



Anna Ashley

School: Prince Rupert Secondary

Athletic Director: Mel Bishop

Currently Coaching: Junior girl basketball

Length of Years coaching: 18 years

Subject currently teaching: English, Socials, Humanities and Geography

Also Coached: Grade 8 girl's basketball, Jr. Basketball, Sr. Basketball, U 14, U15, and U16 Northwest Regional girl's basketball teams for Basketball BC.

Why did you decide to coach: "I played high school sports and one of the things I truly believe is that you need to give back. My coaches and teachers in high school gave up their time for me to be involved in school sports and it was a very memorable and rewarding experience. I enjoy having the chance to provide that for my players. It also gives me a chance to get to know them on a different level than you can as a teacher, and even though it is a lot of work, it is extremely rewarding as well. I love coaching."

What has been the most rewarding thing about being a teacher coach: "I think the most rewarding thing about coaching is the chance to give students opportunities to be on a team and develop themselves, both as athletes and as young adults. There is nothing like seeing the faces of kids when they work hard for something and then achieve it, or to see their ability to accept things with grace and dignity."

Who would you identify as a role model or mentor in your life specific to coaching: "I look at many of my high school coaches as mentors. My high school basketball coach, Sandy Chambers, who played for the Canadian Women's basketball team, was an inspiration in terms of her drive and commitment to succeed. She expected us to do our best and worked with us to achieve that goal. I also look to my fellow coaches and colleagues as mentors. All of them have different things that make them great coaches and I constantly learn from their examples. It helps me stay inspired and committed."

What do you do during your spare time: "When I have spare time, I like to participate in sports myself such as ball hockey and indoor soccer. I enjoy the outdoors, I kayak on the ocean as well as camp whenever I can. Hanging out and spending time with friends and family is also important to me. I think a person needs to make time for what's important in your life otherwise you burn out."

Player credentials: "In terms of myself, my only player credentials are the sports I have played in high school which included soccer, cross country, and basketball. I went to provincials with my high school teams for both soccer and basketball. I didn't even play volleyball until I came to Prince Rupert but like I said it's amazing what you can learn from other coaches if you're willing."

Describe how you found sport in your life: "Physical Education class at elementary probably first developed my interest but I have always been competitive and enjoyed playing various sports from a young age. In high school it just seemed natural to try out for various teams and they certainly made my high school years very special for me. Sports are a lifelong thing for me. I believe in keeping active and I feel sports allow you to keep active and be social at the same time, which to me is the best of both worlds."

What do you believe would resonate with the teacher coach of today in terms of recognition: “That’s a hard question to answer, because all of the coaches I know aren’t coaching in order to receive recognition. They are coaching because they love their sports and because they love passing that knowledge on to the players they coach. Coaches like to know that their efforts are appreciated and one of the best ways to make sure that happens is to make sure you thank the volunteers who help out.

It would also be nice to lessen the load by making fundraising and paperwork easier. Maybe get some time to do the extras that coaching now entails, or perhaps some time off in lieu for all the time coaches put in. I think a lot of times coaches over time start to feel like they’re taken for granted and a little recognition of this fact through extra time given would go a long way.”

What is the biggest challenge you face as a teacher coach: “I think one of the biggest challenges that faces teacher coaches is trying to do everything involved. By the time you add up the hours involved in coaching, traveling, fundraising and paperwork it can become quite overwhelming which can lead to burnout. In our system right now with budget cutbacks and the increasing costs of travel it becomes extremely difficult to remain competitive unless you spend countless hours fundraising, especially when you live in more remote areas of the province. We have tried to solve this problem at our school by coming up with one major fundraiser for each senior, but it doesn’t completely alleviate the problem. Many students have trouble participating due to the high costs involved. We just do the best we can.”

What has coaching taught you about life: “There are so many things coaching has taught me about life. It has taught me how to appreciate each of my players for their individuality and their individual reasons for wanting to be part of the team. It has taught me the importance of balance, being firm but fair, patient but demanding, understanding with high expectations. It taught me flexibility, which is essential if you want the respect, and commitment of all of your players. It has also taught me, that while winning may be very important but it is not the only thing nor is it the most important thing.

The fact is that very few of the kids I coach are going on to professional sports careers. I want them to learn to love the sports they play and continue on with that love of sport for the rest of their life. If I can do that, then I feel I have achieved what I want to as a coach. As I always tell my players, you have to go out and there and give it 100% and if you can say you’ve done that, and at the end of the game the results aren’t in your favour, you’re still a winner.”

Describe your first coaching experience: “My first coaching experience was a long time ago with grade 8 girls basketball, and it certainly was an eye opener. It was highly enjoyable, extremely nerve wracking, and had an extremely large learning curve. However, from the very first, I knew that coaching was something I loved to do.”

When was your proudest moment: “I think the proudest moment for me as a coach has to be from last year when my senior girls team came in 4th at the “AA” Basketball Provincial Championships in Kamloops. To see how hard the girls had worked, and to have them do so well really made me proud to be a part of it. It just shows that hard work pays off, especially when you have a talented group of athletes.”

Other Facts about Anna:

I have taken teams to the Senior Boys “AA” volleyball provincials 7 times and I have taken teams to the Senior Girls “AA” basketball provincials 10 times since I’ve started coaching.