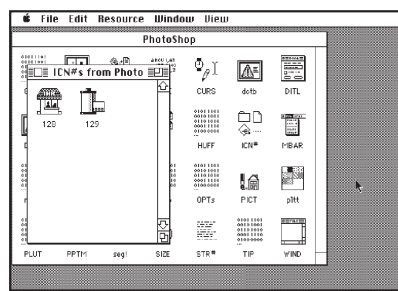
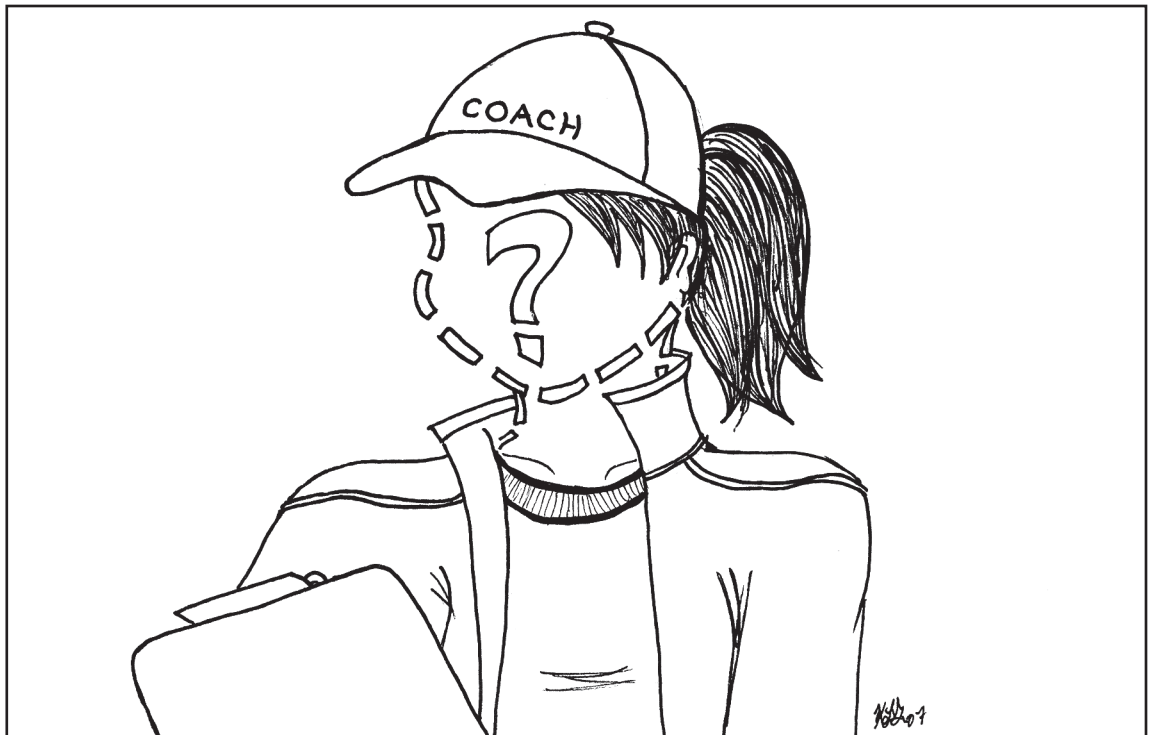
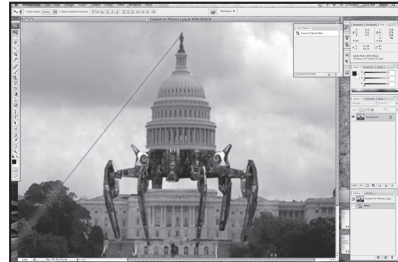


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KELSEY TANASIUK

# Gender equality still a work in progress in CIS coaching

**MYLES GOUGH**  
*The Charlatan (Carleton)*

OTTAWA (CUP)—Despite a general consensus that women are invaluable to the sporting community as role models for athletes, they continue to occupy only a small fraction of head coach positions within CIS.

Sheilagh Croxon, an Olympic medal-winning coach and consultant for the Coaching Association of Canada, believes the disparity between male and female coaches in CIS is a problem, and universities must make a more concerted effort to hire female coaches.

In 2005, a CIS study found that men occupy 80 per cent of all coaching positions at Canadian universities. In addition to dominating male athletics, men also held about 70 per cent of the head coaching jobs for female teams. By comparison, women constituted less than five per cent of coaches for male teams.

Field hockey, a sport played exclusively by women at the CIS level, was the only sport where women outnumbered their male counterparts in head coaching positions.

With little change during the past two years, these figures are still relevant to universities today. Croxon said many barriers exist that discourage women from coaching at top-tier levels—including unequal funding for women's sports and lower salaries for female coaches.

She said equalizing salaries and creating policies around coaching that are more conducive to women and their lifestyles can help alleviate this problem. Croxon said sport is about more than just winning, and believes female coaches should be sought out for their diverse skills.

**“Female athletes need women coaches as role models, and they also need leaders who place more emphasis on relationships.”**

**SHEILAGH CROXON**  
CONSULTANT  
COACHING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

“You need to focus on developing human beings,” she said. “Female athletes need women coaches as role models, and they also need leaders who place more emphasis on relationships.”

Jennifer Brenning, director of athletics at Carleton University, agreed that there is a problem, but said schools have taken steps toward increasing pay equity. She said coaches at Carleton are all under middle management contracts, and any variation in salary is due to experience level.

Despite these progressive measures, Carleton still has trouble attracting female coaches. Carleton currently

employs 13 male head coaches at the varsity level, compared to only two women. While trying to find a head coach for the women's basketball program this off-season, Brenning said the university was in serious discussions with a female for the position. The candidate, whom Brenning could not name for privacy reasons, later decided to withdraw from the discussions.

“For a women's program, the ideal candidate would be female, but when the pool of female applicants is so small, this is hard to do,” Brenning said.

The university eventually hired Taffe Charles—a former assistant with the men's program—as the new head coach.

Kelly Lyons, a member of the Carleton women's basketball team, said she has no preference about the sex of her coach. She said her male coaches have tended to be a bit more authoritative, but her female coaches have placed just as much emphasis on winning.

“I think women coaches obviously understand the female players, but there are some men who come from very female-oriented families,” she said. “It all depends on the person.”

Lorne Adams, president of Ontario University Athletics, said the decision to hire male coaches for female sports is often based on a lack of availability, and female athletes would rather compete under a male coach than not compete at all.

## U OF A GENDER PARITY

The U of A currently employs four female head coaches—Liz Jepsen of Pandas soccer, Laurie Eisler of Pandas volleyball, field hockey's Carla Duncan, and Georgette Reed, who's head coach of both the cross-country and track and field teams. Thirteen of the U of A's 25 varsity teams are female, and women hold a number of key administrative positions in the Athletics department.

University Athletics Director Dale Schulha says that though the U of A doesn't have a policy on it, they do have an unofficial philosophy that stresses gender equity.

“We certainly want to move to as much gender equity as we can in our programs, in terms of providing opportunities to student-athletes as well as coaches and administrators,” he said.

“But when we hire a coach, for example, we want to hire the most qualified individual, and gender is taken into account, but the vast majority of female coaches and women in our department don't want to see women hired just because they're women; they want to be able to stand on their own right, and they can.”

In Schulha's opinion, the lack of gender parity in the coaching profession has a historical basis.

“Over history, there were much more opportunities for male coaches than for female coaches. I think that's changing in a very positive direction,” he said. “Women are getting much better opportunities for entering the coaching profession. Across the county, we've got some outstanding role models.”

He cited Eisler, Reed, former Pandas

basketball head coach Trix Baker, and Melody Davidson as examples. Davidson, a former U of A faculty member, coached the Canadian women's national hockey team from 2004 until this summer—including for their gold-medal turn at the 2006 Olympics—and is now the team's general manager.

Schulha also said that sporting organizations at the provincial and national levels are starting to provide more chances to women, a move he said was important.

“Young girls now can look up to those role models and see that there are opportunities for women in those professions,” he said.

In addition, the U of A has a large number of female assistant coaches, especially on female teams.

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