



john harris

What women want, they don't get

Elwin Heiny is beginning his third year as coach of the Oregon women's basketball team, and he expects this year's squad to be his best yet. Accordingly, he hopes the women will be thoroughly covered by the local media. Realistically, he accepts that they won't.

"We say give us the publicity and we'll get the spectators, and the press says give us the spectators and we'll give you the publicity," says Heiny. "It's a circle that I don't know how we'll get around."

When Title IX went into effect in 1972, women's athletics became entitled to comparable and equitable funding by athletic departments at schools receiving federal funding—which is most institutions, including Oregon. But while Title IX provided women's sports the opportunity to expand, it did not insure the women added publicity, and this irks fans and players alike.

"They (the Oregon women) do feel slighted," says Heiny. "A lot of times the kids really complain about having to turn to the fourteenth page to see how they do."

Oregon hired Janet Heinonen as women's sports information director two years ago, and it has been her job to circulate publicity about the women's athletic teams among the media. She puts out as much information on the women as her counterpart George Beres does for the men, but the difference is in how the media uses the releases.

"It's obvious the emphasis is placed on the money-making sports, men's basketball and football," she says. "You can lead a horse to water, but making it drink is something else."

There is no clear cut answer to what it will take for women to receive the kind of coverage the men get, but it is generally believed by people connected with

the University that success on the court will encourage coverage.

"Publicity is really a product of credibility," explains Sheila Strike, an assistant coach of Heiny's. "That's what I think is gonna happen if this team starts winning some games."

Says Heinonen, "this year George Beres asked if the women could be included in the basketball brochure with the men, but the feeling was that the women have to prove themselves."

This attitude is acceptable to Heinonen. "I don't think women should be demanding x-number of inches in the paper if they have a poor team. Title IX has done a tremendous job evening things out, but I think you have to prove you're worth the attention."

Blaine Newham, the sports editor of the Eugene Register-Guard, agrees and disagrees with Heinonen. He feels the women have to prove they are newsworthy, but being a winner is not the total answer. "There has to be a compelling reason to cover them, and that's people being interested," he says.

Of course this leads back to the endless circle Heiny mentioned, but Newham does agree that as

the team becomes more competitive, more people will become interested in it. "They appear to be getting top players and will probably be successful, and our coverage will increase," he explains. "As people on their team emerge then we'll do stories about them, but we don't feel just because of Title IX we have to give them coverage."

Newham points to the expanded coverage the Oregon women's cross-country team received this fall to illustrate his point. And the publicity the women runners got did not pass by Heiny unnoticed. "I was amazed at the coverage the cross-country team got this year," he says. "Things are definitely improving."

Heinonen agrees. "I can say it's improving. Every year I'm pleasantly surprised."

To enhance the chance for added coverage and fan interest the women will play eight games as part of a doubleheader with the men this season. Seven of the games will be at home, including Saturday night's contest with the Northwest Invaders. "We don't view ourselves as a warm-up act," says Heinonen. "It's a great chance for the women to get some

exposure.

"Down the road a few years they may have games of their own, but now we're going for the exposure. We're pushing Oregon basketball, not men's or women's."

Newham doesn't agree totally with Heinonen. "I don't care what they call it, but it's a preliminary game, not a doubleheader," he says.

And as long as the women's team plays people such as Western Washington in the first game, the contest probably won't be considered more than a warm-up.

"I really feel we have to play some top people to improve and get the community educated," concurs Heiny. "I think a Pac-10 Conference for women would be a good idea. I think it would be an attraction to play the UCLA men and the UCLA women. It would not be that hard to educate the people if that was the case."

Such is not the case, however, and the women can probably expect to face another year with less coverage than that accorded the men. "I don't think we'll ever get the press like the men," says Heiny. "That's not going to happen in our culture, at least not very soon."

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SEATTLE (AP) — Greg Meyer of the Greater Boston Track Club beat Oregon's NCAA champion Alberto Salazar by four tenths of a second to claim the men's individual cross country crown in the

national Amateur Athletic Union championships Saturday.

Meyer and Salazar pulled away from the pack early in the race and ran neck-and-neck the rest of the way. The new champion, a

23-year-old University of Michigan graduate, ran the 10,000 meter course in 29 minutes, 35.9 seconds. Salazar finished at 29:36.3.

Finishing third, 20 seconds behind Salazar, was Craig Virgin of St. Louis. Don Clary of the University of Oregon was fourth. Wilson Waigwa of the Philadelphia Pioneers Track Club finished fifth.

Meyer and Salazar qualified for the United States team that will compete in the world cross country championships in Limerick, Ireland, next March.

The Mason-Dixon Athletic Club won the team title with 73 points, 11 ahead of the University of Oregon. The Greater Boston Track Club was third with 100 points and the Colorado Track Club was fourth with 114.

"Salazar, wow, he's intense," Meyer said just after the race. "Once he went out, I knew he wouldn't fade so we went out together."

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