

RUSHNA JOSIAH

MEMORIAL SERVICE

30 MARCH 2010

I was at school earlier this morning, at 05:30 to be precise, to see off 40 Eunice girls on their Two Oceans Tour. I was supposed to be on that bus but I'll fly to Cape Town this afternoon to meet them as I have another Eunice girl to see off.

Not just another Eunice girl, but a beauty. That's how I'd like to record Rushna – a beauty with a deep inner beautiful personality – so much warmth and feeling and goodness and a beautifully radiant exterior with those smiling eyes and that natural sparkle.

To me that Rushna star will always shine in my memory and I will treasure that gentleness, that sensitivity and that powerful sense of humour.

Rushna was a Eunice girl and all Eunice girls are special but you just have to ask around to know, that at this school, if you're the first team hockey captain you're somewhat extra special. You've been chosen by the chosen few to lead and to inspire. That was Rushna's charm – her presence. She'd set you at ease immediately. You wanted to be with her and to be part of something special with her.

Rushna was a humble captain. She sometimes doubted her own ability to lead not realising that it was her passion and her personality and her humility which made her special to her team.

We were on a hockey tour at St Mary's this weekend. We were due to play St Mary's, the hosts and the joint winners of the tournament at 09:00. At 07:30 we got that dreaded, heart wrenching call. These girls had been Rushna's girls for two years. They were warming up for the match away from their cell phones. Rushna was already in heaven, a Eunice angel in action. Our first team beat the country's top hockey team 1 – 0. We got them together in a huddle after the game, with 11 sets of Eunice parents around us, and I told them of Rushna's death earlier in the morning. They burst into inconsolable tears, every single one of them. They had lost a massive presence in their lives. In a moment they lost a little of their youth. Their parents all knew Rushna too, and parents just shudder at the thought of a teenage tragedy. Together we cried and cried and cried and in moments the 28 schools present shared the loss of Rushna.

Mr Josiah, at Rushna's matric dance last year you recapped on your daughters' 9 years at Eunice High. A day of such promise replaced by a day of such loss. Rushaan, Mr and Mrs Josiah, all Rushna's Eunice friends join me in saluting your daughter's memory. May the many good times, the many beautiful memories you have of your beauty be a source of both consolation and inspiration as your family, perhaps a little smaller, becomes a lot closer.

I'm glad, Rushna, that I can bid you farewell in this place where you were so well known, so widely respected and so deeply loved by the girls in green.