

## Parkers share 'friendly' rivalry

By Amy Donaldson

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MURRAY — Coaches who compete against each other on a regular basis often develop both a camaraderie and a competitiveness that is, oftentimes, as entertaining as the games themselves.

But no coaching duo can boast the kind of connection that **Lisa and Mark Parker** share. Married 24 years, the couple shares everything— except the secrets of their respective Region 6 softball teams. Lisa Parker has coached Murray's squad since 1992, while Mark took over Granger's softball program last season.

Both are supportive of each other — just not so much they'll help each other out on game day.

"She doesn't divulge much," said Mark Parker of the budding rivalry. "She's not going to give us any information on her team."

The two-time state championship coach is also not going to be nice to Mark, just because she's sweet on him.

"She's not going to give us any breaks," Mark said with a laugh. He even gave her some ribbing regarding her killer instinct when the two teams met in the first game of region play three weeks ago.

"I gave her a hard time about delayed steals when they were up by eight runs," he said.

"It's been a lot of fun."

It's been fun so far, because Murray, a perennial favorite in 4A, has dominated the rivalry. But the Lancers have already won two more games than they did last year when they went winless.

"They've done a great job with these kids," Lisa Parker said of Mark and his assistant coaches. "They're getting a whole lot better. I was pretty dang impressed."

And they acknowledge that as Granger continues to improve, it may get tougher to keep the rivalry light.

"We're both very competitive," Lisa said. Asked what she would do if the Spartans ever lost to the Lancers, she doesn't hesitate. "Well, I don't know if that's ever going to happen."

Mark and Lisa both coached their daughter Brittany Parker, now a sophomore pitcher at the University of Utah, in summer leagues for many years.

Both coaches bring their players in on the friendly trash-talking. There are jokes about who has to do the dishes and who might be making dinner.

"They know," Lisa said of her players. "There's always joking. ... Who's going to cook dinner? Who's doing the dishes?"

Most of the trash-talking has been in jest, and the couple even begins and ends the game with an embrace and a kiss — an act that had the Granger student body erupting in cheers.

"It's been fun," said Mark Parker of the budding rivalry.

"Lisa has helped me a lot with organization, which is nice."

The couple met when they were both students at Weber State College. Mutual friends set them up, and the rest, as they say, is history. Like many parents, they've coached their three children, Nick, 22, Brittany, 20, and Tyler, 15, in various activities from soccer to basketball, and of course, softball.

Lisa was awarded the 4A Coach of the Year by the Utah High School Activities Association and is also the athletic director at Murray High. Mark was an assistant for Granger's volleyball team for two years before he started coaching the softball team. He even coached soccer at Kearns Junior High before taking a job at Granger a few years ago to teach driver's education and weight lifting.

Coaching is so much a part of their personalities, one can find them at various sporting events helping other coaches, including keeping score at the women's basketball games at Murray.

For both of them, the job is rewarding, regardless of who ends up doing the dishes because they revel in the development of their players.

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"It's so fun to get to know the girls and watch them improve," said Mark.  
As for whether or not their banter ever gets out of control, they both laugh.  
"No, we're pretty good," said Lisa of their trash-talking. "I tell him good luck."

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**Murray softball coach Lisa Parker hugs husband Mark, the coach at Granger High, following their softball game.**