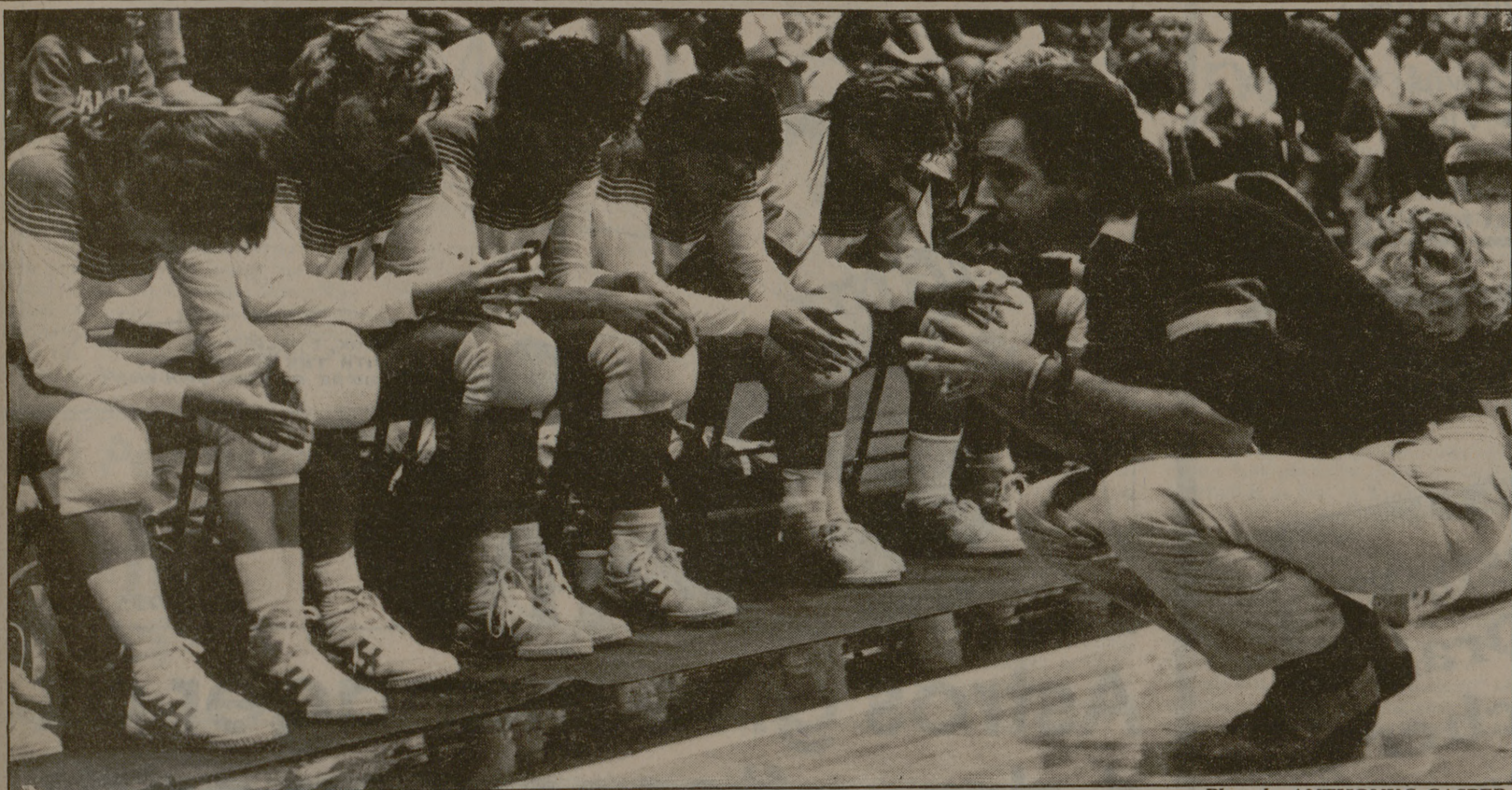


Sports



"You've done it before, so you know exactly how to do it. Now go out and do it." That's probably what Dr. Warren "Spider" Simpson

is telling the A&M volleyball team here. The spikers use Simpson as their mental expert to positively develop their mental skills.

Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

Winning a state of mind to Ags

'Mental expert' hypnotizes spikers to victories

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

Texas A&M's volleyball players go off the court between games, lower their heads, close their eyes and put their finger tips together. It's time for a mental exercise with Dr. Warren "Spider" Simpson.

Simpson, who calls himself the team's "mental expert," puts the players under a mild hypnosis.

"There are all levels of hypnosis," said Simpson, whose first two degrees were in psychology and counseling. "There's the mild, middle and deep. I've never done the deep with them, but most of them have been in the mild hypnosis state."

"Hypnosis is a real touchy thing. There is lots of skepticism because people don't take the time to investigate the subject. People will say, 'oh, he's a fraud,' but really no one even knows exactly what hypnosis is. It's a state of mind, where a person is relaxed and is only susceptible to what they want to be susceptible to."

Simpson, who has worked with high school, college and professional athletes, compares the process to a daydream.

"In a daydream, you see the positive outcome," Simpson said. "You see exactly how the dream's going to turn out. In hypnosis you see the outcome and all the way up to the outcome."

Since it involves getting the athlete to think positively, Simpson uses mental cues to get players in the right frame of mind.

"You have to be relaxed to play the game," said Sherri Brinkman, A&M's All-American middle blocker. "And you can't think negatively. He'll say, 'You see the serve. There it comes. Boom! You got it.' We have a lot of mental signals. When we serve, he'll point to his eyes, meaning we can see where the serve is going. Whenever you're getting mad at yourself, he makes you see what you're doing wrong."

"Most sporting events are mind games. It's all upstairs. If you have the right mental state of mind, you can almost perform the task without the physical."

Simpson said part of his job is to get the players to feel positively about themselves.

"Motivation might be a good word to describe it," Simpson said. "I make them believe in themselves. I say, 'Remember, you're the best. You've done it before, so you know exactly what to do. Now go out and do it.' Any athletic event revolves on how an athlete feels about himself."

Which is exactly why A&M Coach Terry Condon contacted Simpson

a little over a year ago to work with the team.

"I really think it works," Condon said. "I think it helped a lot last year. We settled down during matches and relaxed."

Over the past two seasons Simpson has worked with the team, the Aggies have gone 43-7.

So how much credit goes to Simpson?

"I'd have to say any hard match we played last season (credit goes to him)," Condon said. "Before, anytime we'd play anyone good, everyone would be erratic. We just couldn't play. I think the San Diego State match is a good example of what he did (the Aggies upset the nationally ranked Aztecs). They knew they were going to win when they walked out on the court. I think I was more nervous than they were."

And, like Condon, most of the Ags are firm believers in Simpson.

"Just look at the 33-4 record last season," Brinkman said. "It was a drastic change. We had fun out there. We would feel the vibrations from each other and we knew we could win. We really believed in one another."

But Simpson said if the ability wasn't there, the wins wouldn't be there either.

"In all honesty, I don't have a clue how effective it is," he said. "I don't miss a trick. I know when a player is not in the game mentally. But I'm no miracle worker. If they didn't have outstanding physical ability, they wouldn't be involved in college athletics. I just get them to peak in their abilities."

Simpson works with the spikers an average of three times a week in 35 to 45 minute sessions.

"We have individual sessions," Simpson said, "but the difference between volleyball and say golf or running, is that you ultimately must bring five other people into the picture. Volleyball, other than the serve, is not a one person sport. You have to see everything in context."

But the player has to believe in the system for it to be useful.

"I'd say it's 99 percent positive," Simpson said. "People who want to do it are getting a lot out of it. It's like any kind of counseling. If you go in with the attitude that it won't work, it doesn't. It's all based on trust and respect."

And most of the volleyball players believe that Simpson's way works.

"It's definitely a different experience," freshman Cheri Steensma said. "It takes some time getting used to. He puts it in our minds that to be the best, we first have to believe we are the best. In other words, you have to believe it before you can achieve it. He just helps us believe it."

Horns, Sooners ready to run the ball

Associated Press

AUSTIN — After three straight victories against pass-happy teams, Texas Coach Fred Akers said Monday his Longhorn defense would

have to think run against Oklahoma Saturday in the Cotton Bowl.

"We're going to have to switch gears on defense," he said at his weekly news conference. "We're telling them to forget what they've

learned in the last three weeks to get ready for the running game."

Texas, dropping its traditional ball control offense in favor of a "run-and-shoot" attack, depended on the pass to beat Missouri, Stan-

ford and Southwest Conference opponent Rice. Senior quarterback Todd Dodge set a UT single-game passing yardage record against Rice last Saturday, hitting 11 of 19 passes for 359 yards and two touchdowns.

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