



INSPIRATION — Traci Statler has taken many of the very ideas she has used to train college and Olympic athletes, and now uses to motivate athletes at CSUSB.

Beyond Sport

by Koren Wetmore

Talk with Traci Statler and you'll leave the conversation believing anything is possible, because, from Statler's viewpoint, it is.

Gifted with a natural exuberance, she draws upon her academic training and life experience to share with athletes and non-athletes alike the keys to reaching their potential. And she's quick to credit those who helped her reach hers.

Trained by top experts in sports psychology, the New York City native has coached collegiate and Olympic athletes and challenged perceived gender barriers within her field. As an assistant professor of kinesiology at Cal State San Bernardino, she instructs students in the psychology of sports performance and serves as a consultant for CSUSB's men's baseball, women's softball and women's water polo teams.

"What I do really transcends sport," she says. "The assistance I provide is for anybody who wants to improve his or her performance — whatever that is."

It's a skill Statler may not have acquired had she followed her original career path. In the early 1980s, her interest focused on reporting sports performances, not enhancing them. About three-quarters through University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill's journalism program, however, she discovered little or no opportunities for women in broadcast sports. Not willing to be "a weather girl in Iowa," Statler decided to carry a double major.

She found her second pursuit through a sports psychology class she had enrolled in while a member of North Carolina's ski

team. In June 1990, she graduated with bachelor degrees in psychology and journalism. Following advice she often gives her students, Statler next discussed her goals with her professors. It was her sports psychology professor, Richard Coop, who encouraged Statler to attend Cal State Fullerton to work with Ken Ravizza, a leader in the sports psychology field. In Ravizza she found her first mentor, one who would sharpen not only her skills but also her resolve. When Ravizza learned Statler wanted to work with baseball teams, he expressed concern over whether an all-male team would accept guidance from a female. He allowed Statler to test the waters by assigning her to a junior college baseball team as part of her master's program at Fullerton. Statler excelled in the position and the team requested she return the following season, this time as a paid consultant.

"Ken strongly tried to convince me away from baseball. He believed I could do the work. He just wasn't sure I would be accepted and I appreciated his honesty," Statler says. "His reservations helped me work through all the 'what ifs.' Now about 75 percent of the people I work with are men." Statler faced a similar challenge while pursuing her doctorate at the University of Utah, where she trained under the expert eye of Keith Henschen, her second and most influential mentor, she says. Under Henschen, Statler worked with members of the U.S. Olympic Speed Skating Team and U.S.A. Track and Field, but her greatest challenge was working with the university's football team.

"Walking in and working with an all-male team can be hard for a female, but Traci commanded their respect," says



Henschen, professor of exercise and sports science at the University of Utah. “It’s not that she’s hard or anything, but they knew she meant business and they knew she was good.”

It was an experience that earned Statler the nickname “Sergeant” for her ability to maintain a strong stance under the most difficult drills. It was a strength she drew upon as she balanced her academic program with work as an events coordinator at the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City and later as an instructor.

That fortitude combined with her journalism background has now led to a book, “Sports Psychology for Track and Field,” to be published sometime this year. Statler served as an editor for the project and also co-authored two chapters: one on race walking, the other on sports psychology for collegiate track and field. Her achievements, challenges and training proved perfect background for her position at Cal State San Bernardino, says kinesiology chair Terry Rizzo. “In her line of research — sports psychology — she’s bridged the gap between our academic program and athletics program. It allows our students who are non-athletes to experience vicariously through working with her,” Rizzo says. “Traci makes this field come alive. She doesn’t just research it and teach it, she actually does it.”

Her performance expertise also helps the college athlete adjust to the rigors of university life. “They’ve been used to

being a big fish surrounded by small fish in high school. They get to college and suddenly everybody’s a big fish,” Statler says. “I see the same stress at the Olympic level. It’s about meeting a high level of performance all the time — and that’s exhausting.”

Statler’s guidance helps alleviate much of that stress and provides the tools athletes need to excel, says Tom Finwall, head coach for CSUSB’s women’s water polo team. “Instead of looking at a challenge as stressful or tense, she’s helped the athletes see it as an opportunity to overcome that challenge,” he says. “We now have a better attitude and a more positive approach to the game.”

Much of what she teaches athletes can translate to any student, she says. Tools include mental exercises such as visualization and time management skills that help address common issues of confidence, stress and performance anxiety. Tips she offers students include:

- Focus your energy on what’s happening here and now, because that’s what you can control.
- Use time management, setting realistic expectations for



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‘Twas the season to be jolly. Late last year many of the CSUSB athletes made the holidays merrier for some by giving, although it has never been quite clear who reaps the most joy from such generosity — the receiver or the giver. So here, perhaps, the privileged were the Student Athletic Association Council (SAAC), the Coyote women’s basketball team and the men’s soccer team who spent time doing what is never really out of season.

The 11 sports teams that make up the Cal State San Bernardino intercollegiate athletics department collected toys and clothing during November and December to brighten Christmas for the children of farm workers in California’s Imperial Valley.

SAAC was the biggest campus donor to hold a special toy and clothing drive coordinated by Professor Loreto Velarde-Petersen, a Spanish instructor. Velarde-Petersen took more than 300 toys collected on campus along with the clothing to Mecca, where the farm workers live in a complex of 130 mobile homes amid one of the state’s largest agriculture zones.

The organization was one of several groups on campus

Better to Give



GREEN CHRISTMAS — Coyote soccer players (left to right) Brendan Perez, Eric Salazar and (far right) Aaron Wilson are among those who helped deliver Christmas trees to those selected in a special drawing. Eileen Moore, her husband and son received one of the 18 trees given.

that donated to the project. The university’s Latina culture class also donated \$500 worth of food certificates to Stater Bros. markets for the farm worker families, Velarde-Petersen said.

The women’s basketball team gave new meaning to the term “Back the Pack” by providing backpacks to 250 elementary school children in San Bernardino. With the organization Somebody Cares Southland, the team filled backpacks at Arrowhead Elementary School with notebooks, colored pencils, markers and other items.

“It was great to see these children so excited and happy,” said Leilani Tirona, a senior and captain of the Coyotes’ team. Tirona is also president of SAAC.

With a little help from members of the men’s soccer team, the Inland Empire Chapter of Childhelp USA delivered 18 decorated

Christmas trees during the holidays as part of a project that raised more than \$10,000 for the charity.

Charlene Waelder, hospitality chair of the chapter, said the funds raised during the organization’s sixth annual “Forest of Hope” helps support Childhelp USA, which provides shelter, prevention and treatment for victims of child abuse. “We couldn’t have done it without the great help we received from the soccer players,” she said.

One special recipient was Eileen Moore of San Bernardino, her husband and young son. The Moores were among the more than 200 homeowners who lost their residences and all their belongings in late October, when the Old Waterman Canyon Fire swept through the north side of the city.

also the birthplace of Islam and is home to Islam's two holiest sites, Mecca and Medina. Its public education system was established in the early 1950s, and only boys were allowed to attend school. It wasn't until 1960 that girls were allowed to attend formal classes.

Lost in the political debate portrayed in the American news media, and therefore the minds of most Americans, is that the bond between the two countries strengthened during the U.S. cold war with the now-dismantled Soviet Union. The relationship was such that Saudi Arabia and the U.S. had closer ties than the U.S. had with its European allies, said Professor Othman Al-Rawaf, a member of the Saudi delegation and a political scientist. It was a relationship that went beyond the concern over the Soviet threat to the Middle East, he said. Also, Saudi Arabia has been a strong moderate voice in the region, making it a leader in the Arab world, able to be a force in forging joint agreements with its neighboring states.

William Green, a political science professor at CSUSB, said tensions between the two countries have devel-

oped and increased in recent years as the U.S. military presence in the Arab region has grown, especially with the war against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003. "We [Americans] have to understand that even if we intervene in another country with the best motives," said Green, "that we are doing this for the best of everybody involved, people on the ground in that region are not going to like us being there. Even if they understand why we are there, they don't like the fact that outsiders are coming in to resolve their affairs."

Sounding a similar caution in a later panel presentation on culture, religion and society in Saudi Arabia was Dr. Selwa Al-Hazzaa, an eye surgeon who heads the most prestigious ophthalmology hospital in Riyadh and a fellow at Johns Hopkins Ophthalmology Center. If any change, if any true reforms are to take place, she said, they have to come from within Saudi society not from the outside.

Outside pressure, for example, should not be applied in regard to women's rights. It is wrong, she said, for people to expect Saudi women to achieve the same level of inde-

pendence in their home country in a rapid fashion when it took generations for American women to do the same. Cultural and religious matters must be considered. Outsiders either don't know of these or don't value them, and Al-Hazzaa and other Saudi panelists said their culture is very religious and very conservative compared to the west.

"People will make the change," she said. "But it has to be our own change. It has to be within us that we have to make the change, not some external force. If you force reform, it isn't reform anymore."

The conference was a continuation of CSUSB's activities in the region initiated by political science professor Ralph Salmi and fully supported by President Karnig, Dean Conley and Louis Fernandez, university provost and vice president. It was the result of a relationship developed and outlined in a memorandum of agreement signed June 2000 on the CSUSB campus between Karnig, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Higher Education, Dr.

Khalid Al-Angary, and King Saud University President Dr. Abdullah Faisal.

Cal State San Bernardino has taken a leadership role within the 23-campus California State University system with regards to academic programs

designed to increase understanding of the Middle East, including one of the few programs offering Arabic languages.

In addition to its partnerships with King Saud University and other universities in Saudi Arabia, CSUSB also has forged educational partnerships and exchanges with universities in Turkey, including the hosting of a symposium at Cal State San Bernardino in November 2003 with Gazi University. More programs are being developed as a result of those partnerships and the desire to forge better understanding between Americans and other countries, Conley said.

"The communication and understanding that we talked about all day long is a two-way street," Conley said in closing the Jan. 22 panel presentations. Referring to Americans, he said, "It is as much our responsibility as it is the countries of the Middle East to expand our curriculum, to develop student and faculty exchange programs and to open our societies to cross-cultural communication."

— Alan Llavore



tasks ("Don't schedule two hours to write a 10-page term paper") and get the big stuff done first.

- Develop a relationship with someone who can help you.

It's that last tip that can be so critical, a tip she learned with Richard Coop, Ken Ravizza and Keith Henschen. Armed with the attitude that makes anything seem possible, Statler suggests that professors are among the people who ensure that anything is, indeed, possible for students.

"If you're struggling, don't keep it to yourself," Statler says. "Talk with your professors. We care about our students." And, she adds, no matter what major you're pursuing, know there is someone in the kinesiology department ready to help.

(Koren Wetmore is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in publications such as Inland Empire Magazine and Real Woman.)

What 55 Brings

California voters' March 2 approval of Proposition 55, the \$12.3 billion statewide school repair and construction bond, will provide \$54 million to Cal State San Bernardino, including funds for a new state-of-the-art College of Education building.

The new \$48.6 million building will provide lecture halls, lab space and faculty offices for the college, which consistently ranks among the leaders in producing credentialed teachers in the 23-campus CSU system.

Patricia Arlin, dean for the College of Education, added, "With the increasing number of students entering school, the need for credentialed teachers is substantial. This building will go a long way in helping with its state-of-the-art classrooms and labs. Our credentialed students will have more opportunities to learn teaching methods and new research in a much more modern environment."

But the education college isn't the only winner with the bond's passage. The measure supplies the university with \$1,480,000 for equipment and furniture to the science building and \$2,556,000 for equipment to the university's new Science Annex, which is now under construction. The university's Palm Desert Campus will receive \$1,382,000 for equipment and furniture for its second building, the Indian Wells Center for Educational Excellence, which is also under construction.