

Corbin Bleu Live!

by Bridget Riggs

Strolling through Town Center Mall, I spotted a colorful poster advertising upcoming events. Stopping to look over the entertainment options, one in particular stood out from the rest. “Come see Corbin Bleu live in Center Court on July 21st at 12 p.m.” I wrote the information in my calendar but didn’t think too much about it as I continued to window shop.

I mentor nine middle school girls at my church. Knowing that they would love to see Corbin Bleu in person, I decided I would haul them to the mall to see the actor from Disney’s High School Musical. Having seen the movie myself, I must admit I was not instantly addicted to the characters the way my chatty, sixth grade girls were. They were obsessed with this curly-locked boy whose ultra white smile radiated against his dark, tanned skin.

I sent out E-mail invitations to my girls asking them to RSVP for a seat in my car. Immediately, I received instant messages asking if friends could come as well. Of course, I agreed; the more the merrier. The goal of this trip for me was not to see Corbin Bleu. Gasp! The goal was to get to know the girls who would be in my group this fall. Their goal, on the other hand, was to get as close to the superstar as possible.

As with all teen events, we started off with almost all of my girls telling me that they needed a ride. I was thinking of reserving the church van because so many sent RSVPs. As the weekend of the trip approached, the fickle girls began to back out of their reservations. Some were going with other friends or family members. A few decided they just didn’t want to go. One girl really wanted to go, but had to attend a mandatory volleyball practice. I scaled down the vehicle from a van to a car as only three girls would be attending my “fabulous” event.

As I woke up on that Saturday morning, I was almost dreading the day. I really wanted to lie in bed. My favorite time of the week is Saturday morning. I love sleeping in and playing in bed with my two-year-old daughter when she wakes up. This particular

Saturday, my husband was home, too. It could have been a perfect family morning, but I had scheduled right over it.

My daughter cried as I slid into the car to leave. She didn't understand that I had to spend time with other girls. They needed me, too.

I picked up all of the girls. Chelsea, from Huntington, was spending most of the summer at her aunt's house. Her long, black hair flowed down over her shoulders and onto her Abercrombie t-shirt. She informed me that she wanted to shop for school clothes. She did not care about Corbin Bleu. Alex (Alexandra) and Torre who grew up together sat in my backseat and giggled about the possibility of getting to actually touch Corbin's hand. They were dressed head to toe in High School Musical paraphernalia, a true sign that they were only sixth graders. As all of the girls were new to my group this year, I spent the drive time asking the girls questions and trying to get to know them.

After a horrible parking job on my part, we all leapt out of my car and started toward the mall doors. We arrived at 11:00 in the morning. I only saw a few families walking about as we entered the Lee Street entrance. "Maybe we'll be lucky and it won't be crowded," I told the girls. Boy, was I wrong.

As I led the girls around the corner to the center of the mall, a plethora of red and white pom-poms along with signs that read "Go Wildcats!" greeted us. The floor seats were reserved for those precious few who were early risers. Some had been waiting in line since six o'clock that morning. The second level of the mall, where we were, had people two rows deep surrounding the banisters overlooking the stage. We toyed with the idea of staying there. We were trying to predict where Corbin Bleu would be entering the stage. The mall offices were on the third floor, and while people were crowding around the banisters there as well, we decided to chance it. Surely security would bring him out of the mall offices and down the elevator. It would be his quickest and safest way to the stage, or so we thought.

My little brood and I grabbed a Subway sandwich and claimed our spot. We had a really good view of the stage, granted we had to look under the big red banner advertising the event. After almost a half an hour, the announcers finally began

speaking over the crowd. As his first words were spoken, squeals of excitement erupted. He introduced the first set of teen board models showing off clothes from Macy's. Although the soundtrack from High School Musical was playing in the background, no one was really paying attention to the models. My girls kept checking their cell phone clocks to see if it was nearing the noon hour. More models from Delia's and JC Penney's were presented. The clothes, to my pleasure, were cute and conservative.

The Charleston Light Opera Guild, who will be performing High School Musical this summer, gave a sneak peak at their performance by singing two songs. I asked the girls if the performance was interesting enough for them to want to attend the Guild's show. They scoffed at me, explaining that the Guild version was not the REAL story.

As we watched the Guild actors dance around to their final song, a hum that started as a buzz transformed into earth-shattering screams as we saw his bouncing curls barely visible among the crowd. Instead of entering from the third floor mall offices and utilizing the elevators, Corbin was escorted by security straight through the throng of teeny boppers on the second floor and walked down the escalator to get to the stage. I watched in amazement as my three girls (yes, even Chelsea) jumped and screamed until they were nearly hoarse. Corbin danced a few steps with the Guild actors. The music was inaudible. Noisy screams and chants of "Corbin, Corbin" polluted the air.

If I were a musician promoting a new CD as Corbin was doing that day, I would have planned on performing at least one song for my fans. We would not be graced with a performance by him on this Saturday. As soon as the stage was clear, a small, bistro table and chair were lifted onto the stage. Corbin sat down and smiled widely as flashes snapped everywhere causing a reflection off of his ivory teeth. Mall security led groups of fans (about 20 at a time) to a holding area near the stage. An announcement informed those waiting that Corbin would only sign autographs for two hours. The only item he would sign was his new CD. If you hadn't purchased his new CD, you could pay \$15 at the table and he would present you with an autographed one. This disappointed

my girls. They desperately wanted an autograph. The line was already wrapping around the mall, and I knew that Corbin would be long gone by the time we could get through the line.

I loaded the girls into the elevator to go down to the first floor to attempt to get as close as possible to the movie star. We took the best photos that we could from about 30 feet away. Let down a bit from all of the hype, my celebrity stalkers and I returned to the car and drove away in silence.