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## PREP BASKETBALL

# Classy Morse is at home with Cascade Christian

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Mail Tribune  
March 08, 2009

SALEM — Not only has Brian Morse developed a powerhouse boys basketball program at Cascade Christian High, he has done it with class.

Morse's Challengers captured their second state title in three years, defeating Horizon Christian 48-37 in the Class 3A boys championship at Cone Field House Saturday.

In 2007, Cascade defeated St. Mary's for the 2A crown — the first basketball championship for the Medford school.

The 42-year-old coach has amassed a 372-158 record and seven state tournament appearances in 21 years as the Challengers coach. Morse, an alum of Cascade Christian, took over the program in 1988 after graduating from Seattle Pacific University. He married his high school sweetheart Jennifer — sister of St. Mary's boys basketball coach Rick Jackson — two weeks after they both graduated from Seattle Pacific.

The Morses each assumed coaching duties at their prep alma mater with Jennifer coaching volleyball for six years. The couple has seven children, four boys and three girls. Their oldest, Scott, is the senior captain on this year's squad.

"I got the job by a default hiring type thing," Morse says. "They had about 50 kids in the school when I got there. I loved sports and wanted to coach."

Morse played basketball four years in high school, and the team won the league title each of those years. He was a first-team all-league guard his junior and senior seasons. The school was called Grace Christian until his senior year, when the name was changed to Cascade Christian.

"The students got to choose the name," Morse says. "I remember voting on it."

When he returned as coach, Morse's first team only had eight players and went winless.

"We lost the last game of the year on a buzzer-beater by one point to Prospect," Morse says.

By 1992, Morse had developed a team that reached the conference playoffs. The Challengers needed to beat Butte Falls for their first trip to the state tournament.

I covered that game at Umpqua Community College. The Challengers played very effectively in the first half and appeared well in control.

But Butte Falls coach Keith Williams made some crafty adjustments at halftime. The Loggers rallied to win the game and eventually won the Class B state championship. When I filed my story, my lead was how Williams had essentially out-coached Morse.

I was concerned that Morse might take offense to my reporting. But when I brought it up to him later, he readily admitted that, "I got out-coached."

"We played no defense," Morse says bluntly about his early teams. "We played all zone. That's what I played in high school. That's all I knew. At first I thought I knew everything, then later I realized I didn't know anything." Morse hasn't been out-coached many times since. He made himself better by attending clinics, watching instructional videos and asking questions. Morse has never allowed his ego to get in the way.

"I started tapping into all the older local coaches, especially South Medford's Dennis Murphy, on what they would do in certain situations," Morse says. "Murphy gave me a lot of insight. It helped too being Rick Jackson's brother-in-law. I tried to learn a little each year."

Morse has accumulated a lot of knowledge. His biggest change in philosophy came on the defensive end. "I started looking at all the teams that won state championships," Morse says. "All that won it played with pressure man-to-man defense."

Pressure man defense is the strength of this year's state championship team.

Morse also realized that in order to sustain a winning program, he needed to develop players by teaching fundamentals at the younger levels.

In 2001, he began the Junior Challengers AAU teams. He now has 48 kids playing on teams from fifth to eighth grades with a budget of \$15,000. Among the players on that initial team were Josh Heidegger and Andrew and Daniel Shipley, who turned into the nucleus of the 2007 state champion team.

"I saw I was losing Grace Christian kids to all the bigger high schools," Morse says. "Since we started in 2001, we're getting almost 100 percent of the Grace kids coming to us. They know our system and know what is expected."

Morse has also formed a loyalty among former players and has a community devoted to Cascade Christian basketball. Two former players, Josh Galvin and Jon Gettman, are key assistants.

Morse organizes practices and strategies but gives his coaches a lot of responsibility. During timeouts in games, it's common to see Galvin and Gettman getting the message to the players as Morse stands back.

"I used to be a control freak," Morse says. "I did everything myself, and my assistants just stood around. Now I'll give my coaches some basic instructions, and they communicate directly to the kids, and the kids respond to them."

Galvin, who played for Morse from 1994-97, is a compelling story. Galvin was 12 when his dad passed away, and Morse became a major figure in his life.

"Brian was like a father to me," says Galvin, 30. "When Scott was a baby, I changed his diapers. Brian is a mentor of mine. I wanted to stay involved in the program."

At first, Galvin assisted on and off. But three years ago, he became a full-time assistant.

"Brian is consistent and confident," Galvin says. "He instills high values and trust with his coaches and players.

"Myself and Jon Gettman have been involved so long, we know what Brian expects," adds Galvin. "Almost 100 percent of the time we're on the same page."

Morse, who is general manager of Rogue Valley Swim and Tennis Club and vice president of marketing and sales for Sterling Business Forms, has his priorities in order.

Not only is he in charge of a successful basketball program, but he does it with ethics and morality. He's not just about wins and losses.

"We like to think more than just basketball," Morse says. "You try to mold the kids into good citizens. You see the rewards later in life as they grow up and become good husbands and fathers."

We in this profession try to stay emotionally detached, but it only seems right that success should come to a class act like Morse.