

Christopher A. Barker

1960-2020

Coach, Physical Education Teacher

It is with the great sadness that we share the heartbreaking news of the passing of our colleague and friend, Mr. Christopher Barker. We have been informed that Coach Barker, as he was affectionately known to us, passed away on Thursday, April 23rd. Coach Barker remained courageous in his fight against his medical condition to the end. On behalf of all of us here at the German International School Washington D.C., our most heartfelt condolences and sympathy have been expressed to his family.

Coach Barker will be deeply missed, leaving behind so many fond memories we have of him. These memories include seeing him surrounded by a group of students who loved to share their recess time with their highly respected and beloved Coach Barker. He had the rare talent as a coach to be able to coach soccer on a very professional level as well as basketball, tennis and track and field just to mention some of his broad talents as a sportsman. He was an admirably friendly and a modest colleague and friend, always with a smile on his face. He has had great impact on many students and families during the many years of his tenure. As his colleague in the sports department, Ms. Lair Ferrari, shares:

“Coach Barker was admired and loved by all his students. The bond students established with him went beyond his teaching, it extended to their younger siblings that had not even met Coach yet, but already knew about him, wanted to be taught by him, and

most importantly looked up to him. Coach Barker was a very modest humbled person and more than a teacher to many of the students at the GISW and more than a co-worker to me, he was a mentor, a role model, a good listener, a confidante, someone who always had the right words to share and someone who knew everyone’s ‘pick me up.’

Coach could almost always be found at his desk on the computer scheduling games with other schools, ordering spirit wear for the teams, coordinating buses for away games, and so on. However, as soon as a student walked into his office, he stopped whatever he was doing to pay full attention to the student’s needs. Oftentimes, his office became a gathering place. Students loved to come to the PE office during their recess times or free periods. Some would come for the entertaining stories and conversation, others came seeking personal advice, and of course we all enjoyed the delicious snacks that coach used to offer. One of his favorite topics was to talk about movies. Coach was a movie enthusiast who knew almost every movie out there. In addition to teaching and coaching at the school, Coach founded the traditional annual February ski-and-snowboard-trip as a way for students to continue to grow and build a community beyond the four walls of their school. There was no task that coach couldn’t do. He did not only teach sports classes, he coached every sports team the school had. He was the Athletic Director, but he would pick up any extra shifts that needed to be filled. If the school was down a bus driver, he would even come to school extra early and drive one of the school buses. Also when there was no bus driver available to drive our GISW team to games

at other schools, he would drive the bus himself and coach the teams at the game. His calm, open, uplifting personality made him very approachable not only to all the students but also to the faculty. He always had a smile on his face and knew a good joke about the German speakers. He had a talent for making learning fun for everyone, even those that did not think they liked a specific sport. He always found a way to motivate them and got them interested. Many times, Coach Barker would participate in the practices he was leading for the teams. When they were missing a player for a scrimmage, he would jump in without hesitation. This did not only motivate the players but also made others want to join in on the fun. He has inspired many of our athletes to try their sport for the first time under his coaching. He encouraged students to try a new sport that they never had done before.

Most importantly, he instilled to never give up, work hard, have fun, and dream big. He has left his mark over the many years at the GISW and his legacy will forever be part of our school, of our students, and of me. Coach Barker loved to quote Winston Churchill: 'Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It's the courage to continue that counts,' a quote that we as a school community should try to embrace during this time."

Coach Barker's family has informed us that a private interment ceremony will be held in the coming days. A memorial service will be held at a future date. Online condolences may be offered to the family at

<https://www.moneyandking.com/obituaries/Christopher-A-Barker?obId=12779283>.

Coach Barker will remain an inspiration to us all and our thoughts continue to be with his loved ones. In honor of his 15 years of contribution to GISW, the Board and the Head of School are coordinating a memorial in his name to be placed near the sports fields.



A public Celebration of Life ceremony at GISW is being planned for a later date when the school reopens to commemorate the life and contributions of Coach Barker. Students, families, faculty and staff are cordially invited to join us for this ceremony. Event details will follow once school reopens.

Petra Palenzatis, Head of School

Anna E. Ordóñez, M.D., Chair of the Board