

ADVERTISEMENT

**ARE YOU HEAVY OR HEALTHY?**

FIND YOUR WEIGHT >>

Height	Age 18-37	Age Over 38
5'1"	100-133	122-145
5'2"	104-136	116-149
5'3"	109-142	121-152

**FREE Diet Profile**

\*Click For Details

Feedback - Ads by Google

Other editions: [Mobile](#) | [News Feeds](#) | [E-Newsletters](#) | [Subscribe to the Free Press](#)

Find it: [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Apartments](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Classifieds](#)



SEARCH ALL



HOME LOCAL NATION/WORLD SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT AUTOS/BUSINESS LIFE TRAVEL OPINION OBITUARIES EXTRAS

Site Index Photos Videos Add your photos Lottery Past headlines Weather Subscribe to the Free Press Site Services Contests

Comment, blog & share photos  
Log in | Become a member

POWERED BY YOU AND THE **Detroit Free Press**  
ON GUARD FOR 177 YEARS

## Courtly bond

**Sure, they sometimes fight. What mother and daughter don't? But Birmingham Marian coach Mary Lillie Cicerone and her daughter, Anina, have found a special relationship.**

BY MICK MCCABE • FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER • JANUARY 9, 2009

Post a Comment Recommend Print this page E-mail this article Share this article:

The Birmingham Marian girls basketball team was scrimmaging Detroit Renaissance, and Marian's Anina Cicerone was upset at the level of officiating.

As she neared one of the officials, the other Marian players rolled their eyes and had a "Nina, don't do it" look on their faces.

"Can you call some fouls?" Cicerone asked sarcastically.

Now, if you ask that question of a registered official, you'll receive a technical foul. If you ask that question of your coach who happens to be officiating the scrimmage, you earn extra suicide sprints and a seat on the bench.

But if you ask that question of your coach, who also happens to be your mother who is officiating the scrimmage, well, you get the extra suicides, a seat on the bench and you are grounded -- probably for life.

Welcome to Anina Cicerone's world, where she has somehow managed to survive playing for her mother, Mary Lillie Cicerone, in one of the state's most competitive programs.

"I wouldn't want to play for anybody else," Anina said.

Oh, really? Well, it wasn't always that way.

This mother/daughter tandem has had its ups and downs over the years, and that is putting it mildly.

Anina's first taste of playing for her mom came when she was a 9-year-old in AAU basketball.

"It was fun; I was pretty bad back then," she said. "Practices were hard, but she worked with me, so it was good."

Her mother then coached her fifth grade team at St. Hugo in Bloomfield

ADVERTISEMENT

How to Avoid Bankruptcy

Super Cheap Winter Cruise Specials

The Secret to Getting Highly Discounted Cruise Tickets

Advertising provided by: ARALifestyle.com

Hills.



WILLIAM ARCHIE / DFP

Birmingham Marian Basketball Coach Mary Cicerone, 48, talks with her daughter Anina Cicerone, 17, before basketball practice. Monday, January 5, 2009 Anina is a point guard on the basketball team. Mary was an All-State player at Coopersville in 1978. Cicerone has been coaching at the school for 26 years.



WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

As an all-state player at Coopersville in 1978, Mary Lillie Cicerone, right, was always driven. As a coach, she wondered if her daughter, Anina Cicerone, left, would ever have that drive. Anina did, and now she's a major cog on Marian's basketball and soccer teams. "We've spent a lot of time together. ... It's just fun being around her with everyone," Anina said.

### PHOTO GALLERIES

- Pershing 70, Southeastern 48
- Canton 36, Plymouth Salem 32

### RELATED NEWS FROM THE WEB

Sports  
Sports Etc.  
Powered by Topix.net

### More High School Sports headlines

- [Courtly bond](#)
- [Jennings' Web drill worth a triple wow](#)
- [Austin White is staying put](#)

"It was fun," Anina said. "I mean, we had our fights, but it was good."

Are they still having their fights?

"Yeah," she said under a muffled laugh.

Fights? Well, disagreements may be a better way to put it.

But the real show began when Anina was a sophomore and made Marian's varsity team.

"When she was on the team for the first year," recalled Russell, an eighth-grader who is Cicerone's other child, "my mom kept calling my sister uncoachable."

Uncoachable?

"What a perfect line," said Dave Cicerone, Anina's father and Mary's husband. "And that's exactly what Mary said all the time: 'Uncoachable . . . uncoachable . . . uncoachable.'"

Well, times have changed.

Anina, it turns out, is quite coachable. She is the starting point guard on Marian's 7-1 team, which is ranked No. 9 in Class A.

And basketball isn't even her best sport. Anina, who has a 4.1 grade-point average, recently signed a National Letter of Intent to play soccer at Western Michigan, turning down offers from other schools, including Minnesota, and telling Michigan no thanks once it expressed an interest.

But it is in basketball where Anina has to endure practices and games with her mother pointing out every little mistake.

"I think they're doing alright," said Marian junior varsity coach and varsity assistant Pat Lowney, who unwittingly became the mother-daughter mediator. "They butt heads at times. Just like any player and coach, they get frustrated. But she's got a hall of fame mom as her coach. It puts a little more pressure on the kid."

To fully understand the mother-daughter dynamic at work here, you need to know a bit about the mom.

Back in the fall of 1977, Cicerone was an all-state player at Coopersville, just outside Grand Rapids. She received a basketball scholarship to the University of Detroit where she became a record-setting point guard on easily the best women's college team in the state.

Cicerone then turned to coaching and has led Marian to four Class A state championships and 10 Catholic League tournament championships.

Whenever the state's best coaches are discussed, Cicerone's name has to be included in the first sentence.

The problem is that Cicerone expected Anina to be just like her. The truth is no one is just like Cicerone, a self-made player and classic over-achiever.

"Complete strangers in Coopersville tell me they'd be driving down Spring Street and it could be 10:30, 11 o'clock at night and there'd be this makeshift rim with a terrible net on broken cement, and they'd see Mary out there shooting until who knows when after shoveling all of the snow out of the way," Dave Cicerone said. "Her mother would be at the back door and all Mary would do is run to the door, and her mother would give her a dry set of gloves with the fingers cut out and Mary would keep shooting."

Anina was not like that and Cicerone didn't know how to handle it.

"We had some talks on the way home: 'Are you going to decide if you really want to do this or not?' " Mary Cicerone said. "I couldn't keep my mouth shut."

- ▶ Jan. 8 results
- ▶ Highlanders stay perfect

### HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS POLL

**What boys basketball team do you think is the best in the state?**

- Detroit Pershing
- Clarkston
- Country Day
- Saginaw Arthur Hill

[VOTE](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Lifestyle provided by: [ARALifestyle.com](#)



**Build Muscle and Get Ripped without Steroids**



**Defeat Acne with Three-step Approach**



**The Secret to Getting Highly Discounted Cruise Tickets**

[ARALifestyle.com](#)

#### MOST POPULAR

#### MOST E-MAILED

1. UAW strike would kill auto loans
2. Too soon to predict coach
3. Recruiting antics getting ridiculous
4. Looking ahead at the state's top recruits for 2010
5. Disappointing fall TV fades as 3 blockbusters return
6. Osgood shines as Wings dominate Stars
7. Former exec calls Jason Garrett front-runner for Lions job, then switches to Schwartz
8. Pistons pumped to face Billups-led Nuggets for first time since trade
9. Life on the sinking USS Chrysler
10. GM kills Pontiac G8 Sport Truck

ADS BY PULSE 360

[Get Listed Here](#)

#### 1 Rule of a Flat Stomach

Cut down 25 lbs of stomach fat in - 1 month by obeying this 1 rule

[KimsDietPlan.com](#)

#### Oprah's Acai Berry Diet

Learn How A Mom Lost 42 Lbs in 12 Weeks Thanks to Oprah's Acai Diet.

[www.TracysWeightLoss.com](#)

#### "2009 Diet Of The Year."

Finally, A Diet That Really Works! As Seen On CNN, NBC, CBS & Fox News

[www.HeathersWeightBlog.com](#)

Eventually, she accepted that Anina enjoyed playing sports for the social aspect of athletics -- nothing more, nothing less.

She also realized that Anina was not going to become an all-stater, and that was OK.

"I had given up," Mary Cicerone said. "I didn't think it was going to happen. Usually, if they want to win they play hard. Her dad and I were resigned to that she was going to be an average player -- a good athlete, but average player. That's what frustrated me because once in a while we saw it out of her. We said she could be so good, but unless she wanted to be good she's not going to be."

Everything changed just before Anina began high school. She began playing Olympic Development Soccer for the Michigan Future Stars and grew four inches to 5-feet-6.

The success she had playing on an elite soccer team boosted Anina's confidence, which had an affect on the way she approached basketball.

"I guess after watching a lot of my mom's teams play, I would see the thrill -- the win," she said. "I just got that attitude -- if I try, I can be good, so why not?"

Anina made Marian's varsity soccer team as a freshman and was the team's leading scorer. She has helped the Mustangs win three consecutive Catholic League titles and earned all-state honors last spring.

But basketball was another story. For years, Mary Cicerone contended that parents should not coach their kids. She saw it happen repeatedly in AAU ball and more often than not it was a disaster for the parent, the child and the rest of the team because the parent-coach invariably favored his/her child.

Cicerone was determined it wouldn't happen to her, and she overcompensated in the other direction.

"I felt guilty a lot because I rode her all day long," Mary Cicerone said. "I had all this pressure on my back because she was a sophomore on my team.

"Even in practice I'd mark her against who I thought my best guard was and I'd get after her. She had to work harder, she had to get better."

Anina got better, but before that, she became bitter.

"She was like the opposite of any other mother," Anina said. "Everyone else favors their child. If I did anything that could somewhat be worse than anyone else, I would be immediately out. I wouldn't be given a starting spot unless I was so much better than the next person.

"I just accepted it."

That is when Lowney entered the picture and had a heart-to-heart with his boss.

He told her that she was treating Anina differently than her other players, but not in a good way. Cicerone listened and told Lowney he was responsible for telling her when Anina went in and out of a game.

Late in her sophomore season, Anina found herself in the starting lineup. She responded with a 15-point, seven-assist effort and wound up being Marian's best player in the district playoffs.

Anina laughs when her mother recalled the talks in the car, pleading with her to become more aggressive and care about the outcome of games.

"I can't even remember that now, because now I'm the most competitive person on the earth," she said. "Everything I do, I have to win. Now if I lose, I don't speak for a couple of days."

Her mom is the same way, and it is amazing how the daughter has become so much like the mother, which is why they still have their fights . . . er, disagreements.

"I tell her she has to treat me like any other coach, and she tells me I have to treat her like any other

player, which we both have to work on." Mary Cicerone said. "I think this year it's been better. Even in the scrimmage, I got on her about her defensive intensity and she had a little smarty comment so she sat down for a quarter, and then we pretended it didn't happen and we moved on."

Mom and daughter will never be able to pretend these last three basketball seasons didn't happen, nor would they wish that. Not even Anina.

"We've spent a lot of time together," Anina said. "There's a lot of funny things that happen at practice. They say they're going to make her own dictionary because of all the weird words she uses -- calls people 'nimrods' and says 'fiddlesticks.' It's just fun being around her with everyone. Anyone that you talked to that's come to Marian will say: 'Oh, you're Cicerone's daughter. I love her.'"

"I wouldn't want to play for anybody else."

Contact **MICK McCABE** at 313-223-4744 or [mmccabe@freepress.com](mailto:mmccabe@freepress.com).

### In your voice

[READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY](#)

POWERED BY  Pluck

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

1000 characters left

## SPECIAL COVERAGE



**BLOGS**

### From the pressbox

Our prep reporters keep up with stories, issues and highlights from the high school sports seasons



**PREPS EXTRA**

### Top stories of the year

Follow the teams, coaches and athletes that are featured each week in our Friday Preps Extra section



**FOOTBALL**

### The 2008 all-state team

See the players that made the dream team, all-division teams and honorable mention this season



**RECRUITING**

### Keep up with prospects

Find out which players Michigan and Michigan State have signed and who the sought-after prospects are



**SPECIAL DATABASE**

### 2008 Scholar Athletes

We invite you to explore our interactive database and view each of the more than 500 scholar athletes in color.



Partners: [Jobs: CareerBuilder.com](#) [Cars: Cars.com](#) [Apartments: Apartments.com](#) [Shopping: ShopLocal.com](#)

[Home](#) | [Local](#) | [Nation/World](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Autos/Business](#) | [Life](#) | [Travel](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Extras](#) | [Site Map](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Copyright ©2009 ...  
Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) , updated March 2007.