



Gibraltar Area Schools

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May 30, 2023

To the Gibraltar Girls Basketball Community,

It has been a true honor and privilege of mine to serve the Gibraltar Girls Basketball Program over the past eleven seasons, the last four of which I was charged with leading the program. In that time I had the pleasure of working alongside some great coaches who are even greater people including Paula Anschutz, Don Helm, Kevin Bauldry, Josh Kropuenske, Josh Glocke, Mark Helscher, Kayla Schleicher, Emily Heidler, Evan DeBroux, and Maria Grasse. This does not include the countless volunteers, speakers, and alumni who have taken time out of their busy lives to give back to the program, most notably Clayton Buske who has spent the better part of the last decade doing in-game and season statistics with comprehensive analysis as well as some coaching to lend extra hands at practice. It takes a village, and in this case, it truly has.

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you that I will be stepping down as the Girls Varsity Basketball Head Coach and walking away from the program. Although I am doing this completely on my own terms this was not the timeline that I imagined regarding my resignation. Over the past few weeks, it became quite apparent to me that there was growing unrest for the way the Gibraltar Girls Basketball was being run. I can honestly say that my intentions have always been to do right by the girls, the program, the school, and the community. Based on some of the email correspondence from the community to the school that I have read over that time, somewhere we fell off.

To say that I was blindsided by the communication would be an understatement. I have always wanted every player, parent, or fan to feel like they could come to me with any concern that they had. The coaching staff regularly would meet with players to try and get feedback on how the program was doing and being run and looked into any concerns that they had, trying to find a solution for any problem. This obviously was not done with the effectiveness that it needed to be based on the concerns brought up by some community members.

Although over the past few weeks I have felt personally attacked, I still have genuine care for the athletes and their families that make this program special. Families protect their own and I know that many of the words thrown at me were done so in an effort to protect their own children. I would never knowingly do anything to hurt any athlete or child that I have been entrusted to work with. I have worked diligently to earn trust with the stakeholders of the program and the community and somewhere along the way, I have lost trust with a group of them.

I could contend with much of what has been written in the correspondence from our basketball community but I do not feel that this would be beneficial or move the Gibraltar Girls Basketball program forward. Leading the program is a difficult task and one that I valued and was proud of. I hope that whomever the school determines is best suited to take on this task realizes how special these athletes are. They are the ones that make this program incredibly special. Building relationships with them, who are some of the best people that Gibraltar High School and its surrounding community has to offer has truly been one of the best parts of my life over the last decade.

In the future, I hope that the stakeholders of the program feel empowered to go to the future coaching staff directly about any problems that they may witness or have. I can honestly say it was a lonely and crippling feeling to find out about these problems in the manner that I did. I would not wish that on anyone and I hope that this situation will help shed some light on some of the breakdowns in communication that happened. I only want to see what is best for the program and it has become apparent to me that my presence in the program is hurting more than helping at this moment.

With all of this being said, I will be formally resigning from my position within the Gibraltar Girls Basketball program. This will be made official at the Gibraltar Board of Education meeting on June 12th. I have informed all of the current players who attended the meeting in the afternoon on the date of this letter. I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for allowing me the opportunity to work for this program, school, and community. With that, I wish you my best.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Devin Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Devin Thomas
5th Grade Teacher
Varsity Girls Basketball Head Coach
President- Peninsula Youth Basketball Club