

Dear Friends:

I hope this letter greets you well. I want to introduce myself for those of you who do not know me. I am a graduate of Delta State University, and I am a former coach in the MPSA (now MSAIS). My coaching career began at Strider Academy under the direction of Coach Joe B. Bradshaw. He mentored me for one year as I coached the high school girls and junior high boys. I also coached for 3 years at Indianola Academy alongside Ed Waldrup. During my time at Indianola Academy, I was privileged to coach the high school and junior high boys' teams.

In July 2009, my wife and I got married, and we moved to Kabul, Afghanistan to work at the International School of Kabul. Working in Afghanistan has many challenging rewards. Nothing works exactly like you are used to, but in the end you just have to make peace with how things work and move forward. This is our third year in Kabul, and we are attempting to make great strides to move forward.

In the spring of our first year at ISK, I started a girls' basketball club. To my surprise, 11 girls showed up on the first day to learn how to play basketball. For the remainder of the year, we practiced, drilled, and played each week for only 1 hour. At the end of the year, we had a 3-on-3 tournament with all of the girls in the high school. By this time, the club had grown to 18 players. The tournament was a great success and a foundational building block for a basketball program.

At the beginning of the next school year, I began the club in the fall, and 26 girls showed up for the first practice. This is the moment that I knew that there was a future for girls' basketball in this country. I began to seek out other teams in Kabul. As I began to call around, I was informed that no other high school in the entire country was playing girls' basketball. I finally found a team at the university level in Kabul. American University had 12 girls who came to their gym to shoot basketball. They did not have a coach, nor was anything organized. I contacted one of their players to see if they were interested in starting a team. As soon as she said, "Yes," I became the coach of the only two girls' basketball teams in the country. I coached the university on Monday afternoon, and I coached ISK on Tuesday afternoon.

Just before the winter holiday break we had a match between the two teams at the university. About 100 people from both schools showed up to see the match. The highlight of the entire day was the last shot. One of the university girls made a shot from the 3 point line. Immediately the entire team ran to her and gave her a hug. There were about 2 minutes left to go into the game, but we decided to end there. The high school team defeated the university 32-5, but the only thing that many people remember from that day was the shot that ended the game. At that moment, you could not tell who won and who lost, but one thing was for certain. My Afghanistan coaching record was 1-1, and girls' basketball was here to stay.

As I continued to seek out other teams, and finally I contacted the Afghanistan Olympic Committee. Indeed there was a National Women's Team. I was introduced to the trainer for the team at the beginning of his practice, and immediately he handed me his whistle. It was not my intention, but all of a sudden, I was coaching the National Team for an entire country during a practice. That single experience is one that I will take with me forever. I continued my relationship with the NOC, and our high school team was invited to play in the National Women's Day Basketball Tournament. The ISK team was the only team that did not have any Olympic players. We finished 3rd in the tournament. 3rd in the nation is not too bad for a second year program that only practices one hour a week. We were also invited back to play against National Team at a later date. We accepted, and were featured on national television in Afghanistan. Once again, girls' basketball was here to stay.

We are now in the middle of our third season, and we are attempting to expand the program over the next couple of years. Funds are limited in Afghanistan, and if we are going to be able to expand our basketball program, we are going to need some help. That is the reason that I am writing to you now. The rest of the information in this packet will give you an idea of where we would like for our program to go and details of how you can help us accomplish these goals. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,
Caleb Earnest

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