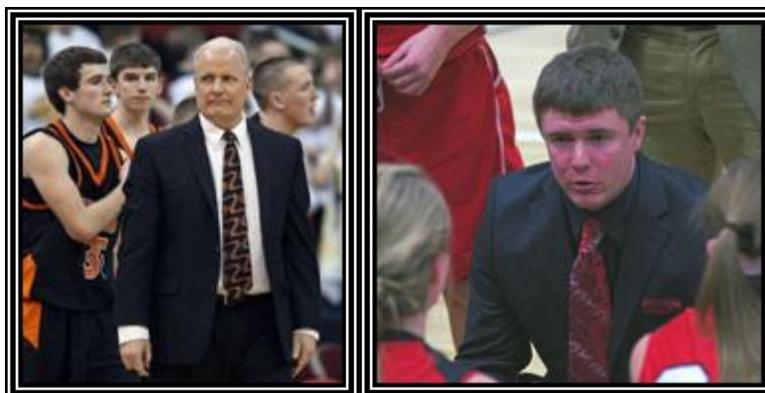


FATHER/SON COACHING DUO: SCOTT & BRANDON SHARP

Written by: Dave Paxton



Scott Sharp

Brandon Sharp

At the end of February, Grinnell High School Head Boys Basketball Coach Scott Sharp was beginning preparation to take another of his Tiger teams to the Class 3A state tournament. Fifteen years as head coach, 11 years as an assistant and a Tiger player before, Scott was headed back to state for the sixth time.

Down the road in Newton, Brandon Sharp was headed out to watch the girls state tournament after coaching the Cardinal girls to a six-win season.

Both men were happy with their programs. And Scott had an added sense of pride. His son, Brandon, had completed the season as the youngest head girls basketball coach of a 4A school in state history, leading the team to their best season in several years while finishing up his teaching degree at Simpson College.

The father-son duo have a couple of things in common including a passion for basketball and serving the past several years on staff at the Fellowship of Christian Athletes sports camp at Central College in Pella – Scott as a basketball clinician and Brandon as a college huddle leader.

Scott, who has led an extremely successful Grinnell boys program (Brandon was his point guard for three years) isn't comfortable taking credit for the program. "I was blessed to have been asked to serve on (the late) Steve Kreigel's staff as his sophomore coach," said Scott. Kreigel died after a courageous battle with cancer. "If I had my choice, I'd still be Steve's sophomore coach. "Our program was in place and we had a rich tradition of excellence when they asked me to serve a year as head coach," he said. "That year has turned into 15 and I'm thankful to be a part of it."

He doesn't particularly like to brag about his son, but it's obvious this father is proud of his son. "Brandon was a three-year starter for me and was your typical gym rat/coach's kid," said Scott. "He has a great love for the game and has always loved working with kids. My wife is a career educator in special education and administration at Newton so education runs deep in our family."

Brandon started coaching little kids as a high schooler, working summer camps with his dad. He went to Mid-America Nazarene University on a basketball scholarship for two years and played on two final four NAIA teams there before transferring to Simpson, playing another year before having his career ended with a series of injuries.

He organized a basketball “academy” giving lessons to young players and organizing fifth and sixth grade boys tournament teams. His academy, that includes instruction in Newton, caught the eye of the Newton administration who felt they needed someone to shift the culture of Cardinal girls basketball. They asked Brandon if he’d consider taking the varsity girls job...while still a student at Simpson...with an offer already to assist with the Simpson men’s team.

After much prayer, he agreed.

Brandon inherited a program that had won a half dozen games (combined) over the past couple of years. The girl’s team had won only three games in two years in the Little Hawkeye Conference. Brandon had grown up in disciplined programs at Grinnell High School, Mid-America Nazarene and at Simpson and knew what high school and college players were capable of doing to be successful. His biggest challenges were to introduce a new culture to the program and encourage more girls to come out (the freshman season had been cancelled the year before because of lack of numbers).

Numbers have started to return, from 17 girls in 9th through 12th the year before he arrived to over 25 this year. His team won one game in the first half of the season. The second half of the season they went 5-6, beating Pella and Norwalk, teams that had trounced them by 30 points in the first half of the year. “The girls started catching on to our system about halfway through the season,” he said, of an offense that stresses getting up and down the court and getting high percentage layups and short jump shots and a tough man-to-man defense. “We were able to change a lot of things in our first year,” he said. “I think Newton is beginning to regain pride in the program.”

He is excited about next year in Newton, but he’d really like to have a teaching job by then. An elementary education major with special education emphasis, he’d eventually like to work with behavior intervention.

He’s also excited about attending another Central College national FCA camp. There’s an added connection with younger sister Lauren a freshman on the Central women’s basketball team (a program also attempting rebuild). Brandon got involved in FCA in high school and for the past four years has been a huddle leader at the Central College camp. “It’s about the best week of the year,” he said. “It’s unbelievable what happens at FCA camp. You work with kids all over the Midwest, some from really Godly homes and others from really rough circumstances. It’s humbling to be a part of their journey, to sometimes introduce them to the Lord, sometimes redirect them to the Lord.”

Scott was invited to be a clinician by Grinnell College women’s coach, Andy Hamilton. “Andy asked me several times and it was a matter of making the time,” said Scott, who works for Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance. “Once I made the time commitment, it’s been very easy to get back. Being involved with coaches who share a strong faith and working with players who are eager to learn about basketball and are on a faith journey is definitely a win-win.”

The two Little Hawkeye head coaches don’t talk a whole lot of shop, since one is a boys coach and the other a girls coach. “Brandon has had some great mentors,” said Scott. “If he wants to talk basketball with me, he always knows I’m around.”