

# Coaching Continued from Page 1B

ESP coaches for a variety of sports, including football, basketball, baseball and soccer.

After a rocky start, the coach-for-credit program drew seven ESP basketball coaches this term. It will continue next term with soccer and baseball.

ESP holds its first meeting for interested soccer coaches tonight at 7:00 in Jefferson Middle School's large gym.

Due to its newness, not many students know of the program. Typical is the experience of Lea Davies, who coached an eighth-grade boys basketball team.

"I'd been coaching for two weeks," says Davies, "and I saw the ESCAPE desk. So I stopped by and just asked, 'Hey, can I get credit for coaching?' They said sure."

That credit does not come easily, however. Most coaches work eight to ten hours per week, with practices two nights and games every weekend. They are required to put in three hours per week per credit.

"Sometimes you have other things you want to do, and you can't because you have a basketball commitment," Davies says.

First-term ESCAPE coaches are required to attend a two-hour seminar class once a week, where topics such as positive reinforcement, communication skills and problem solving are discussed. Then, in addition, there's the paperwork.

"We have a more complete written record than any other ESCAPE department," says Katie McLaughlin, an ex-ESCAPE coordinator who helped to implement the coaches' program last fall.

Each ESCAPE coach is required to fill out an orientation sheet stating what goals they want to achieve and what they want to learn. Coaches keep a documentation of hours worked, and complete a project.

A project is something permanent that can be left with ESP, says Shelley Carr, ESCAPE co-director. It is a learning tool "designed to benefit the agency and the volunteer." Past projects have ranged from taking teams to University basketball games to compiling coaching handbooks. A project proposal must be submitted beforehand, and at the end of the term a project evaluation is required.

"ESCAPE does have a lot of paperwork," admits Christa Rasor, community services coordinator. "But the only way we have to evaluate anything is conferences, project proposals and the like."

Some program participants say they wanted to coach anyway, even before knowing of the opportunity for credit.

"I did it because someone had done it for me," says Dan Gentry, who coached a seventh-grade boys team. "I grew up with ESP... This was my way to give something back to the program."

"Most student coaches are very dedicated," says Dave Bashaw, ESP agency supervisor. "Most of them are the type who say 'gee, I'd like to coach and here's my opportunity.' They work very hard and do an extremely good job."

The ESCAPE/ESP program was born largely because of McLaughlin. As an ESP umpire for five years, she watched a lot, she says, "and not just the pitch."

"It's great that volunteer coaches are out there, but some of them don't know how to teach kids. So I thought if there was some kind of coaches' training, perhaps the situation would improve."

Those discussions led the pair to approach ESCAPE late in the fall of 1983 with the idea of a coaches' program for credit. Ten applied during the program's first term, McLaughlin says. "Out of 260 (ESP) coaches, that's a goodly amount. So it turned out to be a good source of coaches."

McLaughlin says the first coaches' class "had to prove the program's validity." Eventually, after much documentation and paperwork, ESCAPE staffers became convinced that coaching was indeed worthy of becoming a part of the ESCAPE curriculum.

At first, students weren't convinced that the ESCAPE curriculum had anything to do with coaching. The seminars, which Rasor admits cover "generic" topics, have been described by various coaches as "irrelevant" and "a waste of time."

Rasor senses the discontent. Part of the problem, she says, is that coaches are more independent than most ESCAPE volunteers, which makes some of the seminar topics seem irrelevant. But she adds that although they may not seem relevant at the time, later on in life they may apply.

Still, Rasor says, ESCAPE is working on tailoring the coaching seminar to coaches' needs. "Coaches aren't like any other agency or volunteers we've ever had in ESCAPE. It's taken us this long to figure out what their needs are and how they fit in with ESCAPE... It won't ever be perfect, but it's getting better."

And, despite the problems with the seminars, coaches continue to turn out. "After seeing how much fun it is," Motschenbacher says, "I'd do it again for no credit."



Photo by Dean Guernsey

Although coaching grade schoolers in the Eugene Sports Program is a lot of work, University students get the opportunity to earn credit through ESCAPE while gaining valuable experience.

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