

SPORTS FEATURE
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Reporter

Sweat drips from the faces of players as they run drills. Sneakers scrape against the concrete as they practice double dribbles. Tired, they pause to catch a much need breath. As they feel like giving up, they remember their coach's words of motivation. With her words ringing in their ears, they do it all over again.

"Down the line, some of them might not want to play basketball, so making them a better person all over is a great coach," Elizabeth Hutchins, coach for Rivera Beach Juniors Basketball team, said.

Hutchins, or Coach Liz as the players call her, has been a basketball coach for 14 years. Her love for basketball first sprouted when she was young and was motivated by her brother.

"Growing up, I always saw my older brother playing basketball, and that was something I always wanted to do, to be able to play and show skills," Hutchins said.

Along with her older brother, her dad and younger brother also enjoyed basketball. Because of Hutchins's strong roots in Riveria Beach, she pushes her players to be active in their community as often as every one or two months.

"With my travel team, we feed the homeless, we go out and pass out hotdogs, warm plates of food, toothbrushes, and toothpaste," Hutchins said.

Hutchins wants to be a supportive figure in her player's life. According to Better Team, the responsibilities of a basketball coach include creating strategies for the team, instructing the

players, and providing mentorship. When she sees a child with capability, she tries her best to be a guardian for them outside of the court.

“I think it would be much easier for them to not get in trouble if they have someone in their ear helping them,” Hutchins said. “I always wanted to become a coach to put myself in that position to make sure each child is giving their full potential.”

To make a good player, Hutchins believes they have to be willing to set goals for themselves and their future.

“Every year with each player, I notice where they’re at and come up with a goal of where they want to be by the end of the month, season, or half-season,” Hutchins said.

Nadia Franklin, a 7-8 division team mom, applauds Hutchins’s methods and strategies of teaching motor skills to players. As a mom, she appreciates the effort put in by Hutchins and her one on one analysis of each player.

“She’s dealing with younger kids that need something to relate to so all the cones and things she uses within the drills are very important and crucial to the development of their skills,” Franklin said.

Nadia Franklin’s son, Jalen Franklin, is a guard on Hutchins’s team. The team is filled with kids who are new players, making Hutchins their first-ever coach.

“Even when we don’t win she always congratulates us and says that she’s proud of us. It makes me feel better,” Jalen Franklin said.

Through hard work, motivation, discipline, and humbleness, Hutchins believes she can foster a new generation of basketball players with principles unseen before.

“You can’t yell, scream, or anything else because each child is different and you have to let them know that basketball is also a mind game,” Hutchins said, “when you’re doing something, you want to push forward and work hard on it when doing it.”