

# It's about love, not wins, say father, son coaches

BY BRADLEY TRAVIS IRWIN  
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**R**ochester Hills, Mich. Klint Pleasant turned down the offer of a lifetime. The 27-year old assistant basketball coach, only a few years removed from his days as a student at Abilene Christian and Lipscomb universities, turned down an offer to join the coaching staff at the University of Arkansas, one of the biggest college basketball programs in the country.

The job could have led to a coaching career in the NCAA's highest division, complete with arenas of 20,000 screaming fans and appearances on ESPN.

Pleasant's father, Rochester College head basketball coach Garth Pleasant, recalls what his son told him about the decision to bypass the big time.

"Klint told me that the commitment it would take at Arkansas would not be good for his marriage or his faith," the senior Pleasant says.

Last summer, Klint became head basketball coach at Abilene Christian University and created the first father-son basketball coaching tandem among colleges and universities associated with churches of Christ.

Almost 30 years earlier, Klint's father began his coaching career in much the same way. Fresh from Lipscomb College, Garth returned to Rochester, Mich., to become head basketball coach for his first alma mater, Michigan Christian College (now Rochester College).

At his first game, Bill Fowler, the school's vice president, sat next to Garth on the bench. That day, Garth's father gave him a new sport jacket to wear courtside.

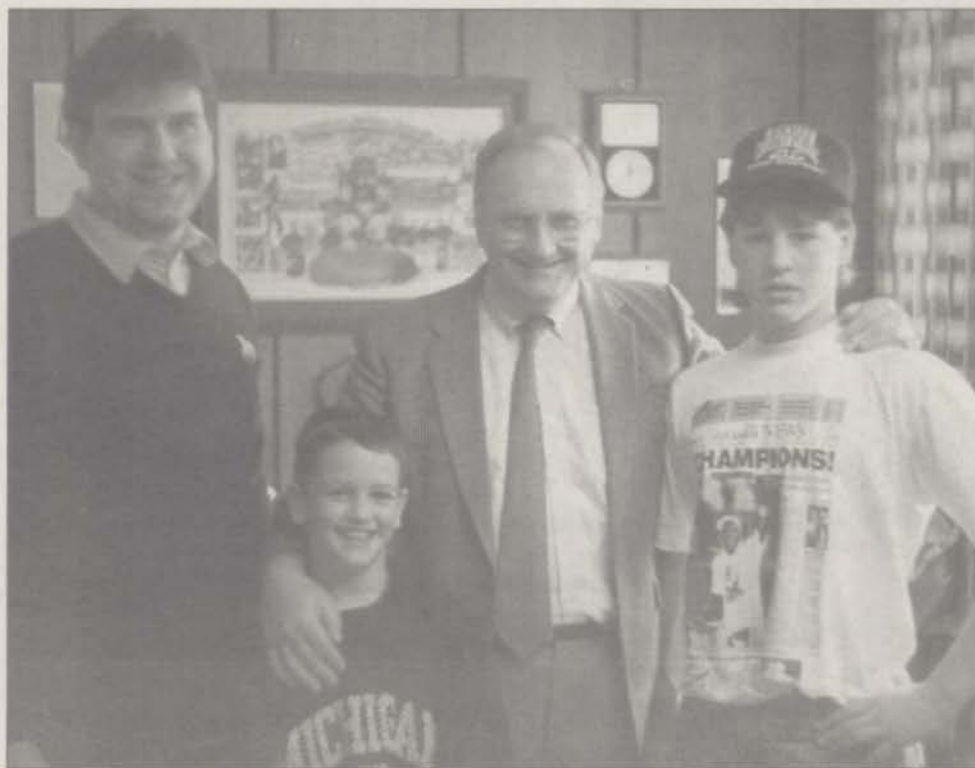
That first game started a run of more than 500 wins (the second highest total by a coach in Michigan college basketball history) and a national small college championship in 1989. Along the way, Garth married Pat, his MCC sweetheart, and had three children: Kim, Klint and Johnny. In 1980, he became the pulpit minister for the church in Lake Orion, Mich., a ministry he continues today.

The combination of coaching and preaching meant long hours, but Klint says his father let nothing stand in the way of being with his wife and kids.

"My father was always there. He took me everywhere with him: recruiting, games, scouting and speaking engagements," Klint says. "He decided a long time ago that he was not going to allow coaching to interfere with his relationship with God, his wife and his children."

Garth says, "I remember people would say that it's not the quantity of time you spend with your kids, but the quality of time. I never bought that. I wanted quantity. My family was my first church work."

Garth's fatherhood philosophy meant that young Klint spent a lot of time on the



SUBMITTED: GARTH PLEASANT

In an early 'coaching conference' Garth Pleasant took his two sons to meet legendary University of Michigan football coach Bo Schembechler. Pictures are, from left, Garth Pleasant, Johnny Pleasant, Schembechler and Klint Pleasant.

court, and it started to rub off. "I always sat next to my dad on the bench and I was always at practice," Klint says. "He was the person I looked up to and wanted to be like. Dad played a huge role in my decision to become a coach."

Garth also played a huge role in the kind of coach Klint would become.

"A lot was made when we won our 500th game, but basketball, to me, is not about victories and championships. It's

with players, how to motivate. He's always the first person I call when I need advice."

Garth said he's given his son two main pieces of advice. The first: "Who you work for is the most important thing. It's more important than money." Second: "When you make a decision, don't turn around. Don't look back."

Klint took Garth's advice and followed his dad's example when he walked away from Arkansas to accept his "dream job" at ACU. "ACU is where my relationship with God became the most important thing to me," says Klint. "I feel the same about ACU as my father feels about Rochester College."

Taking over Abilene's men's basketball program would be no game of H-O-R-S-E, however. The Wildcats only won a few games in the three seasons previous to Klint's arrival. Garth recalls that someone privately told him that Klint would be lucky to grasp a handful of victories in his first season.

Coach Klint Pleasant exceeded all expectations, however, and led his new team to 13 wins during his first season. Unfortunately, sharing a career with his son meant Garth couldn't make it to Klint's first game as a head coach.

"My wife flew down to watch his first game," Garth says. "I was scouting at Wayne State (University in Detroit) that night and I kept calling on the cell phone every 10 or 15 minutes to find out what was happening."

Bill Fowler, now head of ACU's accounting department, sat on the bench next to Klint that day. Before the game, the young coach received a letter of blessing and a package from his father.

Inside — a new sport jacket to wear courtside.

BRAD IRWIN is public information officer for Rochester College.

## NEWSMAKERS

**AWARDED:** Jonathan Wilkerson, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas, with Young American Award from the National Council of Boy Scouts of America. Nathan Jones, of the Central church, Cleveland, Tenn., with first place at the state wrestling championships. Cayti Bynum and Lindsey Lott, of the West Erwin church, Tyler, Texas, named Azalea Belles during the Azalea Trails. Michael Milhorn, of the Walnut church, Texarkana, Texas, for winning the 2003 DeQueen March Madness (12-and-under).



Wilkerson

**NAMED:** Stuart McGuiggan as director of marketing for curriculum for 21st Century Christian, Nashville, Tenn.



McGuiggan

**RECOGNIZED:** Howard Publishing, West Monroe, La., as Best Christian Place to Work in America, among small media organizations, by *Christianity Today* magazine. Joshua Freeman, of the Bammel Road church, Houston, for completing requirements for Eagle Scout. Martha Stilwell, of the Northside church, Chickasha, Okla., for launching the Chickasha Yellow Ribbon Campaign.

**MINISTER MOVES:** Jason Allison to minister of worship and outreach, Aaron Johnson to youth minister and Martin Pyle to minister of preaching at the Pegram, Tenn., church. Donnie Carnathan from the Channelview, Texas, church to the Lake Houston church, Houston. Gary Hill to education minister and Charles Wilks to outreach minister at the Beltline church, Decatur, Ala.

**NEW ELDERS:** Russ McLaughlin and Ken Starnes as first elders of the Charles Town, W.Va., church. Bob Fordyce, Brent Roberts and Landon Samuel, Northside church, Jeffersonville, Ind. David Culp and Charlie Hejl, Westover church, Austin, Texas.

**BIRTHDAYS:** 101st: Charlie McFarland, Onalaska, Texas. 100th: Malena Wilson Warwick, Houston. 97th: Izzie Casteel, Cartersville, Ga. 93rd: Bill Leach, Clovis, N.M. 91st: Eva Gibboney, Loudon, Tenn. 90th: Berton Green, Fort Worth, Texas. 83rd: Ellen Prior, Hastings, Neb. Bud Roder, Centerville, Tenn. 80th: Llyowne O'Neal, Nashville, Tenn.

**ANNIVERSARIES:** 60th: Bill and Marilyn Sweeton, Sebring, Fla. Desmond and Doris Crider, Memphis, Tenn. 59th: Joe and Joyce Vick, Edmond, Okla. 58th: Bill and Pearl Boyd, Mariposa, Calif. 57th: Bud and Jimmie Roder, Centerville, Tenn. 56th: Condy and Lorene Billingsley, Clovis, N.M. 54th: Dub and Erma Youngblood, Edmond, Okla. Joe and Billie Hamilton, Clovis, N.M. Albren and Margie Copley, Centerville, Tenn. 53rd: Bennie and Stacie Glover, Clovis, N.M. 52nd: Jess and Harriett Vanhooser, Oklahoma City, Don and Cora Ward, Centerville, Tenn. 50th: Richard and Helen Branum, Ft. Smith, Ark. Windle and Barbara Kee, Onalaska, Texas. Roy and Anna Bolton, Mesquite, Texas. Edward and Olga Dotson, Centerville, Tenn. Charley and Joan Long, Wichita Falls, Texas.

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**Garth Pleasant**  
Head men's basketball coach,  
Rochester College

about seeing kids change their lives," Garth said. "I look back at all of those players and know that I had a role in making them better people."

That philosophy echoes in Klint's ambition for his work at ACU. "I hope that in 30 years I can look back at my players and say with confidence that I played a role in helping them to become better people in all aspects of life," Klint says.

As Klint's career began to take off and he moved from jobs in the NAIA to NCAA Division II and finally to Division I at Kent State, he still sought his father's advice.

"We talk about every other day," Klint says. "We rarely talk X's and O's, but we talk about philosophy a lot, how to deal