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The Blue Crue

Written By: Harry Gribnitz

I recently noticed a little article in the Grand Rapids Press that generated a flood of memories. The article reported " Ali Griffin of Oklahoma Christian tied the NAIA women's record with 12 3-pointers Thursday night in an 89-50 victory over John Brown". We can all appreciate her achievement as she actually tied the NAIA Div I record, but I am getting a little ahead of my story.

The story starts in the fall of 1992 at the University of Dallas. The University women's team was in the process of setting a NAIA Div. II record for most consecutive defeats with their current streak of 36 losses. The losses stopped abruptly with the arrival of a junior transfer from SMU. On November 7, 1992, the team won its first game in over two years. Campus rumor was that the last win had actually been by forfeit since the opponent couldn't find the campus nestled on the hill in Irving, Texas just outside of Dallas. Over the next two years The Blue Crue won about half their games and became a popular diversion for the students. Her college coach was thrilled with the new energy in the program. "She's the nicest person in the world and she'll do anything to help the program. She has the perfect point of view, because she knows what it's like to be on the court and make the plays and she knows what it's like to sit on the bench. She can talk to the girls on our bench and tell them that she knows what it feels like, that they have to continue working hard even if they're discouraged. And they realize she does know what it's like."

" The girls were just stunned the first practice," he remembered with a grin, "She came out full speed, playing defense all over the place and really taking it to her own teammates and the were like' what are you doing?' It didn't take them long to realize they had to come out everyday ready to play."

She wrote to her dad about the team's trip to play Sul Ross State University on February 7, 1993. She wrote about the 16hour ride in the two school vans from Dallas to the west Texas campus of Sul Ross State. Travel by van was far different than the flights to Las Vegas or Alaska for tournaments when she played at SMU. She wrote about the effort her teammates made to take the heavily favored home team into overtime, before finally suffering a 96-85 overtime loss. Facing another 16hour ride home, she was just happy to be in a place where it was fun to play.

Her parents didn't know about her individual accomplishments until the news release hit the paper. She had established new NAIA Div II records by scoring 60 points and making 13 of 22 three point shots! Over her two years at UD, she also set records for career scoring average, 27.22 per game, most free throws made in a game, 22 (twice) and made the Div. II All-American Team. However, for her it was never about individual records. It was about the TEAM and her love of the game.

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Some day another young lady will surpass her individual records, I just hope they do it with her enthusiasm and love for the game. Her name? Janet Gribnitz. Her Dad is very proud of both Janet and her brother Jim.

Thank You,

Harry Gribnitz

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PS: Please continue to refer friends, relatives or coworkers that might need my help to refinance or purchase their home.