to fulfil the potential he undoubtedly had, but he shared with Dunc and Malcolm a love of life and a desire to make the most out of everyday he had with us.

It somehow seems that he had a job on this earth and that job was to spread happiness as quickly and widely as he could. We will never know for sure if that was his job but if it was, he was in line for a big promotion because he was meeting all his targets and then some.

Rowan has been tragically taken from us and will be sadly but fondly remembered. We should never forget his smiling face, his endless energy, his brilliant personality, his good humour and his out and out friendliness.

Speaking as representative of Gala cricket club, he has been a credit to the teams he played for and everyone involved in the club. He has left a mark that can never be erased, he has added to our history through the impact he has made on all our lives and will be with us whenever anyone steps onto the pitch, and yes he will undoubtedly be looking down and making sure we do it right, just like he told us to.

Speaking from a personal point of view, Rowan is a credit to Elaine, Dave, Kristen and the extended family and you should be very proud of him and all his achievements. I know from my many conversations with him that he is extremely proud of you.

I would like to play a brief DVD in memory of Rowan but before I do I would like to end with brief passage.

Life cannot be measured in days, months and years. Life is measured in love, enthusiasm, passion, commitment, courage, joy and laughter, and in that Rowan Boland, a very special person, lived well beyond his years.

Rowan, Meigle Park and our lives will never be the same without you. Sleep tight wee man.