

# Family Blue

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**N**orthern Nevada umpire Brady Carthen and his daughter, Bianca Carthen, were working together in a 12 and under softball game about two years ago.

It was Bianca's first big game umpiring in the field.

In her mind, the 15-year-old was hoping for a couple easy calls in the first inning to get her a little more comfortable.

"She was nervous as hell," Brady said.

In that first inning, with a runner on first, there was a "bang-bang" play at second base, a very tough call for a beginner.

Bianca froze.

"Her look over to me was of total panic," Brady said.

Bianca saw the play, in the back of her mind she knew the runner was safe, but she couldn't spread her arms to signal the call.

Brady called time to discuss the call with his umpire in training.

"I said 'Calm down. Now, just tell me what you saw,'" Brady said. "She said she heard the thud of the foot hitting the bag before the pop from the ball hitting the glove. I said, 'OK, now go make the call.'"

After the intervention, Bianca made the correct call and explained it to one of the coaches who came to argue it.

After that rough first experience, Bianca could have quit umpiring. But she didn't.

She learned from her mistake, has become more controlled and assertive, and now the two Carthens enjoy umpiring as a family.

"She's doing so much better now," Brady said of his daughter. "She had to take a lot of stuff from



Umpire Brady Carthen and his daughter Bianca umpire games together in Sparks.



some of those fans and it got on her nerves... I just told her we all have bad days. Then a week later, at a 16-under league, she tells me she had one of the best days she's had."

Brady has provided a perfect learning opportunity for his daughter because he's been in the business since 1987. He understands the pressure from fans, players and coaches to get it right. In fact, he's seen the worst of the worst.

Brady recalls his first year behind the plate at a 12-under baseball game

with some unruly fans in Sun Valley, a suburb of Reno.

Brady is used to hearing the "Come on ump!" or "That's a terrible call!" yells from the fans. That doesn't bother him, because it's part of the game.

But on this summer day in 1987, the yell was derogatory.

The proud African American umpire was called the N-word by a fan.

"I stopped the game," he said. "I called the coach over and I said, 'You want this game to continue, right?' He said, 'yeah, yeah.'"

Brady told the coach that the fan had to leave or the game would be cancelled.

"The coach says, 'What? I can't control the crowd, they say whatever they want,'" Brady said. "I told them that one of them just crossed the line."

The fan eventually left, and just before the game got started, one of the players tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I'm sorry, blue."

"At that time, that just kind of washed everything away," Brady said. "The day was done for me. But then I was like, OK, I'll stick it out."

Brady hasn't stopped umpiring and has since got his daughter into it.

It started when Bianca grew into a teenager and kept asking her dad for money or allowance. Brady was strapped for cash, but since they were hiring high school kids to become umpires, he saw it as a situation for her to earn money and spend time together.

After the first couple gigs, Bianca had the "allowance" money she wanted.

"I like getting paid," Bianca said. "But it's not just about getting paid, it's the responsibility that comes with it. I like the responsibility and how to handle the game. It gets nerve wracking, the crowd and coaches are yelling at you, but it's part of the deal."