



(Left to right) Coach Tiffany Mills with her sister, Latoya Mills

Students preparing for the future with Coach Tiffany Mills

When you first meet her, Coach Mills seems like she's all business. She has a lot to do and a short amount of time in which to do it. She has students to teach, practices to organize, uniforms to order, and teams to coach. It is a lot, but she loves it and all the challenges that accompany the title of "Coach". And, she's doing it all at a new school, a new campus, with new students, and a growing sports program. She is establishing a foundation for Aristoi Cypress students for today and for the future. That's her mantra - the future.

It is important to Coach that her students understand that "now" is important as it establishes and creates the "future". She

tells her students, "Whatever you put your mind to, be the best version of you. Education is first. Always. Sports will always come second. An education is one of the most important things you can have. If you don't have an education, what can you do as you get older?"

Coach herself was a four-year Varsity Basketball Letterman at Clear Creek High School. She was later awarded a full-ride basketball scholarship to Southern University in Louisiana, played two years, then returned to Texas. She finished her degree in Kinesiology at Texas State University in 2013. Her first teaching job was as a PE teacher at Burnet Elementary in Galveston. She also coached basketball, cross country, and track at Scott Middle School. She has been "Coach" ever since.

“Classical education has affected me in a good way. Hearing Mrs. Davidson in some of her speeches and our own one-on-one conversations, makes me want to learn more. At the conferences and hearing the different teachers’ presentations during Communitas intrigues me more and more every time I come to work,” she says, “I try to instill all these values and virtues that these teachers strive to teach. This month it’s Magnanimity. We talked about that today. With everything that we’re doing in PE, I want to instill all of those virtues.”

Coach was part of the foundational team at the Aristoi Cypress campus when it opened its doors in 2020. She started PE classes with more than 80 students then and now has 226 Griffins.

“It was just me coaching. Please give a shout-out to teachers Bradley Small and Matthew Piper. One helped me with basketball, the other with soccer. They knew a lot was on my plate with starting these programs. I’m thankful for them because they asked to come help. They asked if they could help and I took it. I’m very thankful for those two.”

“I get to teach every student,” Coach beams, “I know every kid; last and first name. Mr. Malone (Head of Aristoi Cypress Middle School) says I have a mind like an elephant. I remember everything.”

Coach knows that what she does is important, as is the impact she has on her littlest scholars. She says, “I take the initiative of learning about every student. I want to know every student. It’s important. I want everybody to be heard.”

And, she believes in the big picture for her students. She says, “They expect more from the kids here at Aristoi, but that’s a great thing. It will put them on a bigger pedestal when they get into college. So, the rigorous learning and education is a great thing. I want these kids to be their better version of themselves.”

“I have just had a blast. The kids are awesome,” she grins, “Growing the program this year at the Cypress campus has been a blessing. I can’t wait until we grow and have more sports and see what that becomes in the future. I’m very thankful and blessed to be a part of that and be part of the foundation of it. I’m very thankful.”

In their inaugural year for athletics, Aristoi Cypress enjoyed success and created lasting memories. Recalls Coach, “One of my favorite Aristoi memories is with the boys cross country team. We were at the last meet at Covenant Christian. One of our students won 4th and another won 7th place. Those were the best times we had ever had. One of the Covenant Christian coaches told us to stick around. None of the kids left. We brought all of our kids together, then told them that they won first place in the division!

They sprayed me down with water like we had won the World Series! That was fun. You could see the energy; those kids just being so happy.”

“That’s what it’s all about. Being a coach. It is a hard task, and I know I can be tough. But, I always look back, and people say, ‘Coach, you helped me’. I haven’t taught you anything if you don’t know how to be tough. If it was easy, everyone would do it.”

The Aristoi Cypress Griffins also brought home trophies and awards with the girls’ basketball team. The team made it to the playoffs and were runners-up in the tournament.

Coach reflects, “That’s the foundation. Our first year. Getting plaques, getting trophies. It’s a great thing. There are many more to come. There are a lot of bright, young student-athletes at the Aristoi Cypress campus.”

This summer, Coach is stepping away from leading her AAU basketball teams. She’s coached AAU for the past eight seasons, but it’s time for a break. Instead, she and her family are traveling to the Turks and Caicos Islands for sun, sand, water, and maybe even some fishing.

“People don’t know this about me, but I love to fish,” she admits, “My best friend and I go out past Lake Jackson. We get up at 4:00 in the morning and just head out there. Fishing is calm and peaceful. You have good talks with your friends. It’s a sense of peace.”

Coach looks forward to next year with enthusiasm and anticipation. “We have a lot to do. We started planning this spring. We have more students to work with and more programs to launch. It’s such an exciting time to be at Aristoi, especially Aristoi Cypress! It’s going to be a great year!”