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Holbrook coaching legend Vince Budenholzer still connects to basketball at 94 with family



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Vince Budenholzer, the original Coach Bud, sits in the stadium seat in his apartment at the [Clarendale Arcadia](#) senior living community in the Biltmore/Arcadia area of Phoenix, and looks at the wall that is decorated with his accomplishments.

He lives in the memory care part of the community with caregivers. But, at 94, he still hangs onto things that happened long ago through basketball.

As he glances at the memorabilia, memories come back of his greatest days as a coach, leading Holbrook High in the 1970s and '80s, amassing more than 300 wins and winning the 1971 state championship, being inducted into the Arizona High School Athletics Coaches Hall of Fame, seeing the youngest of his seven children, Mike, find coaching success in the NBA where he was twice named Coach of the Year.

When Vince was moved into Clarendale Arcadia two months ago, the main idea was to keep him connected to basketball. They put stadium-style seats in his apartment. There are basketball memories throughout.

"Sometimes we sit there, and it sparks his memories," said Kristen Vinson, Vince's granddaughter, who is 39. "We see brackets of championships he's won. And articles of him and (son) Mike. It's been fun connecting with him over basketball the last couple of months, recreating that experience with him.

"Sometimes he really connects and remembers. And other times, he kind of laughs and goes, 'Oh, that's in the past.'"

His short-term memory has faded, but mention someone from long ago, say former high school coaching legend Royce Youree, and it comes back fast.

"I coached an all-star game with him," Vince Budenholzer said.



Former Holbrook basketball coach Vince Budenholzer, at 94, still is connected to the game through his family and people taking care of him. *Provided By Kristen Vinson*

Three generations of Budenholzers will attend Final Four

Vince Budenholzer became the athletic director at Holbrook in the latter part of the 1980s when Mike, the youngest of his seven children, played basketball there.

Vince handed the program over to Terry Brace but coached him from the stands. He became known in Holbrook as "Mikey Bud," a nickname that would stick throughout his career, as an assistant with the San Antonio Spurs, as head coach of the Atlanta Hawks and Milwaukee Bucks, earning NBA Coach of the Year twice (2015 and 2019).

A big section of northeastern Arizona was cheering for Mikey Bud during the 2021 NBA Finals, when he guided the Bucks past the Suns for the championship.

"He coached my older brothers at Holbrook High School," Mike Budenholzer said of his dad. "My joke is, 'He retired from coaching and became the athletic director so he could focus exclusively on me and not have to worry about the other nine or 10 guys on the team.'

"He was very much a coach to me. I think a lot of advice, encouragement, pushing came from him. I got a lot of coaching from him before games, after games. I think there was some yelling during games from the stands. All the good stuff that dads do."

Mike Budenholzer, who is not coaching this year, is coming to Phoenix this week to take his father and Mike's two sons to the [Final Four on Saturday](#) when North Carolina State takes on Purdue and UConn battles Alabama at State Farm Stadium in Glendale.

Mike, who is 54 now, started a tradition 18 years ago taking his first son, William, 25, to at least one day of the NCAA Tournament every year. With his second son John, he's taken both sons every year now.

"Some years, it's the first day of the tournament, some years it's the Sweet 16, some year's it's the championship," Mike Budenholzer said. "Now this year, it's going to be three generations. Grandpa is going to join in the fun."

Coach Bud lights up around basketball

Vince Budenholzer was asked which teams he's picking to get to the national championship game.

His first choice would have been Arizona, he said, but laughed and added, "You can't always get what you want."

Arizona, the No. 2 seed from the West, bowed out in the Sweet 16 against Clemson.

"Let's go with UConn and Purdue, they're the No. 1s," Vince said.

Vince loves watching the college game, and said, "I don't think I always had the opportunity to be a college coach."

"You don't always get what you want," Vince added.

Vince got to get back to the bench this past high school season at Surprise Willow Canyon, where he helped out one game with Cristian Mendez, who is the JV basketball coach. Vince sat on the bench, holding a clipboard. Mendez is one of Vince's caregivers at Clarendale Arcadia.



Former Holbrook basketball coach Vince Budenholzer, 94, helps with his caretaker, Cristian Mendez, coach Surprise Willow Canyon's JV basketball game *Provided By Kristen Vinson*

"I would ask him, 'Hey, Coach, I've got a game today, what should I do?'" Mendez said. "He'd say, 'Make sure you pressure the ball.'"

Vince said he was thrilled to see Mike make it big as an NBA coach.

"It's only natural, I suppose," Vince said.

Mike flies in from Texas about once a month to see his dad. They talk basketball. They go to dinner. This week, they'll take him out on the golf course on the cart, before heading to the Final Four.

"It's an incredible blessing that he does have this time right now to cultivate this time with him during this pivotal point in my grandpa's life," Kristen said.



Kristen Vinson spends time with her grandfather, Vince Budenholzer, at Clarendale Arcadia senior assisted living community, connecting him to basketball. *Provided By Kristen Vinson*

When Kristen and her mother and two other uncles came to Holbrook High unannounced recently, she saw how big the Budenholzer name is there. The gymnasium floor has "Budenholzer Court" on it. It's named after both Vince and Mike.

"The head of the athletics said, 'Are you guys Budenholzers?'" Kristen said. "He said, 'Are you here to look at the court?' We chuckled and said, 'Yes.' We watched kids shoot hoops. It's cool to see his name on there. We kind of landed there.

"My grandmother always had this philosophy, 'Bloom where you are planted.' Holbrook is a pretty desolate place. Not a lot of anything there. They just came in and they became so pivotal in the community and made such an impact. It's really cool to see beyond their time there. You walk in, and they know exactly who they are.

"There's a woman who actually coordinates the people of Holbrook coming in and watching games when Mike comes into town. The whole town rallies and they show up for the NBA games. And then afterwards, Mike takes the time to talk to everyone. But it's also incredible to watch the people know who my grandpa is and the respect they have for him. A lot of them come up and say, 'Oh you made this impact on me.'"

Vince also was a history teacher at Holbrook, known for putting on movies. Vince would shut off the lights and take a snooze, while the students watched the film. Vince laughs at that memory. Other times, he would take out his clipboard and draw up basketball plays.

"Even though he was the history teacher, his mind was always on the game," Kristen said.

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/high-school/2024/04/05/legendary-holbrook-high-school-basketball-coach-vince-budenholzer-headed-to-final-four-game/73193480007/>