

# PERSPECTIVES

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# Full court press

The controversy surrounding the University women's basketball program and its coach, Jody Runge, gets more twisted every day. Campus rumors are swirling around this poorly scripted soap opera, ranging from accusations of an Athletic Department conspiracy to oust a strong woman coach, to gossipy stories of Runge as a high-pressure, confrontative coach lacking proper communication skills.

Whatever the real situation, the time has come for the University to show the community its hand. Athletic Director Bill Moos needs to explain his actions and what seem like extremely poor management decisions. If the department can show Runge has committed any real violations, it needs to say so and move on with the process. Right now, Runge's reputation is being unfairly tarnished because of some publicly whispered rumors.

The latest episode in the Runge battle involves, as usual, anonymous sources. Reports last week from these sources claimed that athletics staff initiated the March 4 meeting between Moos and eight basketball players. This was quickly assimilated by critics of the department, adding fire to their conviction that Runge is being persecuted because of her advocacy for gender equity in collegiate sports.

According to the critics, Moos laid the groundwork for firing Runge by arranging the meeting, getting the players to complain about Runge's coaching methods and then running to The Register-Guard's Ron Bellamy, who immediately went to press calling Runge a "dead coach walking."

Then on Thursday, two players who attended the infamous meeting with Moos said publicly that the Athletic Department *did not* orchestrate the private conference. Shaquala Williams and Jamie Craighead insisted that the team had been planning to complain to Moos for months. In the world of journalism, the fact that these sources are named increases their credibility. But to a skeptic, they're not much stronger than anonymous sources. After all, Williams and Craighead will play for Oregon next year, and if Runge is fired, they'll still be working for Moos. If some graduates from the team would speak out, the community might have a better chance of sorting fact from fiction. But Jenny Mowe and Angelina Wolvert, in a smart career move, have refused to speak about this mess.

The air could be cleared by Runge. But she shouldn't need to make a public statement. She hasn't actually been accused of anything yet. In fact, the claims that have surfaced in the last eight weeks make it sound as though Runge is (gasp) a stern coach. Maybe she is, but that's not a fireable offense.

That leaves us with the University. Moos is unlikely to clear the air, as his management style so far has shown little common sense. If employees come to you with serious complaints about one of your managers, the first thing you do is talk to that person. Immediately determine if there's any merit to the complaints. Make the two parties sit down together so you can find out what's going on. What did Moos do? He told the salacious story to the media out one side of his mouth, while the other side said he couldn't name the players because they wanted to keep their concerns private.

Even after leading media attention to the controversy, Moos still should have met with Runge to explain the problem. Only two official meetings have occurred since March 4, and no specific concerns have been made public. If the department has proof that Runge is in serious trouble, they should have said so by now.

Then Moos decided to further cast an incriminating shadow over Runge's behavior. The University hired a law firm, nationally known for its investigations into troubled basketball programs and NCAA violations, to conduct a full assessment of Runge's performance. Again, no specific claims were made, but the implication is that Runge's problems are so serious that a manager can't solve them unassisted. The critics chime in again here, saying the investigation was a sham designed to collect just enough minor concerns to legally justify firing Runge.

The hiring of the law firm was apparently a hasty managerial decision as well. After delivering its report Wednesday, the Kansas City-based firm itself is now under scrutiny by the Oregon Board of Investigators, because allegedly its lawyers

weren't actually licensed to practice in Oregon. Oops.

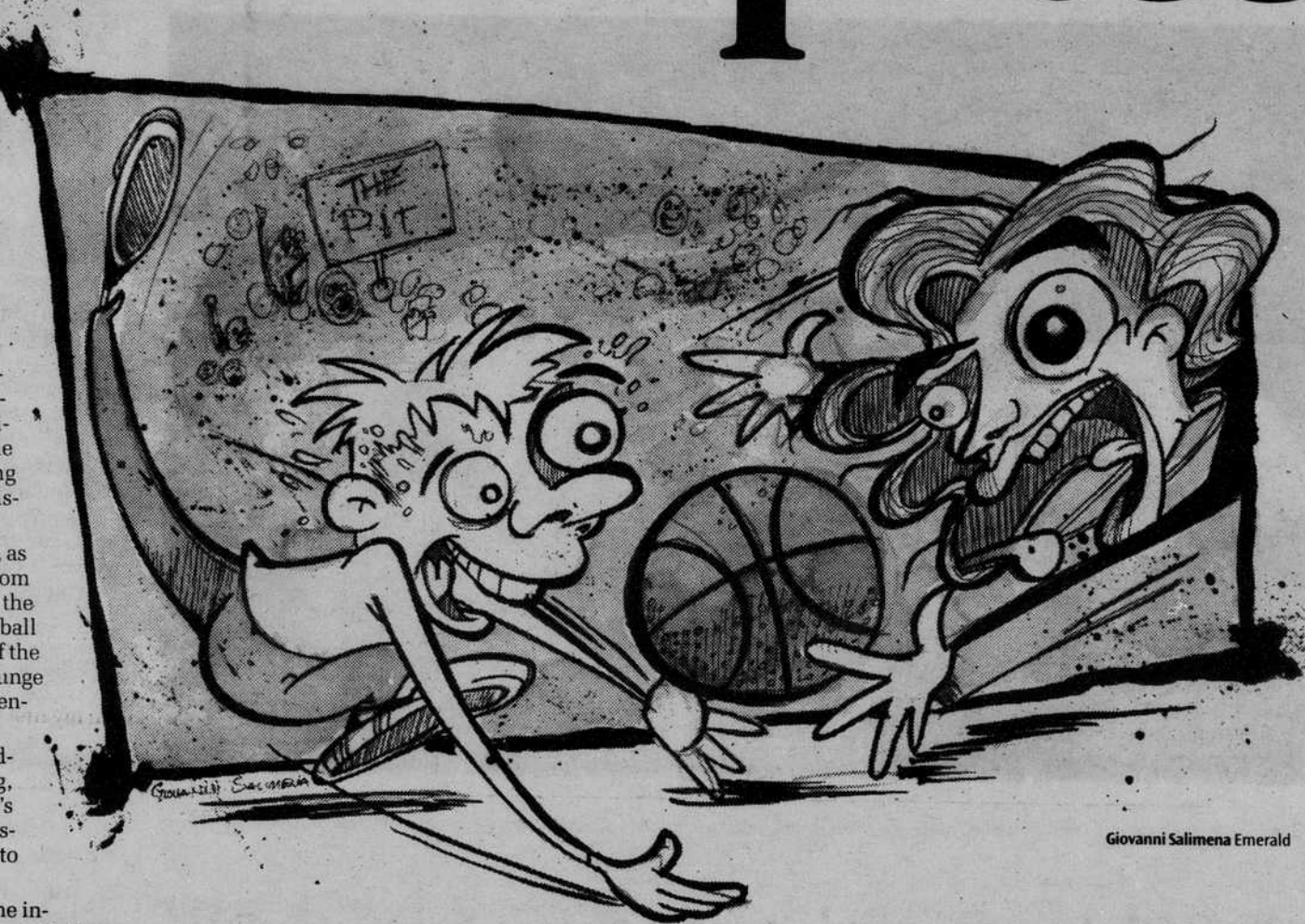
With Moos seemingly unable to handle this situation like an adult, University President Dave Frohnmayer should have stepped in at some point and taken control of this situation, either by explaining the accusations against Runge or by quelling the controversy. Instead, Frohnmayer told The Register-Guard the amazing revelation that he was going to withhold judgment until he had all the facts.

That's mighty nice of you, sir, but it doesn't help. It has only added to the mystique. What did she do? Is there a conspiracy? Will she be fired? The public has no real basis on which to

judge, and they deserve the truth. If it's a not public matter, then why did Moos make it public?

Until someone makes a substantive complaint about Runge, complete with named sources and corroboration, she should be considered innocent. Innuendo and anonymous complaints are a poor excuse for proof. The only thing this controversy has proven so far is that if Runge needs to do some work to improve her performance, Moos needs a total retraining.

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



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

## 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](http://www.dailyemerald.com). We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

### Last week's poll question:

Who is your favorite Saturday Night Live character?

Results: 167 total votes

Dana Carvey as the Church Lady — 34 votes, or 20.4 percent

Tim Meadows as the Ladies Man — 15 votes, or 9 percent

Eddie Murphy as Mr. Robinson — 17 votes, or 10.2 percent

Rob Schneider as the Copy Guy — 10 votes, or 6 percent

Molly Shannon as Mary Katherine Gallagher — 13 votes, or 7.8 percent

Chris Farley as Matt Foley, motivational speaker — 78 votes, or 46.7 percent

**Wow.** It's the really important questions that get a big response. It was a valiant battle, but Dana Carvey never caught up to Chris Farley after an initial surge. But what about Hanz and Franz? Why wasn't Goat Boy or the Wild and Crazy Guys on this list? Jeez.

### This week's poll question:

What should happen on the final episode of "Survivor"?

The choices:

Colby is the final survivor

Colby finally loses immunity

Host Jeff Probst gets attacked by wild dingos

The jury drinks too much and is hung

CBS cans the stupid show

## Letter to the editor

### Ad supplement is anti-woman and inappropriate

I am absolutely appalled by the inclusion of the lovematters.com advertising supplement (inserted in the April 24 ODE) in the Emerald. Its pro-Christian, pro-life, anti-woman statements are completely inappropriate for circulation in a student body newspaper.

I, for one, will never pick up another copy of your newspaper again.

**Meredith R. Branch**

research assistant

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### CONTACT US!

The Oregon Daily Emerald welcomes and will attempt to print all letters on topics of interest to the University community. Letters are limited to 250 words. The Emerald may edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar, style and libel. Letters may be mailed, dropped off at EMU Suite 300, or e-mailed to the addresses at the top of the page. Also, please feel free to give your feedback to any individual story or column directly at our Web site. Feedback comments may appear in print at our discretion. Keep in touch!