BANQUET SPEECH

FOR

LISA MANKINS

Hello everyone!!! I would like to welcome all of you to this year’s Greensburg Salem **(? Is this correct?**) Girl’s basketball banquet!!! To the family members of our great team and to the supporters, encouragers, and motivators that keep us going through thick and thin, we are so happy that you are with us to share this moment of celebration and completion. (**If there are any people in particular that coordinated or planned the event, you can thank them here)**. For those of you that have a child or friend or sister on this team, you know how much her participation in this sport means to her. Just in case you didn’t know, **your** encouragement of her “going for it” on this team has an incredible impact and also means the world to her, so thanks for the cheers and shoulders and all around great encouragement! Each one of you is an integral part of this team so thank you!!

I’d like to extend special thanks to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for all of the planning, attention and hard work that went into preparing this wonderful dinner. Our team, the Golden Lions **(? Is this correct? I did some research. If not, please change**) have given their hearts to the season and to the game and celebration of this level is definitely in order!!! This place looks great and I can’t imagine any place I would rather be right now than right here….

The great tennis player, Billie Jean King, once said, “A champion is afraid of losing. Everyone else is afraid of winning.” It looks like, in that case, and I don’t need to tell you this, **YOU’RE ALL CHAMPIONS!!!** (**Wait for the applause**.) Let’s see a show of hands…. Who’s afraid to lose?? Guess what??? Losing is a **GIFT!**!! …. Let’s just hope that it’s not the kind of gift that keeps on giving!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). No… really…. We learn so much more from losses than we do from wins. From loss we learn how **NOT** to do something. We learn the importance of practice, teamwork and experience. We learn that even though we may “**THINK”** we’re winners on the inside, **real** winning takes time, patience, preparation and tenacity…. meaning there is no giving up…. no stopping… Winning involves focus, planning, resilience, teamwork, and appreciation.

We’ve had an intense season… ups, downs… wins… losses… emotional outbreaks… and that was just in the coaching sessions!! (**Wait for the laugh**). On the court we learned that the old saying… “Teamwork makes the dream work” is really true… It’s so important to be all that you can be and then surround yourselves with teammates that really share the same vision. Whether you learn from someone who is more experienced or you take someone under your wing to teach them some fancy footwork of your own, through practice, dedication, more focus and patience, you’re on the path to be a true winner… not just in basketball but also in life.

We have all heard the expression that practice makes perfect, and that is truer now than it has ever been. We all have so many temptations and distractions but we have also all chosen to be a part of this legacy of the Golden Lions. With that legacy comes hard work. It’s not easy but the measure of a person’s character is revealed in the way they handle awkward situations and learn from mistakes. There was a very famous basketball player named Wilt Chamberlain. He had an amazing career in professional basketball. How many of you have heard of him? **(Let them raise their hands**). Well now you’re going to hear **FROM** him. He said something funny but wise…. He reminds us of what it’s like to be human … and maybe a little confused… when he says, ”They say that **nobody’s perfect**. Then they say that **practice** makes **perfect.** I wish they’d make up their minds!!” (**Wait for the laugh**). You know what? He’s got a point!!

This season was a year filled with changes, transitions, and rebuilding. We experienced the loss of some star players like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ but we also gained some great and promising teammates and that’s **ALL OF YOU**. The truth is that, same as in life, **nothing** remains the same. Everything changes and one of the great opportunities we have is learning how to live and grow with all of the changes that take place around us… at home, at school, with friends, and in the world. People come into our lives and others go off to other schools, new teams, and new challenges. It’s true that there are no guarantees in this world but one thing is for sure…. if you are prepared, dedicated and sincere in your interest in whatever you do, you win!! And when all of you give your all at the same time, it is possible for magic to happen!! We all saw that and felt that magic when this team came together and really buckled down and won an incredible victory against Southmoreland. That win felt great, didn’t it? It got us into the coveted fourth place spot that sends us on our way to the playoffs. Was that victory a once in a lifetime moment? I don’t think so. Was it proof that with hard work anything is possible? **ABSOULTELY**!!

Our statistics and record may not have looked like those of typical champions, but I am telling you that I know… we all know… that this team has the ability with all you’ve got…. or should I say all that you **KNOW** you’ve got. We may have found some rough spots… We may not have had the baskets or scores or stats we dreamt of, but one thing we did have and **DO** have, is the ability and willingness to watch, listen, learn, practice and **improve**. I also know…. because I have seen it…. that individually and as a team, you all have great spirit and enthusiasm- you inspire each other, even when you’re not aware of it. Think about it… you don’t have to say anything or acknowledge anything out loud, but I want you to picture a moment in the past season when you were very inspired…. who on your team inspired you? What was it that she did to earn your admiration? How will you take that moment and use it to feed your performance? What will you, in turn do, to inspire others? Later on, if you want to thank the teammate that gave you that moment of appreciation, it would be a great exercise. Just remember- I can think of moments when **each one** of you has inspired me- with your enthusiasm, your persistence, your ability to want to learn and correct, and your enjoyment of the game.

Every day in every aspect of your lives, you have the opportunity to learn. I promise you that right now, you know everything… you know, but as a young woman I’ve met says, “**I don’t know what I don’t know**!” Every interaction you have, every person you meet, every time you set out to do something, you have a chance to learn something. Just in case you haven’t figured this out yet, I’ll tell you…. learning never stops!! And as you are exposed to new experiences in life, you have the chance to bring what you learned into your basketball game. And everything that you learn in practice or on the court gives you valuable lessons to take with you in life. … And **THAT’s** why we are all so fortunate to have the chance to participate with this team.

I want to encourage each one of you to keep up your game- even in the off-season. Imagine all that you will learn and experience throughout the year until we gather again for the next season? It will be amazing!!! Remember this as well… there are so many great reasons to play sports. You know most of them but I will remind you:

The first reason is obvious… sports are great exercise!! Activity keeps your minds sharp so you can enjoy doing other activities even more!! Through participation you learn to make goals…. you learn to think of what you want to achieve, you realize how much hard work is involved, and you get the chance to win! …And then you go on to set the next goals you want to achieve… Through playing sports we learn accountability- to our teammates and ourselves. No one functions alone in this world and as we’ve learned on the basketball court, it feels great to know our teammates support our goals… or should I say our **baskets**! (**Wait for the laugh**). We learn that even though we don’t always win, and that losing isn’t the greatest feeling in the world, it’s not a reason to quit. We learn to try harder, work to improve, and even though life, and basketball, are not always fair, as long as we’re in the game we have a chance to make our mark. Playing this sport may also help us if we’re shy… we learn to interact with people, we learn to perform in front of crowds, and through that we learn to concentrate and focus on our mission…. One of the most essential things we learn from playing sports is the importance of practice. It really does improve our skills and our ability to understand the game and all that goes on. And if we work on the “art” of practice and use it in other parts of our lives, all areas are bound to improve…

I know I’ve given you a lot to think about and that’s a good thing… I want you to know that I really appreciate all of you and the effort that you put in to the Golden Lions to make this team the best it can be. When I think of where we were when we started at the beginning of the season to where we are now, I know that we’ve achieved a lot … as individual players and as a team. As I said earlier, I encourage you to use the off-season to enjoy yourselves and to use your lives and experiences and practice your skills and your game. There’s no limit to what we can achieve next season and I think that’s very exciting!! Thank you for the opportunity to work with all of you and here’s to a wonderful and Golden new year!!