

NCAA, AIAW in dogfight

AD's concerned about roles

By KATHLEEN McELROY
Sports Staff

Texas A&M men's and women's athletic departments work together with relatively few problems.

But their governing institutions don't.

The NCAA, which governs Texas A&M men's athletics, at its convention two weeks ago voted to sponsor five women's championships already sponsored by the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), which governs Texas A&M's women's sports.

The NCAA's action has left some AIAW members upset and Athletic Director Marvin Tate and women's athletic director Kay Don concerned.

"I think we need to see where we were headed in women's sports," Tate said Wednesday.

It's obvious where the NCAA is headed. At the convention in New Orleans delegates from Division II and III schools — usually smaller institutions — voted to let the NCAA sponsor its women's championships in basketball, volleyball, tennis, swimming and field hockey (the only sport in the group for which Texas A&M doesn't field a team).

Division I schools — larger universities like Texas A&M and the other Southwest Conference schools — tried to override the vote but were outnumbered by the smaller schools. However the championships, which begin during the 1981-82 school year, will only affect the Division II and III schools.

Tate said A&M voted against the change. Don attended the AIAW convention in Washington (held coincidentally at the same time as the NCAA's) and said many women felt betrayed by the NCAA's move.

"Some people were extremely angry. Some felt they had just been totally defeated," she said.

The AIAW also sent to the NCAA a telegram threatening legal action against it if the delegates took any action that might damage the AIAW. The telegram, sent two days before the NCAA voted, was ignored by the Division II and III schools. Some AIAW members are still considering using some type of action.

But why are the women so against the NCAA participating in women's sports?

"The women feel they know how to conduct championships for women," Don said. "We feel we know the women better."

"Women will not have any voice — women will lose out totally with a men's structure trying to run women's championships," Don said.

She also said her complaint with the NCAA wasn't the action itself.

"I'm against the way it's been handled without first setting up governments," she said.

She is not, however, against a merger that gives women a say.

"I'm not opposed to the men and women getting together with equal voice," she said.

"I think it can be done," she said. "But I think they (both the NCAA and the AIAW) are going to have to give a little."

But right now neither organization is giving an inch. As it stands now, both the NCAA and the AIAW will hold championships in those five sports with schools having to decide

which tournament to enter. If this is, indeed, the case the NCAA will have a huge advantage.

The NCAA is the dominant association in men's collegiate sports. It offers three things every school wants — prestige, money and media exposure. The money given to some Division I schools participating in post-season football bowl games exceeds the athletic budgets of many schools.

However the AIAW is trying to establish its reputation. Developed at a time when the NCAA was ignoring women's athletics, the AIAW now sponsors 37 championships in three different divisions based on the amount of scholarships given to female athletes.

Money is just now going to AIAW schools. For the first time since its establishment in 1971, the women's association was able to reimburse

some of its schools participating in post-season championships.

"We have made great strides in getting TV contracts," Don said. Television is where the NCAA has made its money, gaining lucrative contracts for football and basketball.

Don still hopes the differences can be worked out.

"I'm hoping that the men and the women can learn to listen to each other and respect each other," she said, "and come up with the best structure for men and women in athletics."

The current structure of Texas A&M's athletic department won't be affected by the NCAA's decision since Texas A&M is a Division I school. However if the NCAA ever takes over for the AIAW, there would be changes, some of which would affect the coaches.

"There's a big difference in the

rules that the coaches have to abide by," Cherri Rapp, women's head basketball coach, said. "It would cost a lot more to recruit."

But actually, Rapp, like most coaches, says she just wants to have a good program for the school and for the female athletes.

How do the athletes feel about NCAA vs. AIAW?

Most of them weren't aware of any conflicts, but basketball player Peggy Pope said she didn't think the NCAA would be that bad for women's sports.

"I think women's sports will be bigger," she said. "I think there will be more publicity in the NCAA."

Don said, she still has one concern:

"A lot of people fear the male athlete has been lost," she said. "I hope the athlete will not be lost in the shuffle."

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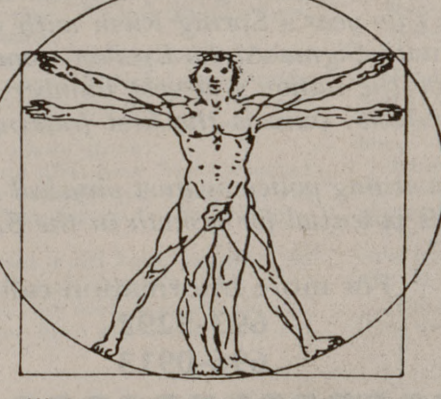
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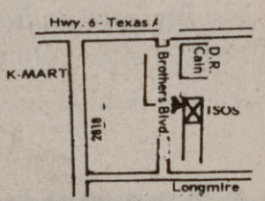


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