

Floyd Central has seen its fair share of Division I college athletes in recent years.

Brigid Morrissey who guided the Lady Highlanders to the Indiana girls' basketball Final Four, went on to play for Furman University.

Recent Floyd Central football star Kyle Bramble is running for Dartmouth College and FC baseball standout is one of the top pitchers in the country playing for the University of Louisville baseball team.

No program at the school or the entire state can match the success of the Floyd Central Dazzlers in that category.

On this year's University of Louisville Ladybirds there are 10 dancers who once donned the green and gold of the Dazzlers.

The two programs have several connecting points including sharing the same coach.

Todd Sharp, who graduated from Floyd Central in 1987, coaches both the Dazzlers and the Lady Birds.

The other glaring connecting point between, the two programs is the fact that they contend year-in and year-out for national championships.

Floyd Central's success on a national level earned them a cover photo and story as the winning-est dance program in the country in the April issue of Dance Spirit Magazine.

The Lady Birds have been just as successful. They will go for their 12th National Championship under Sharp's guidance in April.

U of L is also defending champion in the Jazz division.

Sharp said no dancer who has danced under his and assistant Coach Cheryl Knight's coaching at U of L has ever graduated without a national championship.

Between Floyd Central and U of L (Cheer and Dance), Sharp has 27 national championship rings.

Most of the former FC dancers turned Ladybirds agree that having the same coach at both high school and college has been a huge help.

"Dancing at Floyd Central was great preparation for dancing at this level," said U of L sophomore Jenna Wilbur. "The coaching style, obviously, helped a lot, and the dancing style did, too, because when we get here (to U of L) we already know what is expected."

While it might be an advantage dancing because of the level of expectation of the coach, once they try out for the U of L team, Sharp doesn't see them as former Dazzlers.

"I'll be honest, I am probably harder on the Floyd Central girls than I am the other girls," Sharp said. "I look at them like they've been dancing for me and had my coaching so they should be judged more harshly."

The familiarity for Wilbur doesn't stop at the coach, she also has a familiar face dancing with her.

Her sister, Cami is a senior Ladybird this year. The two have won National titles together in both high school and college.

The elder Wilbur agrees that dancing for Sharp at Floyd helped prepared her for the University of Louisville.

“Todd is the same Todd here as he was at Floyd,” Cami said. “I think it helps a lot that I was at Floyd Central so I knew what was expected, whereas some girls who aren’t from here don’t really know what to expect. They learn quickly though.”

Sharp agrees that as far as coaching he is the same on both levels, but the biggest difference is their relationship.

“When they leave FC you want to see them fly,” he said. “It’s kind of like they have been pushed out of the nest and when they get to U of L, I consider them adults and I think sometimes its hard for them as I cut the strings a little bit. They are strong, talented and ready to go, but they are used to having that daily contact with me. Our relationship on the college level is totally different than what we have on the high school level.”

While knowing what is expected helps make the jump from high school to big time college competition, there are adjustments that the former Dazzlers have to make.

The most mentioned seemed to be mixing with other girls and learning different styles.

“At Floyd we did a lot of pom routines with sharp motions and movements, where at U of L we do more Jazz and Hip-hop,” said Jenna Wilbur. “The dance style at this level is harder to adjust to.”

She said the other big adjustment is dancing with the girls who she never danced with before.

“At Floyd you knew the girls so well because the only new dancers were the incoming freshmen,” Jenna said. “With the Ladybirds we have dancers from Pittsburgh, Texas and places like that. It’s a lot of fun though, the differences (between the levels) are good differences.”

In addition to winning, there are some perks that go along with being a Ladybird, including having some of the best seats during U of L basketball games at the KFC Yum! Center, and being on the field at Cardinal stadium for football game.

Karly Van Hook, who is also a senior on this year’s Lady Bird squad, said she is a sports fan and enjoys being so close to the action.

“I am a huge sports fan,” she said. “My dad coached football and that’s my favorite sport and being here you get to know the players and they become your friends. It’s fun to watch them play. We are on the field and on the court so we are close to the action, which is a lot of fun.”

Sharp said he still gets a kick out of coaching and expects to do both for many years to come.

As long as he does two things will likely continue to happen – Floyd Central Dazzlers will become Ladybirds and national titles will continue for both programs.