

Former player says women's sports have improved

By Rick Huls

Giant strides have been made in the UNL women's athletic program, but much work still needs to be done, according to Elise Reising, a former UNL volleyball player.

At a Women/Speak meeting Wednesday, Reising said things were very different when she played volleyball from 1970 to 1974.

"We did have uniforms. That was a step up from high school, where we didn't have uniforms until our senior year," Reising said. "But then we found out we shared the uniforms with the field hockey and basketball teams. If two teams had a game, we just had to flip a coin or something."

The coaches for women's sports were also instructors, Reising said, making them unavailable for both jobs at the same time.

"If the coaches were busy with classes, we had graduate assistants take over at practice," she said.

In fact, the first coach we had when I started was a woman who knew nothing about volleyball," Reising said.

Went to nationals

UNL won the state tournament and the right to go to nationals that year, Reising said, but she wasn't allowed to travel along because she was a freshman.

"The policies were so disjointed," she said. "The following semester two freshmen were allowed to make the trip."

"Of course, everyone paid their own expenses," she noted. At least we got the uniforms for the trip."

Reising said it became necessary that someone be in charge of scheduling games.

"No one ever knew who was in charge," she added.

Although the women's program has made definite advances since Jay Davis was hired as athletic director in 1975, Reising said the program still could use improvement.

"Not enough women are receiving scholarships," she said. "A training table is another thing the women need."

But, Reising said, the athletes learn better skills now and the coaches are much better than when she was at

UNL.

Davis agrees

Women's Athletic Director Jay Davis couldn't agree more.

"We've got good coaches now and people are starting to realize that we are here," Davis said. "People are calling me now and asking how they can help out our program. You wouldn't believe how different that is from when I started."

"We know we need improvement yet," Davis added. "We're not entirely comfortable without facilities yet and a training table is a great idea. Some girls practice late and when they go back to the dorms they're out of luck for a

meal."

Davis said anyone can have an athletic program, but it's going to be the best if she is involved in one. "There's some good athletes coming out of Nebraska," she said. "We have everything it takes to become the No. 1 program in the nation—facilities, coaches, tradition and location."

Football helps

Davis said the success of UNL's football team helps the women's program.

"Everything they do helps us," Davis said, "and everything we accomplish helps them too."

The men's and women's program get along great, Davis said, and don't suffer some of the problems that some universities do.

"Sure Bob Devaney and I have our differences but we work them out," Davis said. "If he hadn't been so open-minded—saying he wanted the best and nothing mediocre—we wouldn't be where we are now."

She pointed out that the women's program increased its annual budget from \$132,000 in 1975 to about \$420,000 in 1978.

"We've actually dropped from nine to eight sports, Davis said, "but we have full-time coaches now who can devote all their time."

Program gained support

Davis said the program has also gained some backing, by way of booster clubs, parent clubs and other support groups.

Also, the three Big Eight titles the women captured last year in volleyball, gymnastics and tennis were helpful, Davis said.

"There are some world class athletes on our campus and most people don't realize it," she noted. "They're not only good athletes but very good people and students."

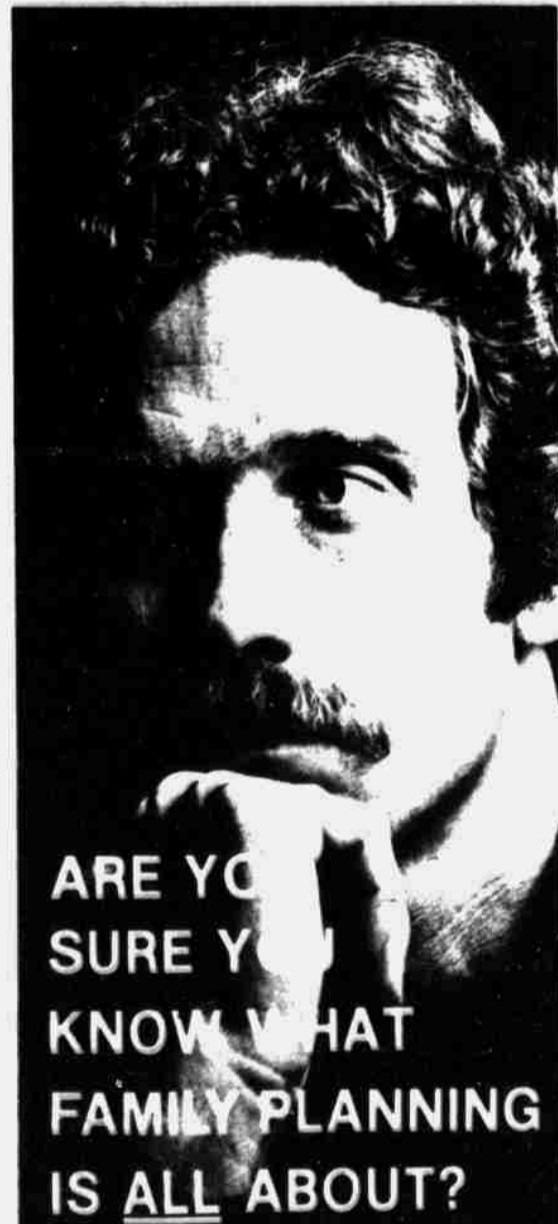
"But most of all," Davis said, "We don't want to become a production system for athletes. We are part of the university system and are not looking at these women for sports only."

"Their education background is just as important as the excellence of the sports program we offer them."



Photo by Ted Kirk

Great advancements have been made in women's athletics at UNL since the early 1970s, according to UNL Women's Athletic Director Jay Davis. Davis and former UNL volleyball player Elise Reising spoke to the Women/Speak luncheon at the Nebraska Union Wednesday.



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