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Angela Beck instructs her team.

## 'Attitude raising altitude' focus helps Beck turn around team

By Steve Sipple  
Staff Reporter

Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck has used motivation as a tool to rejuvenate the Cornhuskers, but Beck's team isn't the only benefactor of her inspiring speeches.

Beck recently addressed a group of local political leaders, including Lincoln Mayor Bill Harris, Waverly Mayor Mary Applebee, and Omaha Mayor Bernie Simon, on the topic of motivation and the effects of positive attitude.

Beck said she frequently gives motivational speeches and said she told the politicians the same thing she instills in her players: A positive attitude can take you a long way.

"I always say attitude determines altitude," Beck said. "Turning from a losing to a winning program is all because of the attitude adjustment we've had."

Beck's philosophies have helped restore a Husker program that previously hadn't had a winning season since 1983-84. She guided the Huskers to a 16-13 record in her first season last year, which included an 8-6 Big Eight record. It was Nebraska's first-ever, upper-division finish and the first winning season ever in the conference.

This year, Beck said, could even be better. She said improving players' self-esteem has been a key factor in the program's turnaround.

"It's important to feel good about yourself as a person," Beck said. "I want my players to feel good about themselves. A lot of players don't feel good about themselves away from athletics."

### 'I always say attitude determines altitude ...'

Beck

"If we can make them feel good about that, they feel good about themselves on the floor."

Along with the positive-attitude approach, Beck brought to the program a work ethic that has manifested itself in her intense practices and the team's uptempo style of play. Last season Beck drove the hard-work approach into her players by printing the letters I-T-H-W-T-B-A-C (It takes hard work to be a champion) on virtually everything associated with Nebraska women's basketball.

Apparently the motto has had some impact. The Huskers set nine team-records in pre-season conditioning drills.

Beck said she and assistant coach Theresa Becker used the I-T-H-W-T-B-A-C method during their tenure at Bradley from 1983 to 1986. Becker said they promptly decided to use the angle again upon their move to Nebraska.

"That's the symbol within our organization," Beck said. "Everybody wants to be a champion. It's a Nebraska theme. Nebraska has a very hard-working ethic. They expect a lot from their teams."

Beck said the program lacked a positive and hard-working atmosphere when she inherited it from Kelly Hill prior to last season. Hill's contract was not renewed after the 1985-86 season and Hill is now the coach at Western Illinois.

"I thought we had a losing attitude," Beck said. "I just said, 'Hey, this is your motto.' (The players) adopted it and they work hard every day."

Beck said her penchant for hard work comes from her collegiate career at Millikin University, which is a Division III school in Decatur, Ill. There Beck earned All-America honors her senior season and established 17 career scoring and assist records. Last year she was inducted into the Millikin University Hall of Fame.

### 'Everybody wants to be a champion. It's a Nebraska theme ...'

Beck

But Beck said when she looks back at her playing days she regrets she didn't work harder in what she labels a "laxed" atmosphere. Not fulfilling her true potential was frustrating and Beck said she vowed after her collegiate career she wouldn't let this happen to the players she would soon be coaching.

"I'm the opposite of my coach at Millikin," Beck said. "I wanted a coach as a person to get everybody motivated. I wasn't satisfied at a Division III school. I wanted to get to a Division I school and make players the best they can be."

Beck has proved she can get a lot out of her players by resurrecting programs at all three schools she has coached. In 1980, she took over a lackluster Southeast Missouri State team as a 22-year old - which made her the youngest college coach in the nation. She finished 9-15 her first season and went on to produce back-to-back 20-win seasons.

Beck then moved to Bradley in 1983 and inherited a team that had finished last in the Gateway Conference the previous year and turned them into an upper division finisher. They went 16-12 in 1985-86 before Beck took the helm at Nebraska.

Beck said the Husker program will continue its upswing this year, led by a strong recruiting class and the presence of pre-season All-America Maurice Ivy. She said the Huskers have the talent to finish the season in the nation's top 20.

Beck said "a lot of pride" and "a lot of hard work" has helped during her six years as a head coach. She said she has enjoyed the challenge of taking sub-par teams and turning them into winners.

"Genuinely speaking, I love challenges," Beck said. "I like to be challenged. When I came to Nebraska I knew they were never .500 (in the Big Eight). There was only one way to go - and that was up."

"I never wanted to take a program that won 20 games. I wanted to instill my reputation on a program."

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