

Williams College's Herman Bases Coaching and Life on Tenets of Support

By Brian Davis, NFCA Director of Media Relations

At its very core, coaching involves an individual providing support, guidance and instruction to others on how to best achieve personal growth or professional goals.

For current Williams College Head Coach Kris Herman, the coaching tenets involving support and personal growth are ones that have always held particular interest, not just as it relates to her players, but also to her own life and to the lives of others while holding down such an influential position.

The support she personally received started early on in Herman's coaching career from the administration at Tufts University, her alma mater and, ironically, a league rival to her eventual coaching home, Williams College.

"I was extremely fortuitous (to get into coaching at Tufts)," Herman said. "It was actually a case of right place, right time and was significantly different from the way kids get involved in coaching these days.

"I had played in college at Tufts, so I was already there in 1987. The head coach Dave Caputi, as was somewhat typical of the time, was an assistant football coach who had been assigned to coach softball. He was a good friend, so he coached me during my senior year and had no assistant. I graduated and had a number of different plans, none of them particularly solidified. I walked into the athletic director's office and said, 'the head coach needs help, and I need a job. Hire me.' The A.D. Rocky Carzo hired me on as an assistant, which I think was a win-win for everyone.

"The following year the head coach took another job, coincidentally at Williams College as a football coach. I again went to the athletic director, this time in an attempt to become the head coach. Either he was happy to have me or he did me a great favor, probably both, by hiring me as the head coach. Again it was a case of right place, right time. The good news/bad news was you didn't have to have a lot of experience to become a head coach in most women's sports at that time, so I'm not sure that it was the best for the players at the time, but it certainly worked out well for me."

It certainly appears to have been the best for the players at the time. Herman took full advantage of that opportunity to coach the Jumbos, compiling a record of 339-164-3 (.679) over 16 seasons while winning five New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) titles and guiding her team to an NCAA tournament appearance in each of her last seven seasons at the school.

From there it was on to league-rival Williams College prior to the 2004 campaign. Her coaching success continued unabated as Herman immediately led the Ephs to three straight NESCAC crowns (2004-06) and to a pair of World Series berths. Over

26 years in charge of the two NCAA Division III softball programs, Herman has racked up an impressive 547-318-5 overall record.

Shown such vital career support in her own life's pursuit for professional growth, perhaps it's not surprising that Herman developed a passion for passing along support as a coach not just to her players, but also to others throughout all walks of life.

That passion led Herman into involvement with numerous charitable organizations as well as to encourage others to get involved. Whether it's riding through Massachusetts on a bike in the Pan-Massachusetts Challenge to raise funds and awareness to help battle cancer or working with various non-profit organizations in attempts to improve the quality of life for those facing adverse issues and events, Herman looks at her work as just another way of providing vital support.

"My getting involved in charity didn't really come from someone in my family having pediatric cancer or another illness," Herman said. "It just came from my strong belief in teams and the fact that all the great benefits that one gets from being on a team can certainly benefit anyone.

"Charities are a relatively big topic in my world. I am a co-founder of a non-profit called Team IMPACT (GOTEAMIMPACT.ORG). What Team Impact does is strive to improve the quality of life for kids (throughout the northeast) with life threatening and other chronic illnesses, through a match with a collegiate sports team. It's sort of like a Big Brother-Big Sister program except the program matches a kid with a whole team. Young kids in age from 5 to 15, sometimes older, dealing with many different illnesses and circumstances, basically get to be a part of the team.

"Many of these children won't physically ever be able to play collegiate sports at any level. Some of them will, but many of them won't. They also miss a lot of time in school and a lot of youth sport participation, depending on what their issues are. I really believe that being able to give people who aren't able to be a part of a team the positive benefits and support of 'Team' is really pretty special. That's where my involvement comes from.

"The important thing with Team Impact is that the relationship is not a one-shot deal. It's not like a kid is only with a team for a season. We use the statement 'for the duration of their treatment and beyond,' so it goes as long as the child and family wants it to go. The kid will stay with the team even as players graduate or, in some instances, coaches move on.

"Depending on how old the child is and their level of connectivity, the college athletes are texting them and e-mailing them, visiting them in the hospital or the school lunchroom or even going to one of their soccer games. Best case scenario for these kids are that they've gone into remission or are getting better, but they've missed a lot of school, and it has impacted them socially. Team Impact offers them a

chance to have some of that vital socialization, which is one of our main concerns. Some of them head back to school eventually, but having a bunch of big brothers or big sisters is pretty cool.”

Herman’s success at both Tufts University and Williams College paved the way for not just a lengthy coaching career, but also the opportunity to impart her knowledge and lessons for personal growth on to a large number of players. Through Team Impact she is also provided the chance to serve as a ‘coach’ to players at other colleges and universities.

“Developing players on and off the field is sort of the crux of the job, to be a guide for players as they develop. I don’t look at it as a top-down, like I’m developing you. I’m just there to help a player figure out what path’s important to them, and how best to start and continue on that path of growth.”

If the ultimate goal in coaching is to provide guidance, instruction and support to help others in reaching personal or professional results, then Williams College is truly in fine hands with Kris Herman at the helm.