

LOCAL STORIES

Meet Lars Hanson of Ignite Your Game

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Today we'd like to introduce you to Lars Hanson.

Hi Lars, thanks for joining us today. We'd love for you to start by introducing yourself.

HI, I'M LARS Hanson, and my journey into coaching started after I was cut from a basketball team at the ripe old age of ten because I "lacked speed, strength, and stamina." My dad challenged me with a simple choice—You can either get bitter or get better—so I began training on my own, eventually becoming a successful middle-distance runner and continuing to compete in basketball, cross country, and track.

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In seventh grade, I started coaching my younger brother and a few of his friends, which eventually became the first Ignite Your Game Speed & Agility Camp. While I originally assumed I would need to find a "real job" after college, I realized that coaching and investing in young athletes was the work I wanted to pursue, so I converted my garage into a gym and began coaching athletes after school each day.

Ignite is about much more than athletic development... it's about helping young people grow and mature on & off the court/field in an environment that's fun and high-energy.

This past spring, Ignite was awarded "The World's Greatest Gym 2026" by the Bloomberg TV Show, "World's Greatest..." We feel incred-

ibly blessed to receive the award, but we're even more grateful for the opportunity to work with countless hard-working individuals.

We all face challenges, but looking back would you describe it as a relatively smooth road?

We've had our fair share of setbacks over the years, but nothing compared to the challenges we faced during COVID. We wanted to honor the constantly changing government guidelines while also serving families who often had very strong—and very different—opinions about how those guidelines should be handled. That season taught me a lot about leadership, particularly the impor-

tance of making thoughtful decisions in faith without being controlled by the approval of others (Galatians 1:10). I still want to do everything I can to lead and serve people well, but I've learned that good leadership doesn't always mean everyone will agree with you.

COVID also created significant financial challenges for us. We had to lease additional space, inflation drove many of our expenses higher, and we hired additional staff in order to maintain required distancing protocols. It was a difficult season, but it ultimately made both me and the business more resilient.

Alright, so let's switch gears a bit and talk business. What should we know?

Ignite Your Game is a youth sports performance program built around



a simple goal: helping athletes run faster, jump higher, get stronger, and become more confident competitors. We work with athletes from elementary school through college and specialize in speed, agility, strength, power, and overall athletic development through small-group training.

What I believe sets Ignite apart is the culture. We care deeply about getting results, but we care even more about the person behind the athlete. We intentionally keep our groups small, build real relationships with our athletes, and try to create an environment where kids feel known, challenged, encouraged, and excited to come back.

Brand-wise, I'm probably most proud that Ignite has become a FAMILY more than just a gym. We've worked hard to create a place where high-level athletes and kids who are just beginning their athletic journey can train side by side and both feel like they belong.

At the end of the day, we want people to know that Ignite is about much more than shaving a tenth of a second off a sprint or adding inches to a vertical jump. Those things matter, and we love helping athletes improve, but our larger goal is to use sports as a vehicle to help young people develop confidence, discipline, resilience, and relationships that will hopefully impact them long after they stop playing.

Do you have any advice for those looking to network or find a mentor?

Find people whose lives you want to imitate. Surround yourself with people you aspire to be like and learn the ins and outs of how they live—how they conduct themselves in marriage, raise their kids, handle finances, lead others, and respond to adversity. I've found that the best mentorship often happens within a local church naturally when you're genuinely interested in someone's life, ask good questions, and are humble enough to learn from them. ■