

Men coaching woman athletes; are there really differences?

sports

By Mike McCarthy

A slap on the behind or a squeezing bear hug, often characterizes a coach's pleasure with an athlete's performance. And a humiliating scolding often shows his displeasure with the ballplayer.

But if George Nicodemus was seen giving one of his players an aggressive bear hug, some eyebrows might be raised.

Nicodemus is UNL's women basketball and softball coach. But Nicodemus, who coached boys for 17 years, said the "gender" problems that occur are minor. He is joined by UNL women's swimming coach Ray Huppert.

Nicodemus said he has a female manager that notifies him when the women are done putting on their uniforms before a practice or a game.

"But if the manager isn't around, I just yell 'Are you ready?' and knock on the locker room door," Nicodemus added. "It's no problem at all."

And what does he do at halftime? "Well, I usually won't go to the locker room for about four minutes," he said. "One reason is to regroup my thinking so I can calm down and don't say something off the top of my head. The second reason is to let the girls do what they have to do."

"I know where I stand when it comes to the lockerroom."

Never 'slapped a rump'

But Nicodemus said he has never "slapped a rump" or "bear-hugged" a girl at UNL or when he coached at the now defunct John F. Kennedy College in Wahoo.

"I don't do that," he said. "In my excitement during games at JFK, I think more girls have grabbed me than I did them."

Nicodemus said he has used foul language only once.

"I said 'damn' to the girls when I first started coaching (at JFK), he said, "and I apologized to them for saying it."

Nicodemus said he treats girls the same as boys, and he sees no difference between coaching the two.

"I don't expect girls to dunk a basketball, but I do expect them to play up to

their abilities," he added.

Training rules forbidding liquor and smoking also might present difficulty for a coach to enforce. But Nicodemus has the same punishment for boys and girls, if they're caught breaking regulations. They are off the team, he said.

"I learned a lesson from a coach of mine a long time ago," Nicodemus said. "He said 'You can run the beer out of them, but not the nicotine.'"

Kicked player off team

Nicodemus said he kicked an all-American woman basketball player off the team for breaking regulations, and the team went on to a championship season.

He added he doesn't think women necessarily coach women sports better than men.

"I'm not saying women can't do a good job of coaching sports, but you don't see men saying, 'Oh, let's get this practice over, I got a hair appointment at 5.'"

"Women coaches are not yet willing to place their coaching ahead of their home," he added.

However, Nicodemus said, he thinks that trend will change as women's sports become as widespread as men's.

"The point is that a coaching job should go to the best qualified person, regardless of sex, he added.

"I make this comparison. If women should be coached by women, then why don't women go to women bankers, doctors or lawyers?"

Ray Huppert, UNL women's swimming and diving coach, agreed with Nicodemus that women's and men's sports require similar coaching. But Huppert said women are more emotional.

"They cry when they're happy and when they're sad. Yet, a good coach should understand, whether its boys or girls, that they are dealing with individuals," Huppert said.

Huppert added that he has never resorted to physical or verbal abuse when disciplining a woman swimmer.

Watches his language

"I most certainly watch my language, whether it's a girl or a boy," he said.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Husker women's basketball coach George Nicodemus talks of the problems of men coaching women.

"I'm not a saint, and I have used damn before, but I catch myself and get upset."

"I've seen male coaches at this university use four-letter words right and left with guys," he said. "But what are they accomplishing?"

Huppert said he never walked into an embarrassing situation in the girls locker room, but he "has to be very careful."

Like Nicodemus, Huppert uses the manager and knock-on-the-door system when entering the dressing room.

However, unlike Nicodemus, Huppert said he "shakes and slaps hands when a swimmer has a good swimming time. When there is sorrow, I put an arm around her shoulder."

Training rules are the same for Huppert,

whether he is coaching men or women.

"Just because I coach girls, I don't change the rules," he said. "My policy stands."

"On road trips, we represent the university use four-letter words right and left. Girls should recognize they shouldn't go overboard."

"They won't be able to handle our program and 6 a.m. practices if they're in the bars drinking all night."

Huppert said he is uncertain how much to expect from a woman swimmer.

"I wonder how far and how much I can demand out of a girl. I am not sure how far you can push a girl. You can push a boy nine to 10,000 yards in swimming in two hours. But with girls, I just don't know."

UNL runner now recognized for more than red socks

By Rob Barney

He said the red socks were supposed to make him more recognizable.

The socks might not be the answer, but senior trackster Matt Reckmeyer has become one of the most notable figures on this year's UNL team.

"The socks were just something I joked about. I said I would wear them because I was finishing where people couldn't see me," Reckmeyer said.

"They've been a good luck charm for me. They set me apart as an individual. I don't know if that's why I'm doing better, but I'll keep wearing them for now."

Reckmeyer has come into his own this season. He finished second in the 1,000-yard run at the Big 8 Conference meet two weeks ago at the UNL Sports Complex.

"That was my highest finish ever," he said. "Last year I failed to qualify (in the 1,000). I did place sixth or seventh in the mile."

He qualified for the NCAA indoor championship in the 1,000-yard run last weekend in Detroit. His 2:10.4 time in the event in a triangular against the Air Force Academy and Drake University beat the national qualifying time of 2:10.5.

However, the Mt. Morris, Ill., native said he does not think he'll compete in that race this weekend. He plans to compete just in the two-mile relay event.

"Both of the events have prelims and finals. That

would be four races in two days and that would be pretty taxing so I'll just run in the relay.

Reckmeyer has had success running in relays at Detroit's Cobr... Last year, he was a member of the distance medley relay team that finished fifth at the meet.

"This year there are four different guys in the distance medley," Reckmeyer said. "My goal is to place high in the two-mile relay. I think we should be right in there."

Reckmeyer said the Huskers' two-mile relay team had the fourth fastest time in the nation when it qualified for the nationals.

Two consecutive years at nationals cannot be too bad for a person who was not even going to run track in college.

"I originally hadn't considered running track in college," Reckmeyer said. "Things fell together my senior year in high school and when I was offered a scholarship to help finance my education, I decided to run. I'm glad I did."

He said he chose Nebraska because of the Pharmacy College and a partial scholarship offered to him by head track coach Frank Sevigne.

Reckmeyer has postponed Pharmacy College plans for now, but he has been accepted to the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

"When they transferred the Pharmacy College to Omaha I didn't want to commute and I wanted to run my

senior year, so I requested a year leave of absence.

"I'm going to forego pharmacy for now and try medicine. I was accepted to med school at Omaha and I plan to start in July."

Myles joins Buckeyes

UNL lost its third assistant football coach in as many months Monday when linebacker coach Bill Myles announced his resignation from head football coach Tom Osborne's staff.

Myles, a five-year member of the Husker coaching staff, accepted the offensive line coaching job at Ohio State University under head coach Woody Hayes.

Two months ago, defensive back coach Warren Powers left UNL to become the head coach at Washington State University, and defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin accepted the post of defensive coordinator at the University of Arkansas.

"I was surprised that coach Hayes contacted me," Myles said. "I wasn't seeking the job. Coach Hayes got a hold of me a week ago last Friday and then he and Coach Osborne got together."

"Ohio State is one of the few places you'd leave Nebraska to go to," Myles said. "Professionally you can't coach at two finer schools."

Myles, whose duties at UNL included coaching the offensive line for two years, will leave for the Buckeye campus next week.

"I think it's a great move professionally, for my family and for educational opportunities," Myles said.

"It will give me a chance to coach in another conference and to learn another system. And I know I was hired as a coach because there is already a black coach on coach Hayes' staff."

Ohio State will be Myles' second college job. He coached high school ball for seven years in Kansas City, Mo., compiling a 45-20-3 record.

Myles said his stay at UNL was a pleasant one. "It was a pleasure to work with the fine coaching staff," he said.

"I think I benefitted from being able to work with all of the coaches on the staff. And it was a privilege to work with the great athletes here."

Woog, not Wilcox

The remarks in Monday's *Daily Nebraskan* tennis article, "Husker tennis players snare weekend victories" were incorrectly attributed to Chris Wilcox. The remarks were made by Phil Woog, not Wilcox.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Husker senior Matt Reckmeyer, wearing his favorite red socks, crosses the finish line to second place in the Big 8 Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships.