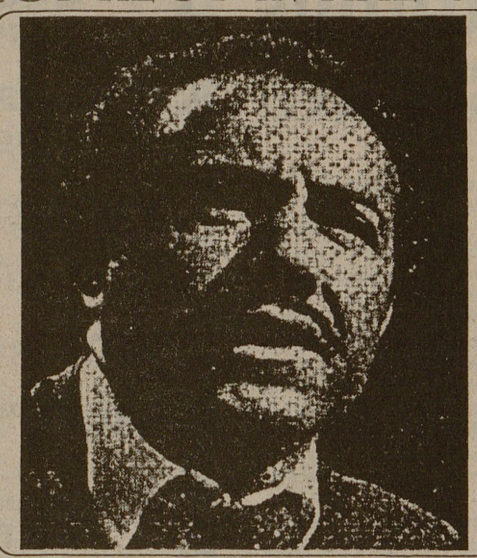


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Basketball fan overcomes challenges in intramurals

Student referees games despite cerebral palsy

By Richard Tijerina
STAFF WRITER

Being an intramural basketball referee is tough for Greg Moore. Although he is an avid fan of the sport, he had problems learning all the rules. Players often consider him their enemy. It's also hard moving around on his crutches.

Moore has cerebral palsy. Moore was born with the crippling disease, which is caused by a lack of oxygen in the brain at birth. This lack of oxygen results in the loss of motor skills. No cure is known for cerebral palsy.

Although the disease is serious, Moore said he was not afflicted as badly as others. He had a speech impediment as a child, but eventually corrected it. He has little strength in his leg muscles, but doesn't always depend on his crutches to get around.

Moore became an intramural referee for the first time this semester. He decided to officiate games because he's always liked basketball and needed to be involved in something.

Being a referee is hard work, Moore said. Difficulties often arise because his crutches restrict his movement. He can't move quickly or always use his hands.

"I don't use the full set of hand signals most of the time," he said. "I'll just make the call audible, then use the hand signals when I come up to the (scorer's) table. It would just slow down the game if I had to work around my crutches and do the hand signal. I have my variations of hand signals."

Even with his lack of leg strength, Moore doesn't always like to use his crutches. He only uses them when he has to travel for an extended amount of time.

"I usually won't use my crutches when I'm inside the house," he said. "My power gives out when I have to go long distances. I'll walk with them around campus, but take them off in the rooms or when I go over to people's houses. I hardly ever use them when I'm home."

Growing up with cerebral palsy was difficult, Moore said. He eventually accepted the fact he had the disease, and underwent physical therapy to improve his motor skills.

"When you're younger, doctors try to train other brain cells or other parts of the brain to take over that function," Moore said. "They make you go through a lot of physical therapy where you learn to do things that strengthen your legs. I don't know how successful the therapy is."

Moore underwent numerous operations to strengthen his leg muscles. He said that although the operations helped, they were far from a solution to the disease.

"I had a lot of different operations while I was growing up," Moore said. "They were for different things — not necessarily to repair or cure the damage. I had surgery on my ankles, hamstrings and other things like that. The operations were corrective to give me some more leg strength, but they weren't a cure."

In high school, Moore said he knew he couldn't participate in his favorite sports — football, baseball and basketball. He said he needed something to be involved in, and became involved in the only sport the coaches would allow him to participate — wrestling.

Although Moore said he wasn't the best wrestler on the team, he felt good to be involved in something he enjoyed. He said he wished he had started wrestling earlier in his life.

"Wrestling requires a lot of balance," Moore said. "I wasn't real good at it. I just did it because it was one of the few sports they would allow me



Photo by Ronnie Montgomery

Greg Moore, intramural sports official and junior political science and economics major from South Carolina.

to play. Football was pretty much out of the question. Wrestling is a more individual-type sport.

"If I had started early enough, I could have developed a lot of moves that would have taken advantage of strong upper body strength."

His lack of lower body strength prevented Moore from being a better wrestler.

"A lot of people would take advantage of my lower body strength," he said. "Opponents would do all kinds of moves to take my legs out. I could have developed earlier and learned some defensive moves to counter that. Wrestling was just something to keep me involved in something."

Moore said players in the intramural games he referees treat him no differently than other referees.

"They usually react like they would toward any other referee," he said. "There have been a couple of people who have told me it's great that I can actually go out and do it. Most of the time, it's normal."

Officials in the Intramural Department treat him the same as the players he referees — fairly. He was given no special opportunities because of his handicap and had to qualify for the position like everyone else.

"I know some of the people who work in the Intramural Department," he said. "They seemed pretty receptive to it, and they work me a lot, so I guess they don't have any problem with me. I passed the written test and they've been evaluating me just like anyone else."

Moore didn't consider becoming a referee until this semester, but said he would consider officiating in other intramural sports because he

enjoys it and it's a good way to let in shape.

Living with a handicap is something that occasionally depresses Moore, but he said it is something that must be accepted. He said accepting the disease is the first step to overcoming it.

"Every once in a while, you feel sorry for yourself," he said. "Outside of that, I just had to accept it. I worked out a lot when I was young, but when I got older I just had to accept it and work with it."

"If you're going to feel sorry for yourself all your life, you're going to be wondering. 'What if, all you do I feel like that sometimes, but basically I don't let my handicap bother me. You have to go out and do what ever you want. You have to try and not let it get to you. If you can't do something, then that's life. You have to go on."

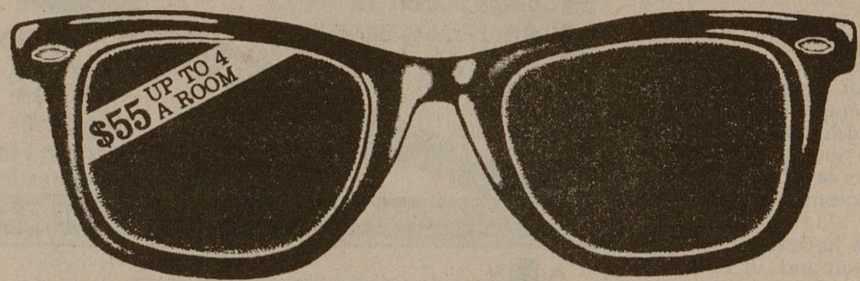
Moore said it's important for handicapped people to find something they enjoy because it helps keep a person going.

"You have to find something that you enjoy that makes it all worth while to you," he said. "If you work hard enough and you really want it, you can find your niche. You can expect unreasonable goals."

"Everyone has something they have to deal with," Moore said. "When you're handicapped, the reason is just a lot more obvious. You just show determination, you're going to find something that you can do. Everyone can find something they can do well — it just takes them a while to find it."

"Don't give up because that's the worst thing you can do. If you let life has beat you then it basically because you're not giving up anymore."

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