

Volunteer coaches return favor for today's kids

By Diane Kershner
 ■ The Western Front
 Western Washington U.

Two Western Washington U. students thought coaching Little League baseball was a "wild idea," but the duo turned it into a fun experience and a unique way to repay those volunteers who helped them when they were kids.

Seniors Sam Petite and Randy Peterson spent two days a week last spring volunteering their time as baseball coaches for 15 fourth- and fifth-graders.

Petite described himself and Peterson as "just average baseball players." He said a few of the team members questioned their coaching ability.

The kids at first looked at Peterson and

Petite as if to say, "You are the coaches?" Peterson said.

But Petite said the players and their parents eventually accepted the coaching pair. "The kids and parents are really cooperative," he said.

One player's mother said the coaches showed a lot of enthusiasm while working with the team. "They've done an outstanding job," she said.

The team practiced twice a week before the games, which lasted from 6 to 8 p.m. The coaches said they didn't try to teach the kids fancy moves such as double plays. "Instead, we simplified it for the kids," Peterson said.

The coaches' main goal was to "get them to play as a team, not as 10 guys out there, but as one team," Peterson said. That was difficult, he said, because

of the egos of fourth- and fifth-graders and because some players would pout if they didn't get to play the positions they wanted.

Each player played an equal amount of time, which made it difficult for the coaches because there were only 10 playing positions for 15 children. "Even the stars have to sit on the bench," said Petite, adding that at first the kids didn't approve.

Both coaches were pleased with the team's performance. Peterson said he believes the "me-me-me attitudes" have changed to attitudes of "team" players. "Every kid is with the others," Petite added.

Petite said he enjoyed being around the kids because they make him feel like a "big kid." One of the highlights of the

season was when both Peterson and Petite showed up for a game each with a newly pierced ear and earring. They teased the team by telling them they all had to get earrings, too. Most of the kids laughed but a few were really concerned, so the joke ended. Petite said he and Peterson give the impression that they are "just college kids having fun."

Petite said he wanted to coach because he felt as if he owed it to the volunteers who worked with him when he was a kid in Cub Scouts and on a baseball team. He believes there is a message that needs to be aimed at college students: "Don't forget all the people who did things for you when you were a little kid," he said. "If everyone made an effort to just give a little bit of themselves, this would be a great world."

Grad students form backbone of athletic staff

By Mary Spearman
 ■ The Auburn Plainsman
 Auburn U.

Coaches, assistant coaches and team members are always in the news, but rarely does one hear about the backbone of the coaching staff — graduate assistants.

Graduate assistants are students who learn the techniques of coaching while earning their graduate degrees. They work behind the scenes in various jobs, from office work to discipline. Some of their other duties include working with individual coaches, coaching the scout team, organizing film swaps and preparing for games.

Auburn U. graduate assistant Tim Beckman said the position is important to students who want to coach on the collegiate level. But he said it is hard when he has to balance schoolwork and athletics.

"It is rough at times, but we couldn't ask to be anywhere else. This is a top-notch program, and we're lucky to be here," he said.

Graduate assistant Wayne Davis said his biggest problem is making up the academic hours he can't take in the fall. "You have to overload yourself because we never stop doing things for football. It makes it hard on us."

Graduate assistants are required to take a minimum of five hours every quarter.

Auburn U. graduate assistants receive scholarships that cover tuition, books and some living expenses. "We have a chance to make some extra money working camps during the summer," said Steve Campbell, a football graduate assistant.

While the assistants said they have good relationships with the players, they are not allowed to interact socially.

"We get along with the players and are their friends, but there are certain areas where you have to draw the line," Campbell said.

Joanne Palombo, a graduate assistant for women's basketball, said, "You have to be careful where you draw the lines. You are expected to be their friend and confidant, but at the same time you have to have some level of respect, because you are their coach."

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6. For names of the Grand Prize winner, available after July 24, 1990, send a stamped, self-addressed, #10 envelope to: Domino's Winners, P.O. Box 4582, Blair, NE 68009.

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