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# THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

I have been involved in high schools sports coverage for more than 25 years and one of the most passionate and dedicated coaches that I have been fortunate to meet is Niki Bray.

I have met some coaches that were in it for themselves or for the stipend, but with Niki you knew she coached because she had genuine love for her student-athletes.

Niki took over a below average girls basketball program at Memphis Central, and with her drive and determination, turned it into the model program in Memphis and the state of Tennessee. Her teams won districts, regionals, sub-states and even a state title. Some of her teams were nationally ranked.

Yet, what stands out in my time of knowing Niki was not that she was an outstanding basketball coach that produced championship-winning teams, but was the time and energy she put into the girls that were on her roster.

Niki would call me on the phone and tell me about how a particular player was being recruited by one of the top college programs in the country. She could talk about her players for hours. She was so excited to see the opportunities that her players were being offered through their hard work on and off the court.

Niki knew that most of her players did not come from stable home environments, and she took on the role of being a mom to many of them. Niki was so much more than a coach to her players – and that love could be seen by everyone that came into contact with the Central Warriors basketball program.

The Niki I know pours this same passion and determination into whatever challenges she attempts to tackle.

Sincerely,

David Boyd

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