



ETG Crusaders Alumni Newsletter

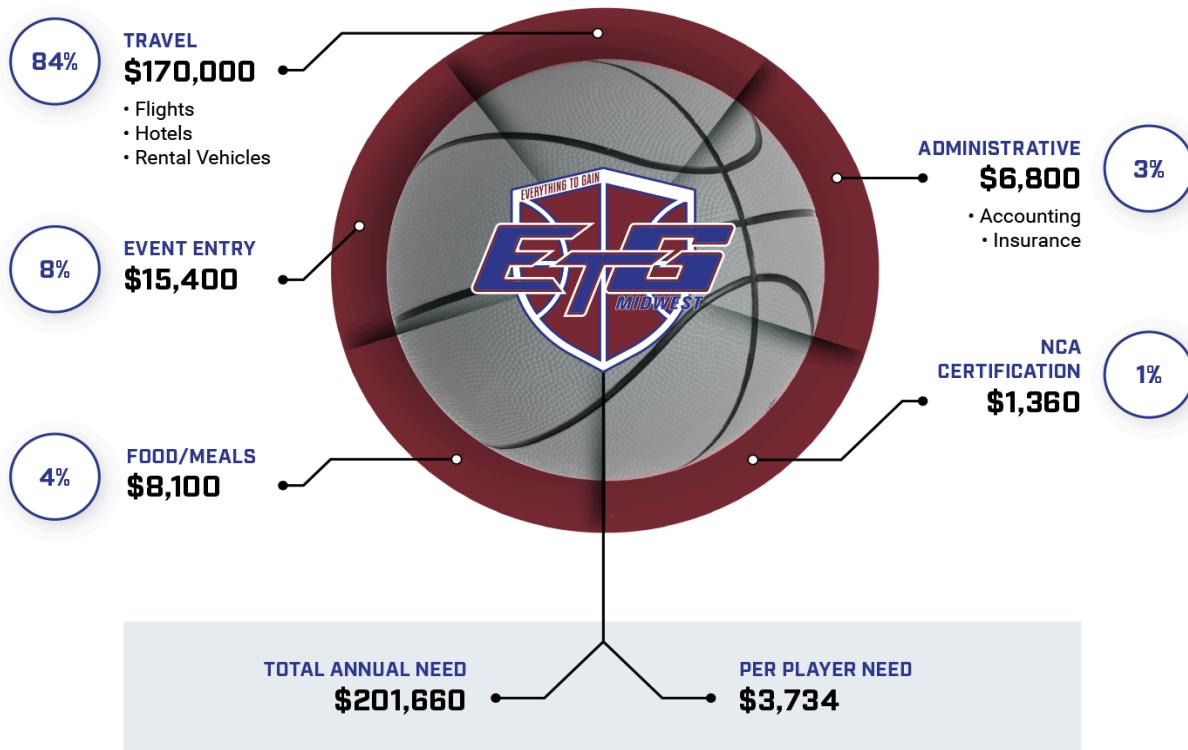
February 2026

A Message from Coach Woodard

All: Hard to believe but Hoops season is about 2/3 of the way finished for 25-25!! I know many of you have children now playing youth or even high school basketball. The challenges are numerous but it is still the greatest game in the world! Enjoy the spotlight profiles on **Kelsey Woodard (Davis) 2007 Crusader Grad** and **Sam Griesel 2018 Crusader Grad** in this February edition of the Crusader Alumni Newsletter!!

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Former Crusader Spotlight



Kelsey Woodard (Davis) Crusader Grad 2007

1. **Can you take a moment and describe your experience while playing with the Crusaders? Any significant moments or memories stand out?**

Those years hold such a special place in my heart! The things that stick out most are the relationships built with teammates and coaches. I don't know that I could necessarily recall an exciting play or game result, but I can definitely remember both on and off-court moments between teammates/coaches. One of my favorite dynamics was playing alongside girls with Crusaders, and then playing against them during the high-school season. It is also pretty cool to be able to tell my kids that we played at some of the places that we see on TV, like Cameron Indoor



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Stadium. In hindsight, we got to travel to some awesome places and I should've been more grateful to my parents for spending so much time and money on my basketball career!

2. What advice or insight could you give to student athletes and/or coaches regarding the recruiting process?

I was fortunate enough to have an older sister that had an amazing college basketball experience and I wanted to follow in her footsteps, so my recruiting process was somewhat unique. That said, it is so important to surround yourself with people you trust and try to make a decision that aligns with your goals and values. I know NIL has changed the calculus of that decision, but I still think relationships and culture should be prioritized above all else! You are going to be spending a LOT of time with the coaches/players in the program and how you fit in with that can make or break an experience, much more than what deals you get with which sponsors. Lastly, basketball likely won't be your career post-college, so you want to look at things holistically and make sure your decision incorporates any career aspirations you have (e.g., does it have a nursing program if you want to be a nurse). Be open-minded and level-headed!

3. How has grassroots basketball changed since your days with the Crusaders? Do you see the changes as mostly positive or negative?

I think it is much more organized at an earlier age now, which is both good and bad. It signals that the game has grown, which is obviously good, but the risk of overuse and burnout is real. I believe it's important to be involved in as much as possible and not specialize in basketball too early. The off-season is needed and a time where you can really hone in on your craft on the side, while being in-season in another activity. I have strong opinions about what youth basketball should look like (e.g., 9-ft rims through 4th grade, no zone or zone press until 6th grade, etc.) but those would take up an entire Spotlight of their own so will refrain from oversharing. From a skills perspective, it does seem like the game



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has gotten more creative over the years though so I've loved seeing that evolution! Overall, I think the more that former players get involved in coaching, reffing, etc, the better off the game will be and we can maintain some of the tradition while also supporting the growth.

4. Tell us a little about your life now with basketball and then just family...basically a day in the life of Kelsey Davis!!

My husband, Dustin, and I have been married for 14 years and have 3 kids - Dashel (10), Finley (8), and Leighton (3.5). We are in the thick of youth sports and love (most) every second of it! The boys play soccer, football, basketball, and even tried their hand at baseball last spring. Leighton is their biggest cheerleader and will start organized activities at some point, but we aren't rushing it. I work in the Accounting Department at Union Pacific Railroad and Dustin works for the US Army Corps of Engineers, where we've both been since we interned in college. We are so blessed to have our families close by and have their support juggling work, school, activities, etc. We are trying to enjoy every moment with our crazy crew as it really does go by as fast as they say it goes!

Former Crusader Spotlight



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Sam Griesel. Lincoln East- 2018 Crusader Grad

1. To this day I cherish the memories I made in the one summer I played for the Crusaders. Traveling around the country with all my teammates was a blast and something, even as I'm overseas playing professionally now, I look back on and smile about. Sometimes while you're in it, you don't necessarily cherish those experiences as much as you do when you look back on them. And looking back now, I truly believe that summer completely changed my life and basketball career moving forward.
2. As far as advice about the recruiting process, I would say always stay true to yourself and go to a place you are truly wanted and valued. I've been around a lot of basketball teams in my career and there are always guys that chose their school or club for the wrong reasons. Really do your research on the coach/players and make sure you will fit in with that team both on and off the court.
3. The one summer I played with the Crusaders we were on the "Adidas Shoe Circuit". At the time it was either the best or close to the best competition for AAU basketball at the time along with the Nike EYBL. Being removed from the AAU world now for years, I'm not sure how much it's changed but with NIL in college I'm sure that has had some sort of an effect on the AAU landscape.
4. Right now I'm living in Berlin, Germany with my fiance, playing professional basketball for Alba Berlin. We play in both the BBL (top german league) as well as the BCL (one of



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the best european leagues). The seasons over here are long with pre-season starting in August and the post-season ending in May or June for teams. But Berlin is a great city with so many things for us to do. This is my third year playing professionally with my first two seasons being in Bonn, Germany. I hope to continue playing as long as I am still having fun with it and my body is holding up!



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