Toxic Avengers

A ballsy corps of HIVers strikes up awareness

October 1, 2003 By Josh Sparber

Who: Andy Ansell
What: The Biohazard Softball Team's season finale
Where: Minneapolis
When: 07.20.03

Bad News Bears meets an HIV ward: That's how teammate Andy Ansell, a head honcho for Minnesota AIDS Project's all-HIVer activity group Positive Link, describes Biohazard, his ragtag team of mostly positive softballers. Swingin' proud at the end of their first season in Minneapolis' gay league, Andy took POZ way-out to the ballgame.

When I was 8, I got hit in the head with a baseball and vowed never to set foot on a field again. But last spring, James Allison, a Positive Link member, pitched the idea of starting an HIVer softball team. We dubbed ourselves Biohazard—it's a little in-your-face and a lot of people found it offensive, but if our team helps other players in the league be more open about their status, then it's well worth it.

For a good 14 of the 17 years that I've been positive, I was extremely closeted bout my HIV. I thought that hiding my status gave me control over it, but the more I kept it hidden, the more it controlled me. Being on the team has challenged my notions of what I can accomplish. Now I'm even toying with the idea of running for public office.

The final game of the season was *so close*. In the last inning, The Tornadoes were beating us 15 to 4, and we came back to score nine runs. During the closing banquet, we were honored as Most Improved Team and received a standing ovation. Much like living with HIV, our season was marked with highs and lows, but our victory was overcoming adversity and becoming better people along the way.

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