



Rob Garibaldi

Died Age 24

Suicide / Steroids

Rob Garibaldi (1978-2002) was like many boys. He grew up playing Little League, emulating sports heroes and dreaming of making it to the big leagues. Living on the San Francisco Peninsula as a youngster, Rob watched with excitement at the accomplishments of his local sports heroes: Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire, and Jose Canseco. Their successes fueled his dreams. Rob had both the talent and desire.

To Rob, baseball was life. He was the “all-American athlete” - an All Star during high school, selected California Junior College All State Player of the Year, and earned the “Big Stick” award with a batting average of .459. His dream of playing in the major leagues came very close to reality. Rob turned down the New York Yankees in the 1999 Major League Amateur Draft to accept a full scholarship to the University of Southern California. There, he played for USC in the 2000 College World Series as their starting right fielder. He was recognized by Baseball America as one of the top 100 prospects for the draft in 2001.

As a teen at 5’9”- 130 pounds, Rob was told by many working him - coaches, trainers, professional scouts, that the only way to improve his game was to “get bigger.” “Getting bigger” began with working out and using performance enhancing supplements.

“Like vitamins,” Rob’s father and I were informed. When this regime did not produce the desired results, Rob was encouraged to use anabolic steroids. But, the desire and need to look bigger, be stronger, and avoid losing muscle gains previously achieved motivated continued use. Over time, Rob gained the 50 pounds he needed to fit the major league prototype and became the powerhouse the steroids promised.

By the 2002 Draft, Rob was a power-hitter at 5’11” and 185 pounds. But he wasn’t drafted. Steroids had taken an insidious hold, with scouts commenting he was a “head case.” Rob had begun to manifest mania, depression, short-term memory loss, psychosis, uncontrollable rage, and delusional and suicidal thinking (all symptoms of steroid use). When confronted about these symptoms and his weight gain, upper body muscle mass, hair loss, acne, and rage (he assaulted his father twice prompting involuntary psychiatric hospitalization,) he denied his use. At our family’s insistence, Rob eventually cooperated with treatment and entered a residential treatment program. There, he “roid raged” and was discharged home. While I tried to find alternative treatment, Rob shot himself in the head and died at age 24.



Remembering Lost Promise