

TRACY, from page 4

encouraging when they immediately put him on suspension. When we look at Hollywood and we look at the #MeToo movement and you see a Matt Lauer getting dismissed, it was kind of like, "OK, is that finally coming to sports? Are we going to say this is unacceptable when it's one of the most powerful coaches?" But money and winning won out again. The report they did was like, "We know he's wrong. All of this is not OK." But you're just going to (suspend him for only) three games anyway. It was very disappointing: a shining example of the power of a coach and a program and the culture that I'm fighting against.

J.C.: *Is it more challenging to deal with this in the world of football when you also have a president and a Supreme Court justice setting a bad example?*

B.T.: It's not easy, but you just keep grinding and hope that somebody's affected. We need more people like me out there working and doing things to help change this culture. It's not like anybody can deny that there's bad things going on. It kind of feels like an earthquake hit, and there's all this rubble, and it's like, what do we do with it now?

But the fact that we're even talking about these things is progress. It used to be you didn't talk about any of this. No one came forward to share their personal stories, and no one was being held accountable because you weren't even saying that there was a problem.

J.C.: *Your pinned tweet about the #SetTheExpectation campaign is a video clip of four college coaches you've worked with. The message – "It's time for every coach to step up and set the expectation: that sexual violence and physical abuse are never OK" – seems so simple. A sentiment nobody could disagree with.*

B.T.: It seems simple. I think there's something about going on record, making a public stand on this issue, and saying that you're going to do this. That in itself is an act of courage. Some of my trolls and naysayers, they talk about the fact that hardly anyone has signed the #SetTheExpectation pledge. Well, the pledge is not a joke. It's clearly saying for the coach, you're going to hold your players accountable, and your staff, and yourself. It's not just, oh, I pledge to be a good person. Coaches have to decide: Who are you keeping on your team, and what behavior are you putting up with? What are you allowing to happen within your program? There's been a lot of sweeping under the rug, ignoring, minimizing.

The coaches that have gone on video and said, "I will set the expectation," I think that means something, and I would love to see more coaches do that. But some coaches aren't ready, and that's fine. I don't want you to sign the pledge unless you're willing to follow through. This isn't about likes and clicks for me. This is about actual change and doing the right thing. So however slowly this goes, it's fine with me. I just want it to happen.

J.C.: *You say in your presentation that it's 10 percent of men who perpetrate sexual violence, and it's up to the other 90 percent to change that.*



Brenda Tracy joins U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley last year. They participated in a panel discussion at Portland State University, along with U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, to discuss the Trump administration's rollback of Obama-era policies on how colleges should handle sexual assaults.

B.T.: I think a lot of times as a society, we're just telling young men, "You're bad, you're bad, you're bad. Stop raping." We're not giving the good guys any tools. I tell them I'm not here because I think you're the problem; I am here because I know that you're the solution. Ninety percent of you are good. It's just that you're silent. Or you're going along with things.

Women can't stop this, and the 10 percent that are committing the crimes aren't gonna stop it. So who does that leave? They have to come to this realization themselves. And then we can actually start having some real conversations. Are you holding each other accountable? What are you doing? What are you not doing? What about locker room talk? How do those things contribute to this culture of violence? I think sometimes people think, well, if I do nothing and I say nothing, then I'm staying out of it. But isn't doing nothing actually doing something? Isn't saying nothing actually saying something?

J.C.: *You'd previously had a #SetTheExpectation football game at Stanford, which is a major program. But more than 100,000 people, at the Big House, in Ann Arbor ...*

B.T.: Yeah, the thing that really was different about the Michigan game was the amount of fans. And this is something that I think about a lot: being a rape survivor and having to watch tens of thousands of people cheer for the people who hurt you. I don't know that a lot of people understand what that feels like. I do, and I know other survivors that do.

So being on the field that day and having tens of thousands people cheer for me, it was a full-circle moment. I've had a lot of those, but I really did feel part of me heal. It meant a lot. That game and that day is proof that we can believe survivors. We are capable as a society of doing that, and as football fans, we're capable of doing that. And I hope that we will do it more.

J.C.: *I feel like one thing college football fans miss out on is that it's not just about consent and accountability but an entire value system*

of making sports more important than anything else. Is that part of your educational work?

B.T.: Yeah, I think so. For whatever reason, some fans have a really hard time understanding that. You can be a fan and support your team and love them and cheer for them but still hold players and schools and coaches accountable for their actions and expect more of them. It's not one or the other.

But there's also blind allegiance. Blind fandom really does cloud people's judgment. Cases that should be really simple: No, it's not OK for a 15-year-old to molest a 6-year-old. But then when it becomes one of their star baseball pitchers, all of a sudden we don't know how to reconcile that, right? Because it's my team. So, now we're going to say, oh, people make mistakes, and they deserve second chances?

J.C.: *You are referring, of course, to Oregon State pitcher Luke Heimlich, who removed himself from the team in 2017 when his conviction for molesting a relative became public, but returned to lead the Beavers to the College World Series championship this past season before going undrafted by Major League Baseball. Some Oregon State fans turned on you because of that.*

B.T.: Oh, yeah. Everyone was very supportive of me at Oregon State when I first came forward. When I called out (OSU President) Ed Ray on the Luke Heimlich thing, people got really angry. But not everyone. The fan base was divided, as they are with many of these stories.

It's frustrating, especially given my history with the school. I will be forever grateful for the way that I was treated (after 2014) and the work that we have done there, but I was just really dismayed by the way they handled that particular situation. And really upset about the way the national conversation around these issues becomes "this is just a mistake" and "people deserve second chances." Well, what about the victim? What about her second chance? It's so easy to just

“Second chances don't have to involve playing sports. And forgiveness is not the absence of consequences. Playing sports is a privilege, not a right. You don't get to be on a pedestal where you drive culture and you drive the national conversation and people look up to you as a role model unless you've earned it. Character matters.”

See TRACY, page 7