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[Q&A: AAE Girls Basketball Coach Ashley Simpson](#)

December 17th, 2012, 11:47 pm · [Post a Comment](#) · posted by [Kyle Glaser](#)



Coach Ashley Simpson, when not coaching is the Pre-Algebra & Trigonometry Teacher at the Academy for Academic Excellence (caption added by Lewis Center)

The Simpson name holds some clout in the High Desert basketball world.

Lester Simpson compiled more than 200 wins as the boys basketball coach at Hesperia Christian and led the Patriots to 15 straight league titles at one point.

Now, Ashley Simpson is carrying on her father's coaching legacy.

In her second year as the girls varsity basketball coach at Academy for Academic Excellence, the younger Simpson has compiled a 17-12 record and recently saw her Knights end Riverside Prep's 46-game regular season winning streak.

She is a Hesperia Christian graduate, went to Biola University for college and now teaches trigonometry and pre-algebra at AAE. She coached the junior high team for two years before taking over the varsity team prior to last season.

She recently spoke with Daily Press staff writer Kyle Glaser about her basketball background, going into the family business and her philosophy as a coach.

Kyle Glaser: What is your basketball background?

Ashley Simpson: I actually only played basketball in junior high. I was a cheerleader my freshman year (at Hesperia Christian) but my sophomore year when I was going to go back to playing basketball, my dad actually coached that year at Victor Valley High. So we decided as a family not to split the family in two different directions, so he coached and I actually took stats for that team, and that's really when I kind of fell in love with the game myself. I think up until that point it was kind of "How could Lester Simpson's daughter not be into basketball?" and I kind of grew to love the strategy of the game. That's kind of how my love for basketball evolved.

KG: So when you played basketball you weren't actually that into it?

AS: Yeah, my dad had been a very successful basketball coach and I think it was kind of one of those natural "one of your kids needs to play basketball" type things. I think I kind of took on that role in my head and I realized I was doing it for him. But when I became his stat girl, I actually started watching it and learning the strategies and I would ask questions, and that's how I kind of fell in love with it myself.

KG: What are the things you learned the most about the game from your dad?

AS: The importance of fundamentals. That's something I kind of grew up with. He would do these basketball camps and that was my summer, being a kid at the basketball camps and just learning these are the fundamentals and you can rely on the fundamentals and they will always see you through. I think a lot of times girls basketball isn't fundamentally sound and that's something that I strive for with my girls team — to make sure they know how to do things, they know how to play basketball smart, they know how to shoot correctly and they can get away from maybe the stereotype that girls have been given, just having jump balls and traveling calls. Just to have my girls play smart and how to read a defense, read an offense.

KG: HCS and AAE are expected to be the top two teams in the Agape League this year. Is it strange for you at all trying to beat the school you and your family were a part of for so long?

AS: I love (HCS coach) Sally Orlando. She was actually one of my teachers, and I have the

utmost respect for her. I think she is an awesome coach. We were actually talking the other day about how I was a little sad that I never got to be on her team and under her and learn from her. But she's just very encouraging every time we talk. I think it's fun having them as competition and if we end up being the winning team that's great, but I know that whenever we play those girls, those meetings with HCS will be great learning experiences for our girls. I'm excited to see the outcome.

KG: What are your goals as a coach?

AS: I think my goals are just helping the girls see that basketball isn't just about the sport, it's about how basketball can help you grow into a young lady and a woman. Just learning teamwork and sportsmanship. I think a lot of teams sometimes have that mentality of just "Oh we want to win" and girls go out on the court (with the attitude of) I want my points and my stats. Everything is a growing experience and you're not going to win every time. As long as you are the team that learns from those wins and losses (that's enough). I want them to remember that they aren't going to remember every number or every stat they put up. They'll remember those times of working together on the court and having fun on the court. I try to have a more lasting effect on them. The game definitely brings you together, but it's about more than just that.

KG: Do have any aspirations to coach at higher levels?

AS: No. I kind of fell into the coaching. My dad and I joke all the time that I went into the family business. It kind of just fell in my lap and I love it. I love teaching junior high and high school. If I wanted to teach in college maybe that would follow suit, but I love where I'm at. I think I just want to become a best a varsity coach as I can.

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