



jody murray double play

"I've always wanted to sit down and write an editorial for a big sports magazine and say to coaches, 'Hey, those people you're beating on have lives to live, too.'"

Well, the Emerald isn't exactly Sports Illustrated, and Oregon swimmer George Koch, the author of those words, isn't exactly Mark Spitz. But what the holder of several Oregon records says has little to do with the breaststroke.

He is concerned with what goes on at pool side, or on the sidelines, or in the player's box.

"You must think of the coach, that's his job," says the Oregon senior. "He must make the kids produce. You know how that saying goes, 'No pain, no gain.'"

But some coaches go beyond the restraints of their salaries, Koch says, and thereby put a strain on the meaning of sport.

"Some coaches say, 'Hey, kids, I'm the closest thing to God you'll ever get.'"

Years ago, when Koch was competing for Portland's David Douglas Swim Club, the only thing he worshipped was swimming itself.

"They had to tie me down to keep me from the pool. I'd get out of a workout ready to throw up, but it felt great."

Perhaps it felt a bit too great, because once Koch showed some promise, the coaches started getting into the act.

"It gets to the point where coaches take over and they begin to forget the athlete. That's where it gets lost."

Koch, a physical education major who plans a coaching career, said a coach "has to develop his own rapport with an athlete.

"You are their coach, and they respect you, but out of the water they should respect you as an individual."

Some would argue that even though Woody Hayes or Frank Kush scared the living heck out of their players, they had successful programs. Those "some" would be right. But the key phrase for these two men isn't "successful programs," it's "had successful programs."

Coaches who use the bull-whip method are waltzing on a knife edge — one extracurricular punch at a player and they cut themselves out of the picture.

The athlete, in turn, constantly dodges a hangman's noose held by the coach. But the coach is wary of the athletic director, who is looking over his



George Koch

shoulder at the administration and alumni.

The athlete gets the nastiest end of the pecking order. Does

it really benefit the competitor to receive verbal and sometimes physical abuse? Certainly any athlete who feels a need for such treatment is on the downhill side of his career.

All this bitching about overzealous coaches may sound utopian to those who worship Hayes or Kush or former U.S. Olympic hockey coach Herb Brooks and his scare tactics. But is the success of a program a sufficient tradeoff for the doubts of a George Koch or the lawsuit of a Kevin Rutledge?

Apparently, yes.

Says Koch, "A lot of coaches lose it when they forget the athlete is a human being and not some animal they're trying to train."

Perhaps it's the coaches who should be caged.

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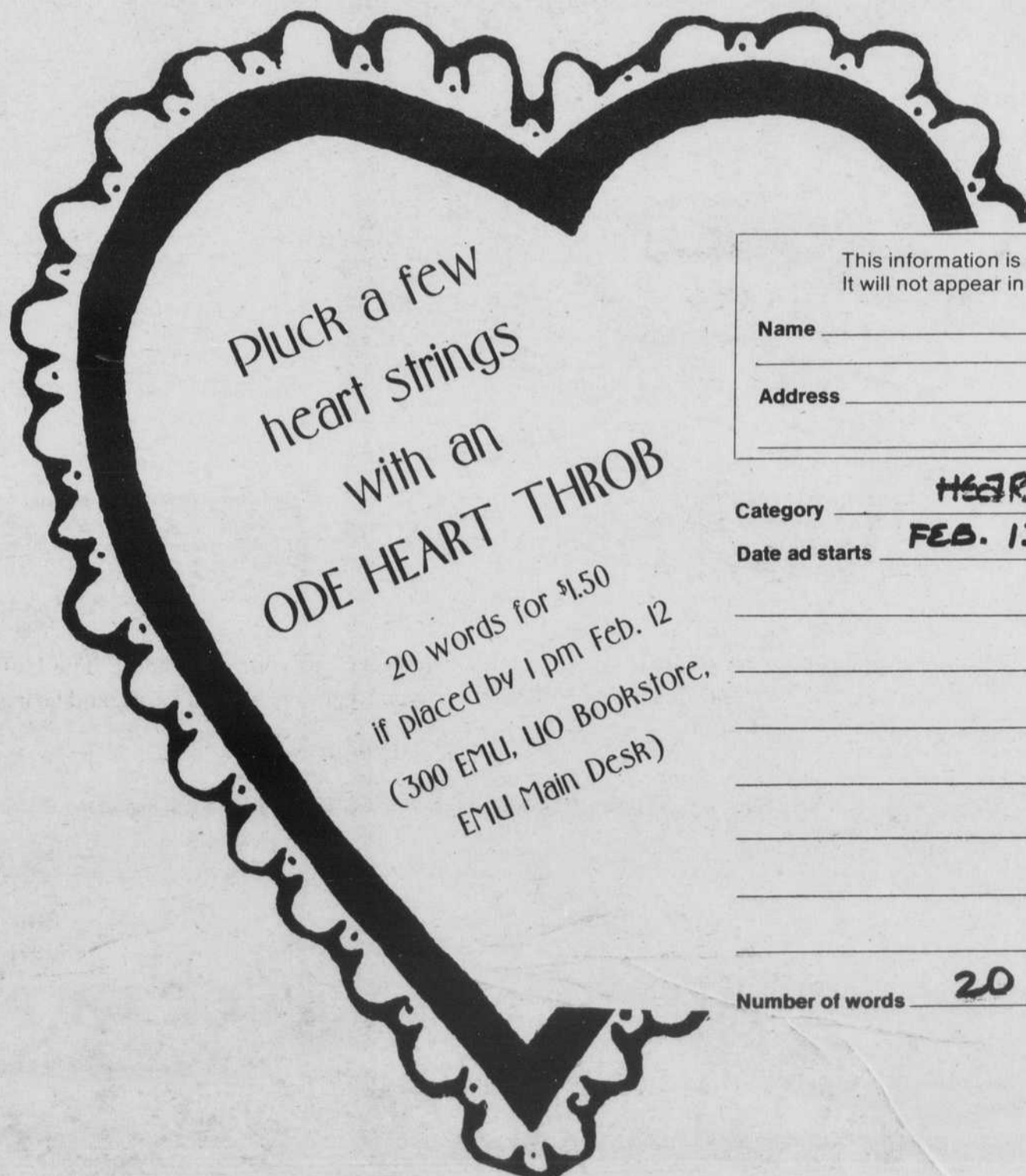
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