

SPORTS

Olympic women's field hockey coach fired following complaints from senior players

by LORNE MANLY

Marina Van der Merwe, the York University professor who was the coach responsible for taking Canada, in seven years, from 16th in the world to 2nd at the 1983 World Cup, has been ousted from her position by her players and the executive board of the Canadian Women's Field Hockey Association (CWFHA).

Van der Merwe received notice two weeks ago that her contract was not being renewed while she was in the Netherlands with the junior team. According to the CWFHA the reason behind her dismissal was that the team wasn't improving enough, technically or tactically, and because Van der Merwe was unable to communicate with her senior players.

Van der Merwe, however, doesn't accept this rationale as she told Matthew Fisher of *The Globe and Mail* two weeks ago: "If we were not doing the job technically or tactically, we would not have progressed to the point where we were at the foot of the medal podium. And a coach who cannot communicate could not have had a team that improved so much. If there was a communication problem, why didn't the players confront me with it?"

According to Van der Merwe, the trouble began last August when the Field Hockey Association requested that Van der Merwe involve herself in the 1988 Olympic quadrennial plan. After a great deal of soul-searching Van der Merwe agreed to the task and moved to improve the program. She felt that, in order to keep up with the rest of the world, more emphasis had to be placed on the development of the junior team (as well as weeding out those players who were not progressing). The resulting shift of some financial support to the junior team led to the discontinuation of the carding of a few senior athletes and had the effect, as Van der Merwe said in a recent interview with *Excalibur* "of putting the cat among the pigeons."

Van der Merwe decided that "those who didn't progress were no longer to be carded."

They could continue...but no longer were they to have the benefits that come from being carded."

Being a carded athlete carries with it both the status and material benefits of a scholarship as few are awarded and the athlete's tuition is paid for and they receive a monthly stipend. The senior players, both those who had been carded for two and a half to three years but are no longer carded, and other seniors who felt threatened by these implications of these actions, were not about to take this turn of event lying down. To ensure their job security, which Van der Merwe was taking away with these changes (Van der Merwe) had to be replaced.

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Van der Merwe was aware of this unrest and said that "the Board would see, in their wisdom that these emotions were the natural upshot of these developments. But the ladies didn't she said, adding "they stepped out of their role and interfered with the selection process. The executive board handed over the selection process and training method to the athletes. The entire role definition has become reversed."

"I have become a bystander (taking the executive's role). The athletes are now the programmers and criterion setters. And the executive can't be coach. There is now a void of coaching expertise due to the serious lack of understanding on the board member's part", Van der Merwe said.

CWFHA president Jan Meyer said the executive board reached its decision after considering evaluation reports handed in by senior players. Most of them disliked Van der Merwe's handling of the team but almost all of the younger players (on the junior team) support the coach.

The senior players didn't like the way they were being treated by the coach. These athletes felt they had established themselves and deserved a larger role in their program's direction. Van der Merwe scoffs at this assertion of the players: "They call themselves 'seniors'. That is incredibly presumptuous—no player in Canada can call themselves that. Senior in longevity maybe..."

The titles senior and junior team are misnomers to the reader unfamiliar with the Canadian field hockey scene. They are senior and junior only in terms of age. There are members of the junior team that make the Olympic squad but are placed on the junior team the rest of the time because of their age. In other words, the senior team is not necessarily better, just older.

According to Van der Merwe the state of upheaval surrounding the program the past year has been costly to the seniors. "I know for a fact that the senior athletes have lost a year. They sat back and watched...There was no serious concerted effort training while the other leading countries were going faster than lightning."

"Women's field hockey is now a bonafide Olympic sport. Every other country has pulled out every stopper in the book: junior development, senior development, weeding out players not progressing." Van der Merwe stresses the point that Canada is not good enough to be able to afford standing still, not with the English, Germans, Dutch and Australians improving at such a fast pace.

In Van der Merwe's opinion, the whole episode has had a bizarre, soap-opera-type atmosphere to it. Further proof to Van der Merwe of this constant paradox can be found in Jan Meyer's comments on the search for a new coach. The president of the CWFHA has stated that Van der Merwe is welcome to apply "just like anyone else." She isn't to be rehired but she can apply.

But despite everything, Van der Merwe will reapply. "I don't need the aggravation but many talented people didn't become number one by, one, acting in an illogical fashion, and two, saying stuff. I have a lot of energy and ideas. I love coaching at the international level. I have to reapply", Van der Merwe concluded.

Sports Briefs

by EDO VAN BELKOM

HOCKEY

• Yeomen hockey coach Dave Chambers made the final cuts on Canada's under 18 hockey team and will be travelling to Colorado Springs, Colorado for a two game exhibition series against the American under 18 team July 22 and 24.

TRACK AND FIELD

• York track star and member of the football Yeomen, Desai Williams finished in third place in the 200m event at an international meet in Nice, France. Williams completed the dash in 20.67 seconds.

• Members of the York Optimists Track and Field club made their presence felt at Jim Buchanan Memorial Meet held at Etobicoke's Centennial Stadium. On the women's side Molly Killingbeck won the gold in the 400m even while teammates Camille Cato and Dana Wright placed second and third in the same even. The men were equally impressive lead by Mike Dwyer winning the 200m. In the pole vault Noel McIntyre and Doug Wood finished first and second, while the same finished in the long jump was achieved by Richard Rock and Peter Stasiuk. The men completed a sweep in the shot put where Michael Spiritoso, Martino Catalano and Luby Chambul collected the top three positions respectively. All tolled the Optimists collected 14 medals out of a possible 48.

1985 MACCABIAH GAMES

• The 1985 Maccabiah Games, more commonly known as the Jewish Olympics held in Israel in July will see York represented in a number of events. Yeomen Basketball coach Bob Bain is coach of the Basketball team of which Yeomen Stuart Levin-sky will be a member. Other York students who will be competing include Jonathan Goodman, Mike Zunder and Jonny Cole who will be entered in various Track events.

WRESTLING

• The Canadian Junior World Wrestling Team used York University as its training headquarters before heading off to Colorado for the Junior World Championship, finishing better than any Canadian team in the past. The team won three medals—two silvers and one bronze. York student Paul Hughes, pictured left (kneeling), exhibits the overpowering technique that brought him the bronze medal at the competition. Another member of the York squad, Gary Holmes, picked up a fourth-place finish. Coach John Parks hopes the York team's success will help in the bid for a National Wrestling Centre to be located at York University.



TED CHRISTENSEN

A SALUTE TO YORK RUNNERS

The Provost congratulates the staff and faculty members of the York running team which did so well in the recent YMCA Corporate Relay. York claimed second spot in the men's-over-50 (average) grouping, second spot as well in the men's-over-40 category, and seventh place in the mixed-over-35 group.

Do all these smiling faces tell us something about fitness?



LEFT: Peter Moens. CENTRE: (standing, left to right) Robert Prince, Claudia Hungerson, Glen Norcliffe, David Scuse, Maureen Smith, Robert McEachern, (kneeling, left to right) David Promislow, Roy Merrens, Michael Goldrick. RIGHT: Brian Maraj. NOT PICTURED: John McConnell.

DANCE MAJOR AUDITIONS

Final auditions for 85/86 undergraduate dance majors and minors will be held at York University, Burton Auditorium on Wednesday, August 7, 1985 from 12:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m. For details, write or call:

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