

Cover Story | Family Tradition

Hoops Connection Brings Gubbruds Together



Story And Photo By James D. Cimburek/P&D

Chris and Tara coached against each other twice. By the second time, they were dating. Now the Gubbruds patrol the same sideline for different squads at Bon Homme High School, as Chris coaches the boys and Tara the girls.

The two first met when Chris taught and coached at Ethan, and Tara was there as a student teacher. She also served as Chris' assistant coach that year. Upon graduating from college, Tara ended up at White Lake, where she matched up against Chris twice.

"We had coached together and stayed friends," said Chris. "We were dating by the second time we played."

After a brief tenure in Council Bluffs, Iowa, the two — now engaged — were looking to get back closer to family: Tara is from

Mitchell, Chris from Huron.

"We moved back, and it worked out that we got jobs in Bon Homme," Chris said.

Chris took over the boys' program, with Tara serving as an assistant on the girls' team. Two years later, she took over the girls' team.

Like many professionals, they try not to "bring their work home with them."

"Most of the time, we try to leave it at school," Tara said. "Once games start going, we'll give a little insight."

Chris said that, while that sounding board is there, advice typically comes only when solicited.

"There's usually not an over-abundance of advice given unless it's asked for," he said. "We don't really talk about it too much in depth, but it's nice to be married to someone who understands varsity sports."

While both said that their teams' style of play don't mirror each other, Chris admits that Tara has had an effect on his demeanor.

"I've mellowed out a lot more," he said. "Tara has often told me to just chill out a little bit."

Even though their teams have 11 doubleheaders on the schedule this season, their differing schedules often make it difficult to spend time together.

"There are days that go by that

we barely see each other," Chris said. "But that's what we signed up for."

The couple try to accommodate their players when setting things like open gym and camp schedules, but said they try to pick camps in and around Mitchell in order to spend time with Tara's family.

When the teams have different schedules, they will try to go to the others' home games. Tara will also try to taking in the games of her younger siblings. Her youngest sister, Macy Miller, is a freshman basketball player at South Dakota State.

"We try to get to each other's games at home," Tara said. "If they are away and I have a sibling playing, I'll go to it or watch it online."

While their schedules have each running — often in different directions — for several months of the year, they enjoy every minute of it.

"From the middle of October to the end of March, basketball kinda takes over our lives, but we enjoy it enough that it doesn't bother us," Chris said. "Like everyone else's lives have ups and downs, we have ups and downs. It's nice to have that someone that lives in the same world that you do."

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/JCimburek. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net

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Coaching Comes Naturally For Fitzsimmons Clan

For Dan and Cilla Fitzsimmons, coaching was not about wins and losses, but about instilling a love of sport in their athletes. Now their children have begun to share that love with another generation of young athletes.

Dan, who now serves as head cross country and assistant track coach for the University of South Dakota, coached gymnastics, cross country and track and Yankton for a number of years. Wife Cilla remains a teacher in the Yankton School District, and has served as a sub-varsity coach in various capacities over the years.

Now oldest son Sean serves as head boys' cross country coach at South Sioux City, Nebraska. Daughter Shannon is in her first year as head girls' soccer and gymnastics coach at Vermillion High School. Sean's wife, former Yankton and USD stand-

out Ramsey (Kavan) Fitzsimmons, is preparing to take over as head girls' track and field coach at Dakota Valley High School.

Cilla admits that she and Dan did not push their children to follow in their footsteps.

"We didn't encourage them to do this. We kinda pushed them away from it," she said. "But they were always around it."

For Shannon, the choice to follow in her parents' footsteps was quite simple.

"I'd told my parents since I was little that this is what I wanted to do," she said. "I always wanted to do something that would benefit others like my parents have for countless others."

"It's a lifelong opportunity to share you passion with others."

Sean knew he wanted to to coach as well, but he wasn't as sure about teaching.

"I knew I enjoyed coaching. I always helped dad coach my brother's (Connor) teams," he said. "The teaching part I've grown in to."

Ramsey, who was also an athlete of Dan's at YHS and at USD, was the opposite of her

husband. Growing up she was interested in teaching, but had no interest in coaching.

"If you'd have asked me when I was competing if I wanted to coach, I would have laughed in your face," she said. "I always loved kids, but I came to realize that when I was done competing, I wasn't done with running. I have continued to run, and I wanted to instill a love of running in my athletes, too."

Learning The Ropes

Dan traces his philosophy back to his father and a coach-turned-colleague, USD track and field coach Dave Gottsleben.

"My dad probably missed his calling as a coach," he said. "I also come back to coaching philosophy class with Gotts: Don't judge success by big banners, but judge it by how many love the activity you're coaching and give back to it."

"When I see my former athletes and my own children go into coaching, that's the greatest compliment I could have."



(front) Shannon, Dan, (back) Sean, Ramsey and Rory Fitzsimmons

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