

## CHAPTER 2

### **Coaching the Monmouth College Women's Soccer Team**

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#### **Prologue**

On Saturday, September 7, 2024, Monmouth College celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its women's soccer team. Like many commemorations, the timing lacked exactitude because Bill Urban had coached a women's soccer club for three years before the first NCAA season of 1994. It was Bill who learned from my wife, Stacy Cordery, about my soccer career and recommended me to the Athletic Department, hoping employment for me would help us stay. It did, for twenty-two years in Stacy's case! This essay offers a personal account of the program Bill bequeathed to me, the first varsity head coach, a bequest for which I will always be grateful.

#### **Contexts**

In 1994 Stacy got the golden ring of academia, a tenure-track position teaching at a small four-year residential college in west-central Illinois. That meant moving from her two-year position at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. I tagged along, and we learned from her new boss, History Department chair Bill Urban, that the college needed a head coach for a first-year NCAA women's soccer program. I had three basic qualifications: I was not the local sports equipment supplier, who wanted to sell the team his uniforms; I knew something about soccer; and I had a valid driver's license. That last was vital, as I would drive the van to practices and matches. And so we loaded up a U-Haul, crossed the Alleghenies, and found ourselves in Monmouth, Illinois, population 9,500, sixty miles northwest of Peoria, forty miles south of the Quad Cities, and 170 miles west of Chicago, the quintessential Midwestern small town complete with a round square of shops, insurance agencies, and banks.

That was a good time to land at Monmouth College. Founded by Scots Presbyterians in 1853, the place was on an upward trajectory thanks to some clever financial packages for students and excellent marketing based around the slogan, "What College Was Meant to Be." Recovering from a low of 650 students—virtually the death knell for a liberal arts college—enrollments were approaching 750 by the time we arrived. There was a new president, plans for new buildings and renovations to old ones, and a good buzz. Though the town itself looked a little down in the mouth, the people were friendly, there was a fine Catholic elementary school, the high school had a good reputation, and we could afford to buy a house.

My focus that first year in Monmouth had to be on the soccer program. Bill Urban coached a club team and famously stopped at the Amana Colonies on at least one away trip to share a bit of history with his players. This was emblematic of the relaxed atmosphere they enjoyed and many of them did not want to engage in intercollegiate competition. They intuitively understood how the travel, the fast-food meals, the higher-level competition, and the time commitment would impinge on the quality of their student lives. I was essentially starting from scratch, working

with a very energetic and committed Chicago-area recruiter by the name of Peter Pitts, who saw the program as a Godsend in his efforts to convince high school students to attend Monmouth. He helped stock the team with some excellent players over the next few years, but the squad was thin for that inaugural season.

This was also a time when Monmouth College, like so many institutions of higher education, was trying to meet Title IX requirements. Requiring equal access to educational opportunities, including intercollegiate competition, this 1972 federal law initiated contentious struggles in athletic departments across the country. One big obstacle was the fact that American football teams often had a hundred or more players on the squad, often greater than the total number of women athletes on campus. The new women's soccer program was part of Monmouth's compliance plan. A cynic might argue that my hiring as the first women's soccer coach was symptomatic of the commitment to Title IX. I was conveniently arriving with my spouse and I had the appropriate accent to sound like a soccer coach. The college avoided putting out a job ad and bringing candidates to campus, and the athletic director, Dr. Terry Glasgow, could point to a successful hire. And I had that driver's license.

If that was all true, I did not think about it at the time and threw myself into the job. Bill stood on the sidelines of every match, an uncritical supporter and steadfast friend. I did get a lot of help from the men's coach, Rue Carthew, a Mancunian who had played semi-professional football for Macclesfield Town before emigrating to the States. Rue taught me about the many duties of a soccer coach at Monmouth College, from inflating balls to putting up nets to making hotel reservations and booking buses when both teams travelled together. Only the referees were acquired by the Athletics Office, and, even then, we had to remember to pick up the checks for the officials before each home game. Rue was a bit reserved at first, aware that I was finishing my doctoral degree and that he did not have any academic qualifications. But he loosened up as it quickly became clear he had played at a higher level than I had and he knew more about the game than I did.

For that first season, in Fall, 1994, we had a squad of sixteen players. We competed in the Midwest Conference South. The five other Colleges, each of which we played home and away, had been fielding teams for several years before we joined, Grinnell since 1987!<sup>1</sup> The top two finishers in the division would enter the playoffs against their counterparts from the North Division, which boasted several strong programs and seemed to always win the conference championship. Worse, whoever had devised our schedule had not paid attention to the obvious need to begin with non-conference games, so four of our first five matches were against conference foes. To add to the overall challenge, not all of the players were exactly, shall we say, veterans of the sport. My assumption that they knew about and understood soccer was quickly demolished when, in the van on the way to our first practice, one of them piped up from the back, "Coach, how many players are on the field at one time?" Oh dear.

We had to use a van because our daily practices took place on a city field three miles from campus. That rough patch of green was lined for us by Monmouth athletics legend Roger Sander. I had first seen Roger in the grocery store soon after we moved to Monmouth. He was massive, a bulky figure in a Bears T-shirt and the shorts he wore year-round. I assumed, until I met him on

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<sup>1</sup> The other four institutions in the six-team Midwest Conference South at the time were Coe College, Cornell College, Illinois College, and Knox College.

campus, that he must have been a retired Chicago Bears football player. Roger grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago and attended Monmouth to play baseball. He never left, becoming a fixture in the Athletics Department. He was a big help all around, serving as equipment manager, assistant football and basketball coach, and head baseball coach. That's how small schools operated: you do everything, and when they ask, "Would you do this?" you answer, "Yes, of course."

Saying "yes" was the secret to my success at Monmouth. First, yes, sure, I'll coach your new women's soccer team. Then, yes, certainly, I'd love to teach a section of Western Civ that your happily rising enrollments require. I immediately found myself caught between two often warring camps, academics and athletics. The money was laughable: a four-month contract worth a total of \$2,400 for the *de facto* year-round position of head women's soccer coach. For that diminutive salary I was expected to engage in hour upon frustrating hour of recruiting players, which of course I did. I also, thanks to Bill, earned \$3,500 for teaching the Western Civ course. Hardly a king's ransom but I could walk to work and my foot was firmly in the door. What I did not know at the time was how low that rate of payment was in comparison to both the amount of work required and the possibilities for more money elsewhere.

Let me acknowledge from the outset that I did not compile a winning record. The first two seasons were in fact completely winless, though improvement could certainly be tracked from the first to the second. In both seasons we played and lost fourteen matches. Our very first contest, at home to Illinois College, started brilliantly. Chantel de la Torre, a tall, deliberate forward from Prophetstown, scored a delightful goal after just five minutes. I remember thinking to myself, well, this is going to be easier than I thought. Fool. IC awoke from their road-induced slumber and scored eight unanswered goals. How bad can it get? I thought to myself afterwards. Badder, it transpired. The next match took us to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to play Coe College, an athletics powerhouse. They put thirteen goals (I'm writing that in letters so it doesn't jump from the page) past us, showing exactly no mercy, their coach urging his players on. After that we entertained Cornell, the Iowa college known for its one-course-at-a-time curriculum and our best result of the season, a two-nil loss. Most teams took it easy on us, notably Grinnell, whose coach, Marti Kingsley, could be heard sportingly instructing her players to pass laterally and not to shoot once they reached nine goals.

We did have some good players on that inaugural team. Jeani Randall, from nearby Galesburg, was our best player, a junior who had competed on the Monmouth club team and was an all-conference pick at the end of the season. Our midfield anchor was Valeria Orozco, a determined and forthright sophomore who kept everyone around her alternately entertained and on their toes. One student watched us practice and declared "I can do better than that," so I invited her to walk on, which she did, becoming our leading scorer that year. We ended the season by scoring in each of our last three matches, giving us hope for the next year. My job between then and August was to recruit heavily, to strengthen the squad and bring in enough players to scrimmage two full teams of eleven in practice. One weakness had been the lack of depth, with only sixteen players and some of those injured for part of the season. Peter Pitts was rubbing his hands with glee.

That second season, Fall 1995, did contain promise even if it also ended with no victories. Thanks to Peter we added a fair number of good players, many from Chicagoland. Tisha Kimoto, Jessica Donnelly, and Malinda Springer had enjoyed impressive high school careers while relative

newcomers to the sport like Cindy Larson made rapid and extraordinary progress in improving and refining their game. From downstate we got Julie Kahl and Jill Heneghan, the latter a brilliant forward who brought with her a soccer heritage that included her brother playing on the Monmouth men's team. Many of the better players had burned out from playing club and high school soccer year-round from the age of five. They just wanted to enjoy the sport. At a D3 school, with no scholarships, a no-cut policy, and no chance of a pro contract in the future, the pressure was off.

We began again against Illinois College and managed to score two goals, though they plundered four. Better than the year before, so progress. In the next few matches solid defense kept our opponents to lower tallies than in 1994: Grinnell only got seven, Clarke University just one, and we took Cornell to double overtime before losing 2-1. That narrow loss was something of a moral victory. Apart from Coe (again), every other match was close. We scored a total of seven goals, Tish leading us with four. By the end of the season, we seemed to be on the verge of a breakthrough, or at least of actually winning a match, though injuries had slowed us down again. In addition to the usual complement of bruises, strains, and pulls we would, through the years, accumulate players who suffered from debilitating migraines, including our best sweeper, and a goalkeeper who was subject to (fortunately rare) seizures.

The elusive first victory came in the second match of our third season. In early September 1996, we drove up to Lisle, a Chicago suburb, to play Benedictine University. The omens were not good. We had already lost our opening match 7-0 to Judson College, another Chicago-area institution. Judson was an unusual opponent, one of the rare schools without an American football program. Soccer was their passion and we were never really in the match. Why we played them is a mystery to me; I understood teams were queuing up to play us, expecting a victory, but we should not have been scheduling matches against such strong programs. Okay, hands up. I should not have been scheduling them. The coaches made the schedule, starting at the conference meeting following the conclusion of the Fall sports season. Those meetings were held in Beloit, Wisconsin, with the coaches driving up together. Well, all except Kelly Kane, the football coach, who usually did his own thing. Roger Sander piloted us from Monmouth to Beloit, a portable television perched on the dashboard in an attempt to get a signal over the airwaves to watch his beloved Chicago Bears. We added non-conference foes afterwards, but it was difficult in those pre-internet days to get a real sense of what other programs were like.

Back to that third season. The drive up to Lisle took about three hours. We arrived at Benedictine to find a dedicated soccer field, not the American football stadium in which most of our adversaries played. Banners around the field proclaimed, "NCAA Championships Site." The pitch was immaculate and the changing rooms spotless. As the two teams walked out for warmups, I thought the other side looked quite small in stature, but they seemed to have more than adequate skills as they worked through their pre-match drills. By now our assistant coach was Jeani Randall, and she expressed herself as confident that this would be our day. On what grounds I did not know, but they proved well founded. The match was relatively straightforward, we took a two-nil lead into half time, they scored shortly afterwards, but we grabbed another goal and comfortably saw the contest out. Afterwards: emptiness. At last, a victory. But it had taken two years and one match to get there. I found a payphone, shared the good news with Stacy, and chatted with Jeani as the players changed.

Perhaps the emptiness came from my fear that the win was not a turning point. Indeed, we lost four out of our next five matches, a tie against Beloit in the middle of that run. We did beat Illinois College twice later in the season, lifting us off the bottom of the division for the first time. Grinnell scored a total of only five goals against us, their new coach, Jenny Wood, very kindly commending me in their college newspaper. And we took local rival Knox to overtime before falling 3–2. For the season, seventeen goals scored and a record of 3 wins, twelve losses, and one tie. Not bad, but hardly earthshaking, though it did set us up nicely for the 1997 season.

That fourth season we made a run at the top four, finishing with eight wins and seven losses overall, boasting a conference record of five wins and four losses, just one win away from the playoffs. We started well, beating Knox 2–1 in Galesburg. The players were over the moon, joyfully exclaiming their happiness, the substitutes rushing onto the field at full time, (i.e., at the end of the match) and Stacy walking across the pitch to offer a congratulatory hug. A bigger surprise came when the Knox athletic director, Harley Knosher, stuck out his hand and said, “I can see this means a lot to your players. Congratulations!” Fair play to you, Harley! We have just beaten your team on your pitch, and you are congratulating me. That moment exemplified sportsmanship for me.

For the players, however, the celebrations had just begun. We lived four blocks from campus and could hear them marching through town chanting, “We Beat Knox!” They TP’d our house, which in practical terms meant throwing rolls of toilet paper over the hedge and onto low-hanging branches of the trees in our front yard. This was supposed to have been done in secret but they were making so much noise it was hard to miss them. We did not want to spoil their fun so we stayed in the house, lights off, vicariously enjoying their sheer joy while keeping the dogs from barking. Stacy and I had foolishly promised to dye our hair red if we beat the Prairie Fire, and so it came to pass, to the great amusement of all and sundry.

The season gave us a veritable rollercoaster ride. After Knox we lost to eventual champions Lake Forest in double overtime. As the game wound down, Melinda Springer, who had been enjoying a running battle with their left-sided midfielder, was hauled to the ground and kicked out. The ref showed her a yellow and gave the Forester a red. Down to ten players, they still managed to score with barely a minute left to take the victory. T. R. Bell, their coach, told me afterwards he expected to see us in the playoffs. I shared this sentiment with the players in an effort to lift their mood, and we did win the next two matches, travelling into southern Illinois to beat Greenville 9–0 and then taking Beloit 3–0. Grinnell rained on our parade as usual, and then we had a crucial road trip up north, travelling with the men’s team. We got past previously unbeaten Ripon in double overtime but lost to a not-very-good Carroll team. That was a disaster. I had a good sense of which of our remaining games we could win, and it would not be enough to finish in the top four of the, by-then, ten team, single-division league. Coe and Cornell had abandoned the Midwest Conference for the Iowa Conference, which they claimed was superior athletically and certainly had looser rules about recruiting prospective players. I did not miss either of them.

That 1997 season was the high point of my college-coaching career. The next year we enjoyed a .500 record, but we were inconsistent, winning three and then losing three, winning four but following that up with another three-match losing streak. Two key players chose academics over athletics when their major required them to take afternoon classes, ruling them out of the team. Our leading scorer, Tisha Kimoto, had her best season, ending with twelve goals,

one more than her tally for 1997. Those first four years were simultaneously difficult and enjoyable. We had fun despite all the losses, and many of my best memories come from those years.

Things started to go wrong after we--after I--tasted that winning season in 1997. I began recruiting less on the basis of fit to the college and the team and more on the grounds of athletic ability, real or imagined. Alas, a few bad apples spoiled what had been a good program and the chemistry stank. I began to prioritize winning, by playing players who shirked off in practice because they had good skills or chronic injuries, and by alienating those who worked hard and deserved to play but did not because, all of a sudden, I thought I was Sir Alex Bloody Ferguson I began to think also of making coaching my full-time career, of applying for jobs at D2 and D1 schools. Fortunately, my father talked some sense into me; also, just as sensibly, Stacy let me imagine that potential future and sighed with relief when it evaporated. And of course, with my record, there is no way anyone other than an incredibly desperate program would have taken a punt on me.

Over the next two seasons, which turned into my final years of college coaching, we won just eight matches and lost twenty-two. There were definitely some highlights, including a weekend double-header of victories over Ripon and Carroll in 1999 (if only we had achieved that in 1997 and made the playoffs; I would have been even more insufferable than I already was!). We had a terrific recruiting year after that 1999 season, bringing in a number of good players and one natural striker, Kim Olson, who scored hat tricks in each of our first three matches as we beat Marian College, Marycrest, and Blackburn by a combined score of 18 to 4. Those three consecutive hat tricks to start a college career are still an NCAA Division III record. She was fast, strong, and hungry. Her will to win was the most dominant of any player I had ever coached. She would have thrived at North Carolina, where Anson Dorrance was teaching women that it was acceptable to be ferociously competitive. At the time I thought we had a great chance to better that magical 1997 season.

After the three wins, though, came four defeats. The first was particularly devastating, a seven-nil drubbing by Aurora University, a loss all too reminiscent of the early years of the program: outplayed comprehensively by a faster, better team, with us showing too little desire on the pitch. The drive to Aurora had been long, not helped by a late start and an arrival with barely enough time to change and warm up. Olson stood out, however, by her determination against a superior team. After that match I overheard the Aurora coach telling her she should transfer to his school; this happened more than once that season.

Three more losses followed that metaphorical kick in the teeth, including a home defeat to Illinois College, a team we had owned, having beaten them five times in a row over the previous three seasons. Then came a 9 – 0 loss to Grinnell and a 7 – 2 defeat by Carroll. Though we recovered to beat Knox—my job was safe!—and Ripon, that was it for wins in 2000. As the season drew to a close, I realized I had had enough. Though my pay had grown to \$3,195, up a third over seven years, the time it all took and the energy I burned through each season had worn me down. To be fair, some of the players had performed exceptionally well in that season, including the ever-unselfish Jessica Adams, whose fourteen assists in 2000 meant she had registered an assist every two games over her four-year career, an impressive tally and one of the best ever in the Midwest Conference. Kim Olson of course dominated the headlines, scoring fifteen goals, easily the highest number by any Scots women's team member to that point. But I felt I had reached

my limit with losses and, with our son now toddling about the place, a diminutive blond-haired mascot, I felt the time had come to step aside.

## Reflections

Coaching takes a lot of time, even when done badly. Stacy had been a firm supporter of me as coach and of the team, coming to every home match and driving to Knox to watch us whenever her schedule permitted. She was our biggest fan, and the players appreciated seeing us together, a happily married couple enjoying a fulfilling lifestyle. But she was a busy professor and our son, born in July 1998, needed two parents at home on a predictable basis. By then I was on the tenure track, thanks in large measure to Bill's support. Stacy and I coordinated our teaching schedules, also thanks to Bill's humane chairing of the Department, so one of us was at home in the mornings and the other in the afternoons. Even so, that was not an infallible form of childcare because of the multiple pressures of being a professor and a coach. Before our final match of the 2000 season, away to St. Norbert, I told the players of my plan to resign. They were stunned but I think they understood. They also played with an incredible intensity, surprising one of the best teams in the conference and holding them to only three goals.

Looking back over those seven seasons, it is clear that a large portion of the satisfaction in coaching comes from unforgettable events on and off the field. Road trips often bring a staple diet of anecdotes, few as memorable as the time Terry Glasgow drove the second van to an away match. This was a unique event, necessitated by the absence of alternative drivers. Normally the assistant coach drove the other vehicle, but she had a class she could not miss. So, TG it was. We were destined for Clarke College, in Dubuque, Iowa, a two-hour haul due north through the Quad Cities. Terry drove a beaten-up old van while I had a fairly new one. We stopped on the way up for a quick lunch. The players ate their boxed sandwiches—those who hadn't devoured them before leaving Monmouth—and they went off to find a restroom. The next thing I knew, TG came rushing out of the building, complaining that a large group of the women had swarmed the men's room! He quickly calmed down, relieved to have been washing his hands when they stormed in and telling me he was impressed by the fact the players had the guts to do it, recommending that in future they make sure no one is in there before doing so.

TG kept his cool in the face of invading women soccer players, but his van did not. As soon as we arrived at Clarke it overheated, steam pouring from the hood. We went off to prepare for the match and TG drove slowly to a gas station for repairs. He got back to the field in time for the drive home, the van to be retired upon its return to Monmouth. Except, in fact, it was sold locally and could still be seen moving lugubriously around town years later, the red-and-white Monmouth College color scheme fading into oblivion. As for the match itself, we played well, only lost two-nil, and enjoyed a raucous ride home, the overheated van leading the way and travelling just below the speed limit.

One aspect of coaching at Monmouth I did not fully appreciate until I worked at a larger institution was the sheer amount of family support we got for home and road matches. Some parents came to every match while others made every home game. In the Chicago area, from where so many of our players had been recruited, we got tremendous support, regardless of our record or prospects. No parent ever berated me for losing, and many congratulated all of us after our wins. For the student athletes, having parents, friends, and other relatives watch them play

was a morale boost, and Stacy always tried to make me aware of who had friends or family in the crowd in order to make sure they got in, even if only for half an hour. These players also tended to climb into the van loaded down with extras: food from home, winter clothes, the occasional lamp or teddy bear. As long as it all fit there was no problem. And the support was as t for our opponents as it was for us. It was always great to see the hugs and the happy reunions at the conclusion of every match, a solid reminder of the power of connection and the ultimate meaninglessness of results.

In Monmouth, the soccer programs also got a lot of support from the local media and, eventually, from the College media-relations staff. Two people in particular were responsible for that. The first was Dan Nolan. Dan was the sports reporter for the local radio station, broadcasting from the town square, with a morning show enlivened by counts of cars during the “rush minute.” For as long as he worked in radio, he interviewed Rue and me before every season, giving us a chance to discuss new players, returning stars, and our expectations for the year ahead, and to enjoy a bit of give-and-take. He was an excellent interviewer, allowing us to do the bulk of the talking. I’m sure the combination of my received English with a growing trans-Atlantic tinge and Rue’s slightly diluted Mancunian must have made for an odd listen in rural Illinois. When the radio station was bought out Dan took a job at the College as sports information director, at which he excelled.

The other person who helped get the word out about Monmouth College soccer was Barry McNamara, who loved the sport and eventually became a very successful head coach after I stepped down. Barry worked in College Relations and interviewed Rue and me several times for the college website, writing some incisive articles about our teams. One, in particular, was perhaps a bit too penetrating: we had chatted about formations and switching from a 4-4-2 to a 4-3-3 as squad circumstances and the opposition dictated, which he wrote up in great detail for public consumption. I like to think that it tipped off keen-eyed opposition coaches, but probably not.

The athletic facilities at Monmouth College when we arrived in 1994 were, like most of the place, in need of renovation. That would certainly happen over the following seven years, including a magnificent new fieldhouse and, in time for my final season of coaching, a dedicated soccer and baseball complex on the edge of town. The latter was a gift from college trustee Safford Peacock. This was a prime example of the power of a single donation to a small school. Before then, soccer was the poor stepchild of the Athletics Department. We practiced wherever we could find a patch of grass large enough, usually on city-owned land. Our matches were contested on Bobby Woll Field, the football stadium named for a legendary but still very much alive former coach. Bobby himself was an occasional presence when we played, watching more of our matches than TG. Indeed, one season, after we had won a match, our athletic director congratulated us on the victory. As he walked away, one of the players turned to me and asked, “Who was that?”

Sharing the field with the football program was a challenge in and of itself. Quite reasonably, the head coach and, for all I knew, the players did not want to. Playing on a field designed for American football also meant we had a narrow pitch with an unusually steep angle down to the sideline for drainage. To add to the general sense of being on an inappropriate surface the area at the edge of the field where the football squad and coaches stood during games would be torn up by their cleats over the course of the three hours it took to play sixty gridiron

minutes. In my first year the football coach promised not to practice the day before a home match against Knox. Rain had made it even muddier than usual, and of course he had his team out there, worrying for his own record. We lost, and I blamed the football coach.

Monmouth College not only survived having a struggling women's soccer program but thrived in spite of it. One of the principal reasons for that was a man by the name of Dick Giese, who became president of the College in 1997. Giese believed in a beautiful campus, a friendly faculty and staff, and the power of intercollegiate athletics. He knew "curb appeal" gave Monmouth a competitive advantage over other schools, especially but not only in declining cities like Decatur or Rock Island. Even Knox College looked down in the mouth compared to Monmouth. He had been a college coach himself, and he recognized that if four hundred or so of your one thousand students engaged in intercollegiate athletics, then you need to pay attention to that significant constituency. His vision and fundraising ability brought us the new baseball and soccer complex, Peacock Field, which we inaugurated in August 2000 by trouncing Marycrest International University from Davenport, Iowa, by a score of 7 – 1. Scheduling a weak opponent for the ceremonial opening of a new field is one thing I did right, though I had no idea just how weak Marycrest was: the university closed down two years after we beat them, a case, as far as I know, of correlation not causation.

The Peacock Field ceremonial opening featured speeches from Safford Peacock, us soccer coaches, and the team captains. The complex had two full-size soccer pitches next to the baseball diamond. We had electronic scoreboards and a bathroom, though no changing facilities, which meant vanning it out in full battle armor. The field was connected to a nature preserve used by various Monmouth science classes and open to anyone who wanted to take a nice quiet walk. With new fields in a lovely area surrounded by trees, it reminded me of the setup at Ripon College in rural Wisconsin. The whole thing felt as if Monmouth College had finally given the soccer teams the recognition we deserved.

If Monmouth College soccer deserved recognition, it was in large measure because of Rue Carthew. Rue was hired to coach the men's team following a run of eight part-time coaches, none of whom had done anything spectacular in the way of accumulating wins. The best of the lot was Lyman Williams, who won 5 and lost 13 over two seasons separated by three years. The longest serving had been Bill Urban, a pinch hitter who coached for two consecutive years on three different occasions. Fluent in seven languages, the gaps in his coaching resume represent years in which he and his family lived abroad. His teams won eleven of the fifty-five games under his control, including our first-ever conference wins. But Rue had a professional career under his belt and a deep knowledge of the game, so Terry Glasgow hired him in 1991. Rue stayed until 2005, compiling by the far the best record of any Monmouth College men's soccer coach, including a conference championship and a trip to the NCAA tournament.

If Rue had an Achilles heel it was discipline. Or, more exactly, lack of discipline. His players had a reputation for partying and he sometimes joined in. Rumor had it that they inducted him as an honorary member of the fraternity to which many of them had pledged and in whose frat house he could occasionally be found after matches. Having pledged, it seemed he could not punish them for violating rules against drinking. Adding a women's team to the mix made things interesting for everyone, especially when we travelled together on away weekends. The charter buses usually had a video player on board and we once let the men choose the film. After about twenty minutes of *Clerks*, which is not appropriate to a mixed audience of impressionable young

people, we learned we had made a tactical error. We stuck to soccer highlights from England after that one.

Presumably, that's what American football teams do, watch lots of film. They also do a lot of lifting weights, unlike soccer players. The latter did, however, want to stay fit over the winter, and that task became easier when, through the combined efforts of President Giese, TG, and the College's development office, we got a new fieldhouse. Sooner than anyone anticipated, \$22 million was in the bank and building commenced. Small houses adjacent to campus were purchased and pulled down, a street was closed, and an old dorm, nicknamed the Holiday Inn because of its exterior doors, was demolished. Make way for progress! And progress it was. The design was brilliant, creatively incorporating the gyms, old and new, into a vast structure with a huge open track-and-field area easily divisible into small spaces using mesh curtains. It was ideal for indoor soccer, which quickly became an evening mainstay. There was also a new weight room, an Olympic-size swimming pool, intramural facilities, offices for coaches and staff, and a general feeling of prosperity. Talk about curb appeal: the Huff Athletic Center had it in spades and helped recruit students and athletes.

Before The Huff, as the students quickly dubbed it, visiting players and coaches justifiably complained about our facilities. But then coaches complain a lot, and my fellow women's soccer coaches were no different. They were an interesting bunch. In addition to trying to steal our best player, they were mostly interested in beating us. When I coached, the majority of coaches in our conference were men, and they definitely wanted to win, though the women were just as competitive. Women were, however, a little less openly ambitious. Two of the men against whom I coached told me they were building programs with the express aim of winning a national championship, something none of the women did. But women coaches took losing just as badly as their male counterparts. One of my clearest memories from the 1997 season comes from the aftermath of our 1 – 0 overtime defeat of Lawrence University. Their coach, in her first and only year there, could be heard muttering "one fucking goal; one fucking goal!" as she took in the enormity of losing to Monmouth College. I later learned that she packed in coaching at the end of the season and went to work for the NCAA in Indianapolis. The Grinnell team seemed to specialize in trying to intimidate opponents, wearing black practice shirts with a logo that looked like a World War One German military cross and the word "foosball."

Sportsmanship, as we used to call it, was in short supply, but the Cornell College coaches were especially bereft of that particular quality. When lightning forced the referee to abandon a match against them, he told us head coaches—Cornell had two, the Robertson brothers, little and large—that the match would be thus obliterated from the records. Lo and behold, the Cornell women's soccer record for that season, 1997, showed a 2–1 victory over us, the score when the match was abandoned. The lively Robertson brothers also featured in the only time I swore at an official. This came on our home pitch, when a clearly unfit ref, complete with knee braces and thick spectacles, missed a massive foul in the Cornell area that should have been a penalty for us and, a few seconds later, failed to notice one of the Cornell forwards barreling into and knocking our keeper flat on her back. As I was leaping off the bench effing and jeffing I could see in my peripheral vision the Cornell coaches helpfully telling the ref I had it all wrong and my players were at fault. The ref stayed well away from me after that, patrolling the far side of the pitch and no handshakes were proffered at the conclusion of the match. Stacy told me afterwards that the

stands fell silent and one of our professorial colleagues turned to her and said, *sotto voce*, "I didn't know he knew such words."

When it became clear that I was not going to be a one-season wonder, I entertained the idea of actually learning how to coach. In addition to the books I read I joined the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and attended a coaching clinic held at the University of Notre Dame. There were sessions on fitness, on training routines, on throw ins, and on set plays. The star turn was the University of North Carolina's longtime women's soccer coach, Anson Dorrance, who holds the record for Division I championships. He coached a full complement of U.S. women's national team players and won a FIFA Women's World Cup as the first U.S. national-team coach. He was open about being competitive, fostering competition among the players at UNC. I expected to hear a torrent of tactical tips, each one more useful than the last, but instead got anecdotes. One of those made the audience gasp. He told us that his all-world forward, Mia Hamm, would rather go shopping than play soccer, though he seems to have encouraged that habit by sending her out with his credit card to buy him "some stylish clothes."<sup>2</sup> It seemed to be playing on a stereotype about women, but he assured us that was in fact what his players preferred to do.

Anson Dorrance represented a deeply ugly strain in athletics. His solution to the puzzle of creating the desire to win at all costs, to instill hunger and to cultivate ambition in women soccer players of the highest caliber, was troubling to me. His motto appeared to be: hurt, harm, belittle. To win, he thought he needed to bring anger and ferocity out of his players, reflecting his own approach to the game as a college player, an approach I did not share. He was an unparalleled winner and most of his players apparently remained loyal to him, but that cut-throat ideology seemed inappropriate to a D3 school with players who competed for fun and not for a scholarship. I was disappointed that his way to win was so psychically, emotionally, and physically violent.

Trying to bring the ideas of Anson Dorrance and the other top coaches who spoke at the Notre Dame workshop to Monmouth College proved something of a challenge. Whether or not my players thought about going shopping every time they stepped onto the field seems unlikely, and I was not about to take a survey. Nutrition had been the subject of one panel, but we could not expect student-athletes to eat well on our allowance of \$3 for breakfast, \$4 for lunch, and \$5 for dinner, which basically meant stopping at fast food restaurants and trying to convince them to go easy on the French fries. And as for film analysis, Monmouth College soccer was not exactly overendowed with technology. Only once did we have a match video, taken by business professor Dick Johnston. He stood on top of the press box at Bobby Woll field filming on VHS but, sadly, when it came time to give me the finished product, he discovered it had been accidentally recorded over by his daughter Mary, who had a seemingly insatiable appetite for business programs.

Despite the obstacles, we had some record-setting players in my seven years as head coach. I've already mentioned Kim Olson's three consecutive hat tricks to open a collegiate career. Jessica Adams scored three goals and had two assists for eight points against Blackburn College in 1998, still the second highest single-game tally in the program's history. Jessica was a fabulous player, short and quick, and almost completely silent for four years. She spoke with her right foot, scoring twenty-six goals and combining brilliantly for her first two years with Tisha Kimoto, who

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<sup>2</sup> Crothers 2006: 232.

scored thirty-two times in her college career. We had some very fine goalkeepers as well. Colleen Shaughnessy made 139 saves in a single season, second only to Lauren Bentrup's remarkable record of 246 saves in the season following my departure from the sidelines. That averages over seventeen saves a match in a season when the team only scored three goals, one fewer than my first year as coach. Those are both records unlikely to be broken any time soon. I coached, and Stacy and I got to know, a lot of wonderful young women in those seven years.

Bill watched our games from the sidelines whenever he could, offering his quiet, welcome support. Rue was also a constant, offering advice, support, and occasional critiques. He was certainly a hard worker. He earned his real money laboring, usually second shift, on the production line at Gates Rubber Company in Galesburg. He loved soccer, and he enjoyed the coaching, but he always felt a little uneasy not having a college degree. We talked about him enrolling in an undergraduate program, most likely at Monmouth, but he never had the time. Also, like many working-class Brits, he lacked the self-confidence and perhaps a little bit of the cultural capital to imagine himself as a college student. It cost him his job ultimately because the college made the coaching staff full-time members of the admissions office and required college degrees, though his squad's lack of discipline did not help matters. I learned a lot from Rue and remain grateful to him for being what we would now call my mentor, though at the time we were just two English geezers talking football.

## Conclusion

When we met to reminisce on that lovely September afternoon in Fall 2024, Bill Urban was fittingly present and appropriately feted. Recognized as the father of soccer at Monmouth College, Bill watched the current team with us, stood in all the photos, and joined us for dinner afterwards. That we could celebrate thirty years of the women's soccer program is down in no small measure to his willingness to say "yes" when asked to coach a women's soccer club.

From all of us, Thank You, Bill.



Figure 2.1: Celebrating 30 Years of Monmouth College Women's Soccer. Alumnae and current students gathered with coaches past and present in 2024 to celebrate the sport's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Monmouth College. Pictured are Bill Urban (central row, far right); Simon Cordery (back row, third from right); and Barry McNamara (back row, second from right). Photo by Kent Kriegshauser.

## Bibliography

Crothers, Tim (2006) *The Man Watching: Anson Dorrance and the University of North Carolina Women's Soccer Dynasty*, New York: Thomas Dunne Books.