

# sports

## Women coaches struggle for respect

by Katherine Manherz

TORONTO (CUP) — Chris Harron entered the classroom and waited for the instructor. It was the first day of a week-long certification program for hockey coaches. Scanning the room, she realized she was different from everyone else. She was the only woman in the class of 60.

Harron, head coach of the York Yeowomen hockey team, is the only woman to have graduated from the National Coaching Certificate Program during the last three years. During that time, the program has graduated 22 men. Hardly any women coach women's teams in Canada, and none coach men's teams. The question is, why?

There's a tendency to believe that gender equality is much more prevalent today. But when we look at the number of women coaches compared to the number of women athletes, we realize that women are still severely under-represented in the coaching ranks. Some say there are few women entering the coaching profession because many of them aren't accepted as strong leaders. The irony is that women who have become successful as coaches have usually done so by leading their teams to national championships. Take Cathy Shields, for instance.

Shields was previously the head coach for the University of Victoria basketball squad and her team has finished in the top ten every year she's coached. She has won the

CIAU title six times. Shields was awarded coach of the year in '79 and '92. Currently she is taking the year off to concentrate on the women's national team which has qualified for the World Championships.

She believes that technical skills can always be learned, "but whether you've got good people skills" is what really makes a good coach. What also makes a good coach is having the time to dedicate to the craft. "Coaching is extremely demanding, and it's extremely time-consuming and emotionally draining. We're starting to get more women in coaching but keeping them is really difficult," Shields said.

"We lose a lot of good young women because it's such a hard juggle with family life. The majority of men don't have the ultimate [family] responsibility... that women still ultimately do have."

Even if a woman has all the ability and the dedication to make coaching her profession, there are still other barriers. They have to be accepted by the informal network of men which runs sports. Anne Hall is a professor of physical education at the University of Alberta and she has been involved with women in sport for the past thirty years. Hall was part of a team that studied "The Gender Structure of National Sport Organizations", a project funded by Sport Canada.

In the study Hall found that barriers to women's participation. (at any level) in sport are "more firmly

entrenched and much more difficult to address" than they first appear. The study identified four major barriers to women entering coaching:

- The powerful, informal networks among men
- The lack of female role models, as well as the lack of support for women who could be role models
- The attitudes of both males and females towards female participation
- The lack of commitment by women past a certain level of involvement.

"There have been enormous advances and changes," Hall said in an interview. "Women's sport is so different compared to thirty years ago. But there are still real areas of inequity and (women) can't seem to overcome them."

But women have spent years trying to overcome the barriers that exist in the coaching sphere. In 1921 women were formally refused entry into the Olympics. In response, Madame Alice Millat of France formed the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale (FSFI). By 1928, as a result of Millat's efforts, women were active participants in the Olympics. Beginning with only five nations, the FSFI grew and by 1936 thirty nations were participating.

Even with this rapid growth, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) still tried to discourage women from participating in athletics. They did this by opposing the FSFI. Shirley de la Hunty, an Australian former track and field athlete and coach, commented on the eventual disband-

ment of the FSFI. In the book Sports-women Towards 2000, de la Hunty writes that the IOC eventually laid the FSFI to rest.

"It was not thought appropriate that women were in charge of international events," she wrote, adding

that it was thought to be "the rightful province of males." Currently the IOC has on its staff 7 women and 93 men. With 257 events open to men and 86 events to women, men compete in almost twice as many Olympic events as women.

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## Nominations for the positions of Dentistry, Health Sciences, and Education Senator, and VP Community Affairs

### as well as side registration for the CFS Referendum

now open. Forms can be picked up and dropped off to the council offices. Nominations/side registration close Thursday, March 17th, 1994 at 11 am.

A tentative timeline is posted outside of room 216 of the S.U.B. For further information call Jennifer Hockey (ERO) at 494 - 6576/1106, or E-Mail to DSUERO@AC.DAL.CA.

