

PERSPECTIVES

Editor in chief: Jack Clifford
 Managing Editor: Jessica Blanchard
 Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
 P.O. box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
 E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

EDITORIAL EDITOR: MICHAEL J. KLECKNER opededitor@journalist.com

Innocent until proven guilty



Pacing the sidelines of the court, the coach grimaces and flashes looks of anger. Every play is punctuated with a shout to one player or another. The coach's pointer finger is in the air, screaming direction to a player.

After losing a game, the coach yells some more off the court. The players need to find the strength inside themselves. They need to not be so weak, so worthless. They need to prove what they yell back at the coach, that they have what it takes.

Is there something inherently wrong with the above, fictional scenario? Not necessarily.

Oregon women's basketball coach Jody Runge has taken a lot of heat in the last week — in The Register-Guard, over the office water coolers and at bars all over town. In some cases, it's been more than just heat Runge has received, it's been the very fires of hell. The Emerald editorial board suggests that maybe not all the criticism is fair, at least not yet.

Certainly, the stories — heard both publicly and privately — of player mistreatment at the hands of Runge is worrisome.

Coaches need to push; athletes, especially younger athletes learning what it is to play sports, need to have their limits tested and their weaknesses exposed so they can fight past it to excellence.

But it is plain wrong to suggest that coaching is somehow a license to treat someone as less than human. Simple human respect demands that athletes, no matter their age or their skill level, be treated with dignity. That doesn't mean that a coach should be soft and yielding with players. It does mean that there is a line of love and decency that cannot be crossed, especially by someone in a position of authority and influence, such as a coach.

The problem, though, is that no one except the players (and they're not talking on the record) really knows whether or not that line has been crossed. Certainly, the fact that players felt the need to meet with Athletic Director Bill Moos to vent their frustrations indicates that Runge is doing something wrong. But we don't know which players went to Moos (as least not on the record), we don't know how many of them had such strong feelings or how many of them were there simply present as a show of support. And we don't know how reliable their testimony is.

Really, the public knows very little, yet a healthy chunk of that public seems to want to lynch Runge now, rather than wait for more information to be gathered. And that's not treating her with respect. One can't help but wonder if there aren't other issues causing such immediate bad vibes to be thrown at Runge. No matter what it is she thinks she's doing with her players, perhaps Runge is going about it the wrong way.

Maybe her methods, not her purpose, are what prompted sports columnist Ron Bellamy of The Register-Guard to say Runge's already as good as gone. Reading Bellamy's column last week, there was a feeling that

perhaps he hopes the Runge era is over more than it actually is over.

On the other hand, Runge's win-at-all-costs approach to revitalizing the University's women's basketball program may have led her to mistreat her players. And that may not be all her fault, but also the Athletic Department's and college sports' fault more generally.

So perhaps the next meeting that should take place is between the players and University President Dave Frohnmayer. Maybe they should complain to Frohnmayer that college athletics' focus on winning above all else has resulted in mistreatment of them. This is a college, after all; where is the focus on developing these women into well-rounded human beings? In all of the discussion of Runge, her ability to produce a winning team has been trumpeted above most everything else. What about her ability, or lack thereof, to nurture athletes and to develop young women into adults? And what of the pressure to perform or be fired? Surely Runge's often-contentious relationship with the Athletic Department has upped the ante on winning.

All of the information isn't in yet, folks. The verdict on Runge should be stayed until more evidence can be produced. Unless there's a total meltdown in the situation, the verdict is stayed through at least Saturday's NCAA Tournament game against Iowa.

On Wednesday, the Emerald will comment more on Runge's position in the community and her role as a female coach, to examine some of the other issues that determine if she's really so bad or if she deserves the benefit of the doubt. Until we all know more, the University community should offer her some human understanding.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Poll Results

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, www.dailyemerald.com. We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

Last week's question

Do you think the ASUO election process has been fair and equitable?

Results: 102 total votes
 Yes — 23 votes, or 22.5 percent
 No — 51 votes, or 50 percent
 Don't know — 7 votes, or 6.9 percent
 Don't care — 21 votes, or 20.6 percent

Well, exactly half the voters say "no fair." It seems likely that way more than 50 percent of the key players in the election would scream out loud, "not stinkin' fair!" Students need more focus on issues, less focus on scandal.

This week's question

How many copyrighted songs have you downloaded from Napster in the last month?

The choices:
 0-10
 11-20
 21-50
 More than 50

Letters to the editor

Oliver encourages knowing the facts

A letter by Brian Carlson ("Bailey makes empty promises," ODE, March 8) was printed which unfairly targeted my running mate, Eric Bailey, and I. Carlson asserted three unsubstantiated points, all of which ignored the truth.

Yes, Bailey did go to the Kappa Delta house and express the concern of immunizing all students who enter the University. Carlson says this is not within the power of the ASUO, but it is. This is our student government, and we have the voice to make change. Sitting on your hands gets nothing done.

Next, Carlson claims that both of us are resident assistants. First of all, I don't even live in University housing, and Bailey is a programming assistant. We knew the rules of this election, and the people in the residence halls who have displayed our campaign signs made the choice to do so. Claiming that you don't know the rules doesn't give you the authority to break them.

Finally, my grievance was not filed

as a strategic tactic. It was filed because I felt someone broke the rules that are intended to make the ASUO election fair and equitable to all. I must also remind you that my grievance wasn't the only one claiming that Bret and Matt broke the rules.

Throughout my time on this campus, and especially during this campaign, I have been a strong advocate of increasing student debate on campus. I encourage any student to express their concerns, but it is important that you know the facts before you do so.

Jeff Oliver
 ASUO Executive candidate
 junior
 journalism/political science

Beware of OSPIRG's McActivism

OSPIRG is working feverishly to associate itself with environmental well-being. The group has crafted the opinion that a vote for OSPIRG is a vote for Mother Earth. I am compelled to address you as an environmentalist who will vote not to subsidize OSPIRG.

OSPIRG defines itself as a "grass-roots," community public-interest group, but an obscene amount of the group's funding, totaling \$144,426 of our incidental fee, leaves Eugene. The

group, formally OSPIRG Foundation Inc., is a distant political action corporation or, as I like to call it, McActivism. The McActivists use our money to pay rent in the StatePIRG buildings, supply and decorate offices and salary their lobbyists and lawyers.

One of many problems with McActivism is that while technology blessed each McDonald's drive-thru with a cost display of our purchase, we students receive no such convenience from the McActivists. It is simply not in OSPIRG's interest that students are made aware of how this money is spent.

Our money should be made available to campus organizations, not just the local McActivism franchise. The possibilities are endless for us to use our money in a way that directly affects our environment and our lives, if we let the lawyers and lobbyists purchase their own recycled paper.

OSPIRG succeeded in appealing to our maternal emotions of environmental protection. Allow me to appeal to your logic. We can do better than McActivism. Do not "super-size it," work to change the menu.

Dayna Phillips
 senior
 history