

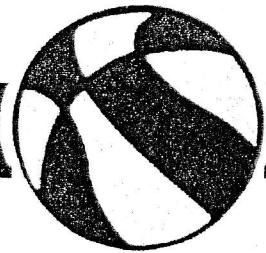


WARRIORS

**If you think you're beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you'd like to win, but think, you can't
It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you will lose, you're lost;
For out in the world we find,
Success begins with a fellow's will,
It's all in the state of mind.**

**If you think you're outclassed, you are;
You've got to think high to rise.
You've got to hustle before
You can ever win a prize.
Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster man,
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the one who thinks he can.**

WAUNAKEE



BASKETBALL

YOU WILL BE
KNOWN BY THE
TRACKS YOU
LEAVE BEHIND.



My name is Keith Ralph and I believe that I am in a unique position to speak with clarity on the situation with the Waunakee Boys Basketball Program and specifically the decision to dismiss the Head Coach.

I have 3 boys in the Waunakee Boys Basketball Program. Two in High School and one in Youth. I am a member of the Waunakee Hoops Club Board of Directors. I am also Co-Director of Waunakee Youth Basketball along with Mrs. Brooke Knowles who has three boys in the Youth Program. All of these are volunteer positions we serve as chosen by our peers to do so. Mrs. Knowles stands united with me today in our statement.

Anyone who knows either Brooke or me knows that we have a high conviction in our belief in doing what is right for the young athletes. We don't put in hundreds of hours per year to serve our own children. We have a passion to serve ALL of them. We both believe in standing up for what is right, especially in the face of adversity. Today it is our duty to stand up for our young athletes who aren't yet able to stand up for themselves.

Our time is valuable, and we would never waste that precious resource on a less than deserving cause. We volunteer our time because we believe strongly in the values that we promote as a program. We are responsible to ensure that our youth program fosters the development of fundamentals, discipline, and teamwork in a caring and safe environment. ALL our athletes are provided with the opportunity to learn and compete, and we promote the philosophies of community, character, and sportsmanship. While Brooke and I believe strongly this is the right way to do things, we are not responsible for creating this culture. This is the directive of Coach MacKenzie, Coach Selk, and the entire coaching staff. They are leaders who care about the wellbeing of the community and especially the athletes above the results in the win/loss column. They believe that the lessons learned on the court and in practice are an important foundation to a successful future not only as an athlete but as a human being. If they stood for anything less, neither Brooke nor I would be willing to stand here today.

With my personal insight as a member of the Waunakee Hoops Club Board of Directors, I could stand here today and tell you a sensationalized story about being relentlessly attacked by a disgruntled parent claiming to represent others who made it clear to us that his only goal was to have the coach removed. I could tell you about the lawyers, forensic accountant, reporters, and misinformation and outright lies on social media. Let me be completely clear in saying that if the disgruntled parent or parents were standing up for what was right, I would be among the first to stand with them. I could show you how in the face of this adversity our directors and coaching staff chose time and again to adhere to our values and do what is right. However, I will not perpetuate that mudslinging with my own children and many of our young athletes here in attendance. Instead, I choose to talk about the positive culture that surrounds these young men.

For Brooke and me, each of us being parents to 3 three boys, it has always been important to us that our boys were part of something greater than themselves. We've always believed that the lessons learned through activities like sports have immense value that reaches well beyond athletics. Being a great teammate, trying and failing, working hard to achieve a goal, overcoming adversity, and rising to meet a challenge are all crucial skills needed to navigate the world. This is our culture as a program. This is what makes our program special. I can tell you from experience that this doesn't exist in most programs, and it certainly doesn't happen overnight. This is the culture that Coach MacKenzie and his staff have built and remain passionate about. This cannot simply be replaced or replicated. It is built through years of hard work, commitment, and passion. This is the reason Brooke and I do what we do.

We could go on and on about the successes of Coach MacKenzie on the court over the past twenty years. The 12 Conference titles. The 3 State appearances. However, when I look at what makes me most proud to be a part of the Waunakee Boys Basketball Program it is clearly and undoubtedly the people. The current players who always represent our community with grace and dignity in wins and in losses. The multitude of current and former players who spend time with our youth players through coaching at summer camps, officiating games, and volunteering to make our community a better place for everyone. The high school coaching staff of Coach Selk, Knutson, and Knatz who couldn't be better role models for our athletes and other coaches. Our youth coaches put in so much time to execute our vision and promote our values. Our booster club serves our program through countless hours of work while maintaining integrity. Our many parents and family volunteers who are crucial to providing the best experience possible for our student athletes. So many high-quality individuals contribute positivity to our program, and we are so honored and proud to be among them. This is all a direct result of Coach MacKenzie's vision and unwavering leadership. This is our culture.

To the School Board and District Staff I would like to say much like I do to my youth players. It's ok to make a mistake. It's how we respond to that mistake that makes us who we are.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Keith Ralph and Brooke Knowles

Administrator, District_ <district_administrator@waunakee.k12.wi.us>

Dana MacKenzie

1 message

Katie Misfeldt <katielforeman@gmail.com>
To: district_administrator@waunakee.k12.wi.us

Wed, May 17, 2023 at 10:16 AM

From: Katie Misfeldt <katielforeman@gmail.com>

Date: May 17, 2023 at 10:03:45 AM CDT
To: joanensign@waunakee.k12.wi.us
Subject: Dana MacKenzie

I wanted to reach out regarding the recent decision to not renew Dana Mackenzie's contract as head varsity basketball coach. My son has been coached by Dana for years in the youth program and we have a tremendous amount of respect for him as both a person and a coach.

While I am definitely concerned about the future of the high school basketball program, I am currently concerned with the impact that this will have on the youth program as that is what my kids are currently involved in. I am not sure that proper consideration was given to the fact that the high school coaches are not only responsible for building and maintaining a successful high school program, but are also responsible for building and maintaining a successful youth program. These coaches do not only give their time and energy to the high school program, but also spend countless hours on developing the youth program. The reason that the high school program is so successful is due to the influence and involvement that the high school coaches have on the youth program. These are closely tied together.

The decision that the board has made has put the future of the youth program in jeopardy. These coaches invent countless hours of their time with the youth players in our community by running camp and skills sessions. They involve the high school players in their efforts which teaches them to be role models for the youth players. It is teaching the high school players to give back. These coaches are familiar with almost all of the youth players due to their continuous involvement in the youth program. They recognize that development at the youth level is imperative for success at the high school level. Can you promise that this is going to continue with a new coaching staff?

All of the people who are involved in the success of the basketball program (both high school and youth) are loyal to Dana and Tyler and the other coaches. The decision to not renew Dana's contract will not only cause a need for a new coaching staff, but will likely cause the entire program to need to be rebuilt. The people that give their time and volunteer do it not only because their kids participate in the program, but because they believe in the program that Dana and his coaching staff have built and because they want to support this group of coaches and thank them for all of the time that they have given. This loyalty has been earned and will not exist if you decide to bring in a new coaching staff.

I am not sure that the downstream impact of this decision has been fully considered. Waunakee is clearly a community that takes pride in their sports teams and their success. This decision promises to be detrimental to the future of this program at both the high school and youth levels.

It seems that all of the unfounded speculation that has been going on has influenced the decision of the board. Please reconsider your position and renew Dana Mackenzie's contract. This is imperative for the continued future success of the basketball program. We want our kids to continue to learn from and benefit from amazing coaching of Coach Mackenzie and his staff. We are shocked by the board's decision and truly hope that the board will take into consideration what the community wants and that is for our community to have a well-respected basketball program. We already have a great program. What "new direction" are you looking to take the program?

Thank you for your consideration.

Katie and Jason Misfeldt



Administrator, District_ <district_administrator@waunakee.k12.wi.us>

School Board Meeting - May 22 Re: Dana MacKenzie

1 message

Olson, Brooke <25olsonbr@waunakeecsd.org>

Sat, May 20, 2023 at 10:59 PM

To: District_Administrator <district_administrator@waunakee.k12.wi.us>, Joan Ensign <joanensign@waunakee.k12.wi.us>, Joan Ensign <jensign@waunakee.k12.wi.us>

Hi Joan and School Admins -

Upon learning of your recent decision regarding the non-renewal of Dana MacKenzie's varsity basketball coaching job, I reached out to Dana via text to share the message below. Please review this in support of reinstating Dana.

hi dana this is brooke and i just wanted to first of all say how horribly sad i am to not get to mange for you. i know you know how much i have looked forward to this coming season since fourth grade when i first found out that managing was a thing. i can not express enough how heartbroken i am to have that experience taken away from me. you are an incredible person and coach i do not understand why anyone would want to make you go through this. i love doing things for you and helping you out weather it's helping cutting down your tree or helping you work concessions at basketball tournaments. i can't even imagine this next season without u and i just want you to know that it's gonna be rly hard for me to want to do things as a manager knowing it's not for you. thank you for always being an amazing person and someone who can put a smile on my face. i can not believe this is even happening, it's doesn't feel real because my heart knows it shouldn't be. i know how much work you have put into basketball and how much love u have for the sport and i can't explain in words how sorry i am that something so horrible happened. just know that this does not define you and your real true supporters still see you as that amazing coach and person you are.

Thank You,
Brooke Olson
10th Grade - Waunakee Student
[1002 Millies Way](#)
Wauankee WI 53597

To: Waunakee Board of Education

Randy Guttenberg

Aaron May

Re: Follow up to BOE public comments heard on May 22, 2023

Dear Waunakee school representatives,

I am the mother of former Waunakee athlete Jacob Soper, who made it to State competition in all three high school sports of football (2009 & 2010), basketball (2011) and baseball (2010). He was a member of a very talented class. However, except for baseball, Jacob did not start on varsity until he was a senior. As I mentioned in my previous letter to the board on May 20th, Jacob came up through Dana's program from 4th through 12th grade.

I attended the public comments section of the BOE special meeting on Monday May 22, 2023, where I learned some information, I did not know before, such as:

- 1) The decision to not renew Dana's contract was made without input from current players or parents, especially upcoming varsity players who will be dramatically impacted. These players stated they would like Dana to stay as their head coach.
- 2) A parent attended a Hoops club meeting and tried to gather support for getting rid of Dana Mackenzie as head coach. This was stated by the Hoops Club director who was at the meeting. The director stated he was an extremely honest person and there was nothing amiss regarding the Hoops Club or the way it spends its funds. Another parent sat with him to back up his statements.
- 3) A 2022 graduate player said that a parent contacted him and his parents, soliciting negative comments about Dana Mackenzie. Additional basketball parents were contacted by this same parent, as stated by them on social media, in a campaign to get rid of Dana.
- 4) Players who spoke said that many of those who are critical did not receive as much playing time as they hoped. They may say their criticism is due to something else, but it is always playing time.
- 5) Dana Mackenzie had a profound impact on the development of young athletes not only as basketball players, but also as good young men. I can attest to this with my own son.
- 6) The support to keep Dana Mackenzie as head coach is overwhelming, as evidenced by the number and variety of people who attended the BOE public comment portion of the meeting. Most of whom were Waunakee residents.

I am not close to Dana but have developed an interest because former board members Mike Brandt and David Boetcher are frequent posters about this issue on social media. Mark Whalen has admitted, on social media, to being the representative of a small group of parents that do not want Dana to remain as head coach. Mike Brandt has admitted to representing these parents. Putting 2 + 2 together we can assume that Mark Whalen hired Mike Brandt to file the lawsuit against the district for not providing requested records. Records they want to use in their campaign to fire Dana. Mark Whalen was outed on social media as the parent requesting negative comments about Dana. I would not trust a word any of them said as I have witnessed the defamation and misinformation being spread by them on social media. I have fact checked some of their statements and found them to be false.

Unless Dana has done something illegal that we don't know about, this screams of bias to me. To decide a coaches future by listening to a select few, presenting one side of an issue, and not everyone who will be impacted by this, is biased. As someone without any skin in the game, this seems extremely unfair to a coach of this caliber. Please reconsider this awful decision and reinstate Dana Mackenzie as head coach of Waunakee boys basketball.

Best,

Jane Soper

Waunakee, WI

May 16, 2023

Re: Coach Dana MacKenzie

To the Waunakee School Board:

I have known Dana MacKenzie for over five years and I want to share my experience interacting with him and his coaching staff.

My senior daughter, Paige Westphal, was one of the JV and then Varsity team managers. From her first interactions with the coaching staff her sophomore year, she experienced nothing but respectful, and positive treatment. The culture of respect that was taught by the coaching staff, starting with Jeff Knatz at the JV level and continued through the Varsity level with Dana MacKenzie, was one that Paige experienced first-hand, and talked about frequently. That respect was not only exhibited by the coaching staff, but was instilled in every player on the team.

This Waunakee basketball program is one that not only has a winning culture, but one that teaches hard work and respect on and off the court. I'm proud to say my daughter was associated with the program, and of the interactions she had with coach MacKenzie and all the coaches over the last three years.

I believe it's an incredibly dangerous precedent being set by the Waunakee School Board, where the malicious accusations and personal agendas of a few select parents can outweigh the good of not only the program, but of the families of the players and managers who will be negatively impacted by the loss of coach Mackenzie. A mistake has been made with the board's decision to not renew coach Mackenzie's contract, and after all the testimonies have been heard on his behalf, I hope a reversal of this decision is made.

Sincerely,

Corey Westphal
4857 Autumn Leaf Court
Waunakee, WI 53597