

# DAILY NEWS SPORTS

HE SAW A GUN IN AN ANGRY COACH'S HAND. IT WAS A STARTER'S PISTOL. NOW HE'S BEHIND BARS. WHO'S TO BLAME?

# YOU MAKE THE CALL



MARK KRAM, PAGES 114-108

Joshua Maxey is serving time in a Texas prison.

DEBORAH CANNON/for the Daily News

FLYERS WIN  
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# In the name of discipline

**TOUGH LOVE OR ABUSE?  
INCIDENTS ARISE THAT  
ILLUMINATE THE SHIFTING LINE  
OF PROPER CONDUCT BETWEEN  
COACH AND ATHLETE, AN ISSUE  
EPITOMIZED IN THIS FESTERING  
CASE FROM A TEXAS  
PUBLIC SCHOOL.**

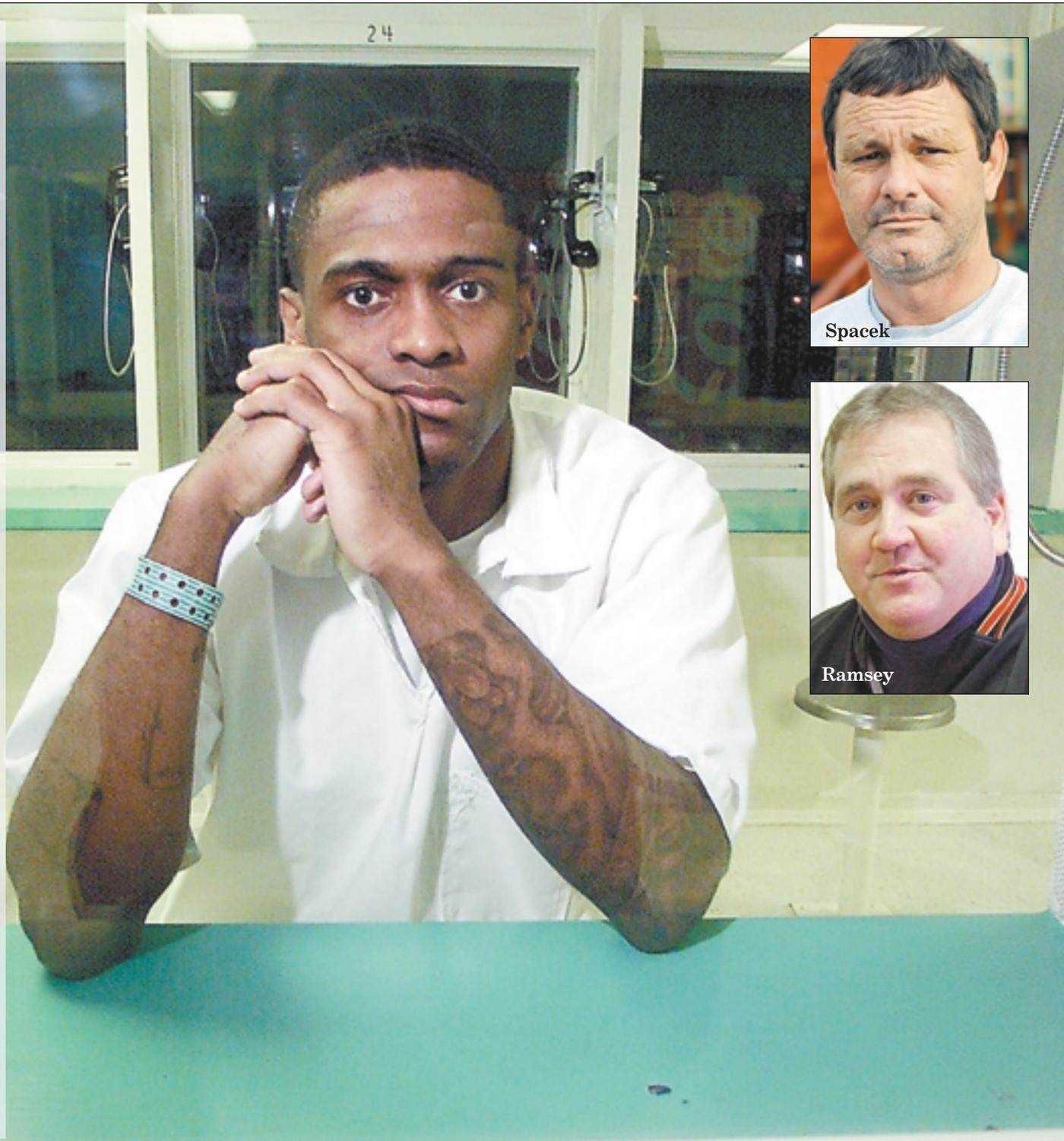
**There was a gun,  
two coaches and a  
student; what occurred  
next is uncertain**

By **MARK KRAM**  
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**N**EW WAVERLY, TEXAS — Only three people know what happened at New Waverly High School that day: Larry Spacek, then the head football coach; Steve Ramsey, his assistant; and Joshua Maxey, then a seventh-grader whose 14 years had been steeped in turmoil. When this story is over, you can decide whom you believe, what version of events you embrace. The coaches say they were victims of a grave untruth, that they had no intention of ever injuring or even upsetting Maxey. They say they were just joking and that Maxey knew it. And yet what Maxey alleges happened 11 years ago is far from funny, if you buy into his contention that it helped pave the journey that would lead him behind bars.

Joshua Maxey is 24 years old and a ward of the Texas Department of Corrections at Gatesville, where he is serving a sentence for armed robbery. In the years leading up to the events of Nov. 27, 1990, he had endured a troubled childhood at home. Going to school, he found that his problems only deepened. He stuttered, had difficulty with the curriculum, and became a discipline problem that Texas school policy redressed with corporal punishment. They bent him over and whipped him with a board. Says Maxey, as he sits in a visiting area at the prison: "We called them 'getting pops.'"

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Spacek

Ramsey

DEBORAH CANNON/For the Daily News

Imprisoned at the Texas Department of Corrections of Gatesville, Joshua Maxey says he still carries the scars of an incident 11 years ago.

COACH

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**Maxey: Wide-eyed fear**

Grades had just come out that November day in 1990, and once again Maxey would bring home a sorry report card: all F's. Seeing Maxey in the gym during sixth-period band class, Spacek walked over and asked to have a word with him. What happened then would become the subject of intense debate, but what Maxey claimed was this: Spacek ushered him into his office, closed the door and began lecturing him on his poor grades, how it would prevent him from playing football one day. Maxey alleged that as Ramsey looked on, Spacek told him, "I oughta whip you for every 'F' on this report card."

"You'll have to catch me first," Maxey told him defiantly.

Spacek is alleged by Maxey to have then removed an electrical cord from a shelf and with a chuckle said, "I'll catch you, and when I do, I'll tie you up and hang you from the ceiling."

Maxey alleged that Ramsey then chuckled and observed, "No, I got something better." He said the assistant coach then went out to his truck, returned with a gun, and began waving it threateningly at him as he sat transfixed by it. Maxey said that Ramsey asked Spacek, "Do you think I should?" Maxey said that Spacek told him not to do it, and that the two coaches then had a big laugh. Maxey only later discovered that the gun was actually a starter pistol.

"How did I know that?" Maxey asks. "I thought, 'This guy is crazy!' I just froze. When it was over with, they stood around joking, trying to calm me. They could



**Thea Clark, Joshua's mom, is worried about his future.**

MICHAEL STRAVATO/For the Daily News

see how scared I was. So I laughed along with them until I got out of the room."

Events became a blur at that point. Maxey said he went home and reported what had happened to his mother, Thea Clark. Angry yet puzzled, Clark immediately went to see school superintendent Alvin Davis, cursing as she approached. Coincidentally, Spacek came by to discuss another issue with Davis when he suddenly found himself overwhelmed by Clark. As Clark stood eye to eye with him and yelled at him with unbridled ferocity, Spacek stammered an apology, which Davis would come to look upon as

a tacit admission of culpability. He asked Spacek for his work keys. When the school board convened three weeks later, he and Ramsey were fired, despite the fact that the two were never charged or even questioned by police.

Why?

Spacek sits on his patio and with a disdainful chuckle replies, "Because I did *nothing* wrong."

**Grandfather: Scars evident**

New Waverly is a sleepy place, a town of a few corner stores, a gas station or two, and some old clapboard churches. A sign on

the shoulder of the narrow, patched-over road that leads in from I-45 announces the population as 950. Quite a few of the people who live here were born here, some years ago, under the iron hand of Jim Crow. Whites and blacks understood their place back when the Rev. Jesse A. Clark was a child, even when it came to such simple joys as fishing and hunting. "If you were black back then, you were only allowed to catch catfish; only white folks were allowed to catch bass," says Clark, who with the help of his daughter, Thea, presides over a declining congregation at Western Grove Missionary Baptist

Church. "And you better not shoot quail or pheasant or even squirrel. But you can shoot a bag full of possums if you liked."

What befell his grandson Joshua grieves Jesse Clark, shows him that while things are better now for blacks here, the old ways are still in place. That fear is still there, wrapped together in a tight ball with poverty, low self-esteem and simmering anger.

REV. JESSE CLARK  
*Joshua's grandfather*

Until Joshua had that encounter with Spacek and Ramsey, Clark, 67, says he could always communicate with Joshua, sit with him and talk over his problems. But Clark slowly began to see a change in Joshua, that there developed a core of hatred inside him, tempered by the desire to strike back before he was somehow struck again. Clark says that whatever the coaches intended to do, even if it was just a joke and not an ominous overture, it was significant to someone only too aware of the *potential* for harm. Says Clark, "All Joshua had to know is that something *could* happen for the fear to set in."

And how did he know that?

Clark shrugs and replies, "Because it *has* happened. For years and years to blacks everywhere."

Joshua sits with his hands fold-

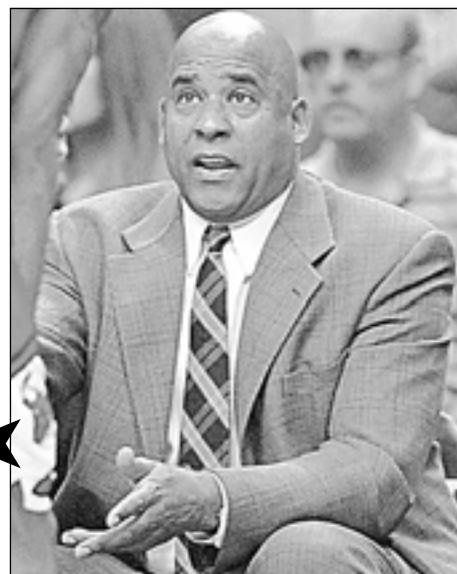
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# TWELVE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**INCIDENTS INVOLVING COACHES AND PLAYERS OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS**

**1** Ten players walked off the **San Jose State University** basketball squad in January 1989 and leveled accusations at head coach Bill Berry of verbal abuse and mental cruelty. Players objected to being cursed at by Berry and one said, "Friends have had to see psychiatrists" because of him. Conceded Berry, then in his 10th year at San Jose State: "I do cuss. I swear some. I also teach. I teach effectively, and I teach well." Walk-ons replaced the boycotting players for the balance of the 5-23 season, at which point Berry was a relieved of his job. Berry blamed the situation in part on the players' frustrations with losing close games. This week, he was named interim coach of the Chicago Bulls.

Ten players boycotted Bill Berry's team at San Jose State.



**2** A player revolt led to the resignation of **Drake University** basketball coach Tom Abatemarco in February 1990. Against a backdrop of assorted NCAA violations, 15 current and former players accused Abatemarco of inhuman treatment. While Abatemarco denied abusing his players in interviews with ESPN and CNN, his players staged a two-day boycott of practice and said that they would not play as long as he was the coach. Former player Eric Berger said Abatemarco criticized players brutally and obscenely, and once embarrassed an assistant coach by pouring a can of soda on his head. Said Berger: "[Abatemarco] just treated you like feces." Ten years later, Abatemarco resigned as coach at Sacramento State in California. Fourteen of his players had left the program during his two seasons there.

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ed on a table in the prison's visiting room. Quietly, he says, "I blame myself for how I ended up. And I blame *them*, Spacek and Ramsey, for what they did to me."

Well before he ever set eyes on the two coaches, Joshua Maxey was what educators like to call an "at-risk child." Thea divorced his biological father when Joshua was just 2. Joshua developed a stuttering problem at age 3, flunked second grade and sixth grade, and was continually a discipline problem. A report by the Montgomery County Special Educational Services Cooperative in January 1991 stated that Maxey engaged in behavior that was "usually inappropriate," and that he is "easily distracted, cannot take 'no' for an answer, is frequently untruthful, appears not to try, lacks self-confidence, does not complete homework, has poor rapport with teachers, is overly aggressive toward others, and does not respect authority." The report's conclusion: Maxey was "emotionally disturbed, and speech- and language-handicapped."

Corporal punishment was a common form of discipline in Texas back then: Out would come the paddle. Parents had to sign off on it, and Thea did just that when the form came home at the beginning of the year. She says now it probably did more harm than good, but saw it back then as a way to keep Joshua somewhat in line. It was only a few weeks before the episode with Spacek and Ramsey that Thea requested that Spacek give her son "pops" for a discipline violation that had come up. While Maxey now concedes that he deserved some of



MICHAEL STRAVATO/For the Daily News

Larry Spacek says the incident at New Waverly High School forced him and his family to flee the area in the middle of the night.

the paddling he received, he says that it annoyed him that "it seemed like only the black kids got the wood."

"All the white kids who acted up got detention," says Maxey. "The black kids got popped and *then* got detention. I know I got into trouble in school sometimes, but I was never in trouble with the law and I *sure* never deserved to have a *gun* pointed at me."

Word of what Maxey said happened slammed into New Waverly like a twister, leaving behind toppled reputations and a debris field of allegations and counter-allegations. Sides were drawn: The coaches had their supporters, some of whom were black. They told Thea, "Why are you stirring things for like this?"

Joshua would not go back to school out of fear. He began to have trouble sleeping. Although the coaches were fired at a school board meeting a few weeks later, Thea secured an attorney from Houston, Gerald E. Bourque, who began working up a civil suit against the school system and the coaches. An energetic bantam who describes himself as "a warrior for the common man," Bourque settled into the facts of the case and became enraged at the very contention that what happened to Maxey was a joke. Says Bourque, "Bullies always pick on the weak and think of it as funny. The truth is as the truth does."

Trouble continued to follow Maxey when he finally stepped

back into the classroom. He played varsity football, but not for long: A friend with whom he is alleged to have committed a robbery shot him in the arm during a school assembly when he discovered that Maxey planned to go to the police. Maxey was placed on probation. He was later picked up in another robbery in Texas with the same person who had shot him. While Bourque worked on his lawsuit with unyielding passion, Maxey was sentenced to 10 years in prison, where he says he still had "dreams of being hanged from the ceiling." Grandfather Jesse says it will "take some time for the scars to leave him, if they ever do," but adds that he has plans for Joshua when he is released. He has some new

tools and wants to teach him how to use them.

"So he can work for himself and not for the white man," Clark says. "As soon as one of them would say, 'Come here, boy,' it would be over. I want to help him build a better life."

He pauses and adds, "I will be his walking cane."

LARRY SPACEK

Joshua's coach

Spacek: Maxey understood

To be a high school head football coach in Texas is a big deal; everyone's eye is on you wherever you go. When Larry Spacek accepted the job at New Waverly in the summer of 1988, he saw himself as more than just someone who drew up plays on chalkboard. He was the son of a coach, and from as early as 8 years old, the only aspiration he ever had was to become a coach himself. He figured he would coach until he was 70 or even 80, pass along his know-how to others as it had been passed to him. Oh sure, you always had to win as a football coach in Texas, but the job held deeper rewards for him, the opportunity to help troubled boys find themselves. And that was just what he says he was trying to do for Joshua Maxey: fool around with him; show him some atten-

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**3** Colorado State fired head football coach Earle Bruce in November 1992 for creating an atmosphere of intimidation and fear. In announcing the dismissal of the 62-year-old former Ohio State coach, the university alleged that Bruce did the following: struck players "with a closed fist in unprotected areas of their bodies"; attempted to intimidate certain school officials; and used racist and other demeaning language. While Bruce conceded that he had punched players, he said he did not think he "ever hit anyone hard enough to hurt them." Said Bruce, who denied the other two allegations: "I was hired to bring discipline, aggressiveness and a toughness to this program."



Earle Bruce admitted punching players at Colorado State.

ers. An academy spokesman said that Miller had been told twice that season that his outbursts were unacceptable and added: "The whole purpose of West Point is to develop leaders. Things such as yelling in

the face of a cadet are totally inappropriate." Miller, who had a 13-61 record at Army and was also a 1970 graduate of the academy, had once worked as an assistant under Bob Knight.

**5** University of California basketball coach Lou Campanelli was fired in February 1993 with 10 games remaining in the season for upbraiding his players with abusive language. Cal athletic director Robert Bockrath twice overheard Campanelli curse his team after losses and later said, "The players were beaten down and in trouble psychologically. Every other word was a four-letter one." One of the players on the team was freshman Jason Kidd, whose father told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that Campanelli was "putting so much pressure on his son he was making him physically ill." Campanelli sued Bockrath and another Cal official for damaging his reputation and his job prospects, but did not prevail in court. Said Campanelli at the height of the controversy: "I did no wrong . . . My integrity and reputation in the game of basketball is above reproach."

**COACH**

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tion; get him on board before the ship leaves. How wrong he proved to be.

"Boy, they accused me of everything but shooting at Kennedy from the grassy knoll," Spacek says. "The phone rang off the hook with threatening calls. We had to pack up and move at 2 a.m."

When Spacek looks back on his career as a high school football coach in Texas, he says that considering what cost him his job at New Waverly, he should have been fired "30 times for some of the things I did" elsewhere. He always believed that unless you were willing to cut a corner here and there, you did not want to win badly enough. In stops at Sabine, Lumberton and Dawson high schools, he was skilled at turning around losing football programs. When it came to handling players, he says he always looked upon them as "prized racehorses." Says Spacek, "You had to stroke them, let them know how special they were, not take a board and beat them or abuse them in any way."

He crushes his cigarette out in an ashtray and adds, "Where I was wrong was that I thought I could save Maxey. What I should have done is just ignore his bleep."

Spacek remembers that he ushered Maxey into his office for a pep talk that fateful day. He had coached his brother the year before and believed "football could give Joshua the sense of purpose he then lacked." But he would not be able to play with failing grades, and Spacek told him so. While Spacek says he indeed told him should whip him for every "F" on his report card, he says that Max-

ey understood it as a joke, that the two had a laugh over it. Spacek also says that he told Maxey that he would tie him up with the electrical cord, but again both of them laughed. Says Spacek, "No crying, no peeing in his pants. Giggling. We were bantering. Period. End of story."

And the starter pistol?

Spacek laughs ruefully and replies, "It never happened. Not the way he said it did."

Ramsey remembers he had just dropped by the gym office for an attendance slip. "What happened was I had taken a starter pistol off of a student earlier in the day," says Ramsey, currently a coach and teacher in Yazoo City, Miss. "So I came in as he was chatting with Maxey, showed it to Larry and say, 'Look what I got.' I placed it in a file cabinet and left. I was there and gone in 6 seconds."

It was only when he saw Thea Clark yelling at superintendent Davis later that day that Spacek became aware that there was a problem. What he says now is that he should have never said he was sorry to her; it gave Davis the opening he needed to eventually fire him. Davis would say to him, "Why did you apologize unless you had something to apologize for?" Quickly, the story was everywhere. The Houston papers played it up. Even a producer from "The Maury Povich Show" later tracked him down; Spacek declined the invitation. Spacek says that the school board fired him and Ramsey "in about 15 seconds" and that it cost them thou-

sands of dollars to defend themselves in the civil action that attorney Bourque filed on behalf of Maxey. Worse, he remembers the creeping fear that set in whenever he picked up the telephone and someone said, "You white son of a bleep..."

"Our dog had its front legs broken by someone," says Spacek, who has a wife and two daughters. "We lived out in the country and I was afraid someone was going to take a shot at us through the window."

Moving vans hurried them away under the cover of night, and yet it would be years before he would let go of what happened. It used to come back to him in nightmares; Davis would come up to his door and would demand to have the keys to his house.

"Stupid bleep like that," says Spacek, who stayed to himself for weeks and weeks before he answered an ad in the paper to run a YMCA. A big part of him wanted to sue, but he surely had no desire to have his job back and he says that Maxey lived in "an old lean-to trailer." And who at that point could give him back his reputation, which had been the highest price he would end up paying. Who could give him back that? For years he seethed over it. Whenever he would run into Davis — who later died of a heart attack — he would accost him in public. "You better keep track of me," Spacek would shout. "Because if you find out that Larry Spacek is dying of cancer or

**"All I can say is that Larry and I have jobs and are doing well. The Maxey kid is in jail and the superintendent is in the ground.."**

**STEVE RAMSEY**  
*Former assistant coach to Larry Spacek*

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Steve Ramsey, a coach and teacher in Yazoo City, Miss., says he'd like to get a job back in Texas.

ROGELIO SOLIS/For the Daily News

**6** Iowa Wesleyan College football coach Charlie Moot was fired in the stormy wake of a player boycott of spring practice in April 1993. Among their various grievances, the players alleged that Moot, in his first year there as coach, was abusive in his treatment of them, that he referred to them as "sons of bitches," told them "to shut the bleep up," and "do this my way or pack the bleep up and go west." One player claimed that Moot once told a player from Samoa, "I'll ship your [butt] back on a banana boat." Moot had no comment. He lost his job three months after the boycott.

**7** At Red Lion (Pa.) Area High School in November 1994, principal Richard Rhine reprimanded assistant football coach Robert Beatty for a locker-room incident that occurred during halftime of a game at William Penn High School in York.

According to Tim Thompson, a 16-year-old junior halfback, Beatty knocked him off a bench, picked him up and began dragging him around, during which Thompson suffered a bloody nose. While other players validated that account, Rhine said that his investigation revealed that "there was no apparent injury to the student, who played in the second half of the game." Beatty did not discuss the accusations, other than to say that the incident "was expanded through some lies."

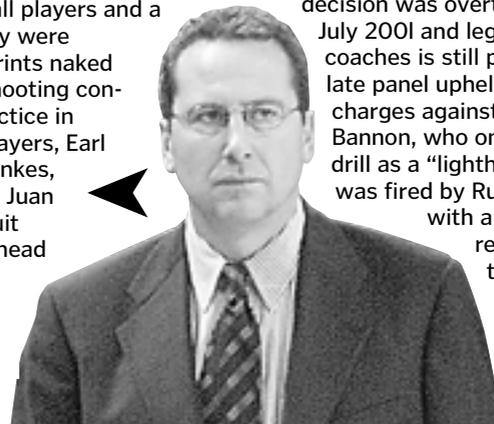
**8** Bangor Area Schools superintendent Wilford Ottey suspended Paul Farnan, a veteran football coach, for one week for striking a player in September 1996. Farnan, the head coach at the Allentown-area school for 22 years, said that 15-year-old Harry Dickey had fallen asleep during a game film, so he struck him on the foot

with a remote control. When Dickey said he "something under his breath back to me," Farnan clipped him on the side of the head. Farnan later apologized for his actions and said, "I lost my poise."

**9** A controversy erupted at Rutgers when two basketball players and a team manager said they were ordered to run wind sprints naked after they lost a foul-shooting contest at the end of a practice in December 1997. The players, Earl Johnson Jr. and Josh Sankes, and the team manager, Juan Carlos Pia, filed a lawsuit against the university, head coach Kevin Bannon,

**Rutgers fired Kevin Bannon last March.**

assistant coach Todd Kowalczyk and athletic director Robert E. Mulcahy that argued the incident was "sexually offensive," violated their civil rights, and caused them to transfer. While Middlesex County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Stroumtsos Jr. dismissed the case in February 2000, that decision was overturned on appeal in July 2001 and legal action against the coaches is still pending; the appellate panel upheld the dismissal of charges against the university. Bannon, who once referred to the drill as a "lighthearted contest," was fired by Rutgers in March 2001 with a 59-60 overall record in four years there, during which he did not earn a berth in the NCAA Tournament.



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AIDS, you better haul your skinny [butt] to the North Pole because I am going to kill you." But Spacek had found a job selling insurance, has become skillful at it, and says that his anger has ebbed in the passing years. He has no intention of coaching again.

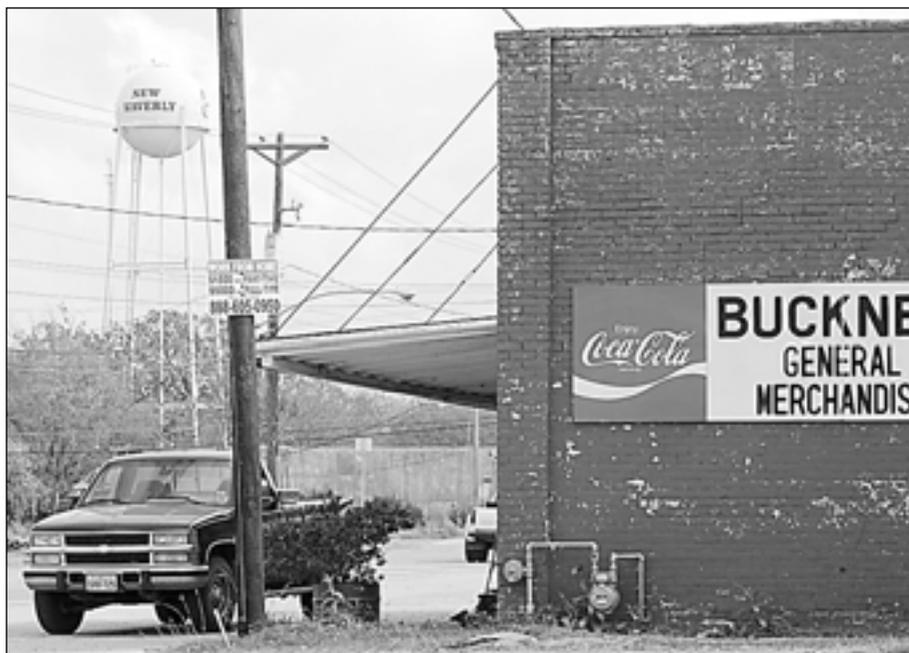
"I know what happened that day and in the year 2001, I could care less who bleeping believes it," says Spacek. "And I could not be more frank with you than that."

Ramsey is single and could pick up and go when he was fired, and that is just what he did. He got out of coaching for a year, into landscaping and once again looked for a classroom job again. He found one at a high school in Lake Charles, La., but only because no one there knew what had happened in New Waverly. He has chosen not to place that stop on his resume. He says he was a "little nervous that someone would find me out," but that passed, and of his own choosing he headed elsewhere. He got a job teaching and coaching (baseball and football) in Yazoo City, but again only because no one knows what happened in New Waverly.

"God, someone would say I was a racist and I probably would be fired," says Ramsey, who adds that he hopes to reapply soon for work in Texas.

"Just to see," he says. "The pay is better over there and I'm tired of feeling like I'm on the run."

Spacek says he and Ramsey are not prohibited from working in Texas. "We still have our teaching certificates," he says. "Neither of us committed a criminal act. In fact, I called the police



MICHAEL STRAVATO/For the Daily News



**Buckner General Merchandise greets visitors to New Waverly, Texas. Attorney Gerald Bourque, who represented Joshua Maxey in a lawsuit, calls the two coaches bullies.**

when this was going on and said, 'Are you looking for me?' And they just laughed. But I just have one question: If we did what Maxey said we did, why were we not thrown in jail?" Bourque says they should have been, and adds, "Let either of them try to coach in Texas again. I promise you no one will ever hire them."

Spacek lights a cigarette and blows out a long funnel of smoke. "What it comes down to is our word against theirs," says Spacek. "The same as if a woman goes to the dentist, gets her molar fixed and then says she was molested. It happens."

Spacek looks over at the sun setting on the tranquil horizon. "I blame Davis and the New Waverly school system, not Maxey or even Bourque," Spacek says. "They were just trying to cash in. Like Joshua had slipped on a grape in the supermarket."

**Bourque: Maxey needed someone who cared**

One day in the early 1990s Joshua Maxey slammed the door to his house and began running. He had gotten into a fierce argument with his mother and told her he was going to commit suicide. As he headed out the door, he picked up an Ace bandage that was sitting on the counter and jammed it into his pocket. He ran to the expressway overpass but could not bring himself to jump into the traffic below. So he continued running, into the nearby woods as his mother and others called for him. He climbed a tree and sat on a limb, to which he secured one end of the bandage. He tied the other end around his neck and looked down at the ground.

"I was ready to jump when I heard my grandmother call, 'Dino. Come back now, Dino baby,'" Max-

ey says. "And I just could not do it. I just climbed down" . . . and back into a world of unrelenting fear.

As he sits in the visiting area at Gatesville, he says that the episode with Spacek and Ramsey led to a change in him. "Get a bad rep and I figured people would fear me," says Maxey, who adds that he committed the robbery with the "friend" who had shot him because "they say you should always keep your enemy close." And now he is in a cell in the Texas prison system, where during the early years of his incarceration he would sit in his cell for 23 hours a day. He would save up the sedatives they passed through the bars to him, get three or four of them together, then gulp them down so he could escape into 72 hours of uninterrupted sleep. Only that would quell his demons.

"I worry about him," his mother says. "I worry about what will hap-

pen to him when he gets out." Sadly, she adds, "Lord only know what those coaches were thinking."

The lawsuit Maxey filed against the two coaches was settled for an undisclosed sum. While Spacek says he wanted to give them "\$10 and leave it at that," Bourque and the lawyers for the insurance company for the New Waverly school system hammered out what Bourque described as an equitable agreement. "Here is a young boy who could have gone either way in life," says Bourque. "What he needed was a coach who cared for him, but what he got were a couple of vultures." Bourque adds that it is "now time for Joshua to come full circle, to leave what happened behind and become a contributing member of society."

Certain events can stay with you as vividly as the day they happened. Something 11 years ago can seem as if it happened just yesterday, and weigh you on forever. And so it is for the three of them: Maxey, Spacek and Ramsey. Only the three of them know what happened that day at New Waverly High School in 1990. Only they know the truth.

"Who are you going to believe?" Spacek asks. "A convicted felon or a taxpayer that is an upstanding member of the community?"

Ramsay says, "All I can say is that Larry and I have jobs and are doing well. The Maxey kid is in jail and the superintendent is in the ground."

And Maxey?

Fear creeps back in his eyes.

"For what they did? They should be in jail," Maxey says. "All I can say is that if I ever saw them again, I would do something. Get them before they get me. Not hunt them down, but if I saw them in a crowd, I would try to kill them." ★

**10** Indiana University fired legendary basketball coach Bob Knight in September 2000 for failing to abide by the "zero tolerance" clause that was placed in his contract when a videotape revealed that he had choked former player Neil Reed. A wildly controversial figure whose 29-year career at IU had been underscored by an array of untoward behavior, Knight violated the terms of his agreement with university president Myles Brand when he allegedly grabbed a student by the arm and scolded him

for being disrespectful. Brand also said that Knight had been "defiant and hostile" since the Reed episode had been exposed and otherwise exhibited "no desire, contrary to what he personally promised me, to live with the guidelines [of zero tolerance]." Currently, Knight coaches Texas Tech.

**11** Upset with the inability of 6-7, 320-pound tackle Dustin Vaitekunas to hold his blocks at a practice in September 2000, then-Georgia Tech football coach George O'Leary handed him the ball, ordered four defensive line-

**George O'Leary defended having several linemen knock down a teammate at Georgia Tech.**

man into a three-point stance, then blew his whistle. Two of the linemen slammed into Vaitekunas, who had to be helped from the field by the team physician and some trainers. Vaitekunas, who later said he believed that the incident was planned to try to get him to quit the team, said O'Leary told him, "This is what it feels like [to the quarterback] when you mess up the blocking." According to his mother, Wanda Charpring, Vaitekunas was severely bruised, had difficulty sleeping and breathing, and complained of pain for 12 days. Said Charpring, "I see this as assault and battery." O'Leary said that the linemen were not supposed to hit O'Leary as part of the drill, and added, "By no means was I trying to hurt Dustin, or run him off any football team." Vaitekunas quit and enrolled this year at Cleveland State, which does not field a football team. O'Leary resigned as Notre Dame coach on Dec. 15 after lying on his resume.

**12** Tamir Goodman, a sophomore at Towson (Md.) University, told his athletic director after a basketball game Dec. 9, 2001, that his coach had threatened him with a chair. Goodman complained that Michael Hunt, in his first season at coach at the suburban Baltimore university, had held a chair in a frightening manner over his head in the locker room after the game and later kicked a metal stool into his leg. No charges were ever filed, and within a few days the school said that it reminded Hunt about "appropriate standards of professional conduct" but did not discipline him. It also allowed Goodman to keep his scholarship, even though he said he would never play again for Towson as long as Hunt was the coach. Goodman had previously gained national attention while being recruited by Maryland for being unable to play from from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday because of his religious beliefs.

# A shifting line

## What once flew as discipline now has its own ramifications

By **MARK KRAM**  
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**G**ET TEMPLE basketball coach John Chaney worked up and everyone knows he can go off like a box of cherry bombs. With his tie wildly askew and his eyes ablaze with fury, Chaney runs his program with a whip and chair, and is too old at 70 to appear to care what anyone thinks of him. By his own admission, he can be very hard on players, so hard that he admits, "You cannot have a thin skin to play here." While some players have had that and have transferred to other schools, the ones who remain come to understand that beneath that cranky exterior is a good man who cares.

And yet few people are apt to become more unhinged in the heat of action. In a close game at Memphis State in 1992, the Owls were up by four points late when guard Vic Carstarphen lobbed up an alley-oop. "To a kid who had not scored a basket in practice in *two years!*" says Chaney, the disbelief still in his voice. So Chaney called a timeout, had the benches moved out on the court so he could be heard over the noisy crowd, and got down on his knees to address his players.

"I looked over to Victor and I see him wiping his face with a towel and looking away, as if he were embarrassed or something," says Chaney. "And so I grabbed his cheek and slapped the hell out of him."

Next day Chaney received a call in his office.

He picked up the phone and said, "Coach here."

The voice on the other end of the line said, "Where do you get off slapping my son like that?"

Coincidentally, Carstarphen happened to wander in unexpect-

**John Chaney, the Temple coach, remembers his tenure at Cheney State when he could discipline players by paddling them.**

edly. Chaney summoned him to the phone. "Victor, come here," he said. "Talk to your damn pop."

Carstarphen arched his eyebrows in surprise and said, "My pop?" He took the phone, placed it to his ear and said, "Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yeah, Dad. Yeah. But you have to understand. If I do what I did again, coach will even do more to me."

Chaney laughs. "But that was just something I did impulsively. Our president and athletic director knew about it, but if it had been caught on videotape and played

again and again and again, I am sure there would have been people who would have insisted they do something about me. And I probably would have been fired."

Coaches have found themselves under increasing scrutiny regarding their treatment of players at the college and high school levels across America. While it was once part of the unspoken contract between coach and player that the coach had a free reign to impose his will upon the player however he pleased,

coaches are being held to a far higher standard of accountability by administrators, players, parents and the media. One case in point is Bob Knight: For 30 years he drove players like cattle across the Red River, only to wake up one day in 2000 and find that there were ramifications to choking a player while hammering home a point. Knight is back in coaching this year at Texas Tech, where the leadership has a somewhat more casual view of his behavior. Says Knight, "What it comes down to is that society has changed."

No one is exactly sure where the line should be drawn, only that it is not in the same place it had been some years ago. Obviously, as the head football coach and his assistant at New Waverly (Texas) High School (see accompanying story) found out, even the allegations of threatening a student under the guise of discipline can cost you your job.

Chaney agrees: "You can no longer be physical with the players like you once were."

Grabbing a player by the jersey and yanking him from the court is even frowned upon by some. Others draw the line at profanity, which coaches tend to excuse as a personal shortcoming along the lines of forgetting to floss. And yet some even say that it is wrong to even yell at a player.

"This is one of those things where no one is sure what it is, but have a feel for what it is not," says Don DiJulia, the assistant vice president/athletic director at Saint Joseph's University. "You kind of know it when you see it."

Coaches of old ruled with an iron hand that players today would find unsettling. So enraged over the poor play of his team in the first half of an NCAA championship game, Adolph Rupp — the legendary Kentucky basketball coach — ordered towels placed at the feet of his players and shouted, "I've been feed-

## WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

**"I feel that a coach is abusive when he or she grabs you, yells in your face and takes verbal shots at you that have nothing to do with your athletic performance, in front of other people. The heat of the moment is also a special case. If during a game a coach does all of those things but apologizes to you in front of everyone, then I think that behavior is OK; however, if it is happening all of the time, then that behavior is abusive. If the behavior of the coach really bothers the athlete, then the athlete should be responsible and adult enough to have a meeting with the coach about how he or she is being treated."**

MONIQUE HORSHAW  
Field hockey player  
University of Pennsylvania

**"There is definitely a line. Most coaches are too macho, especially the male side. Calling your players derogatory names and using profanity just shows a lack of intelligence. There are better ways to motivate."**

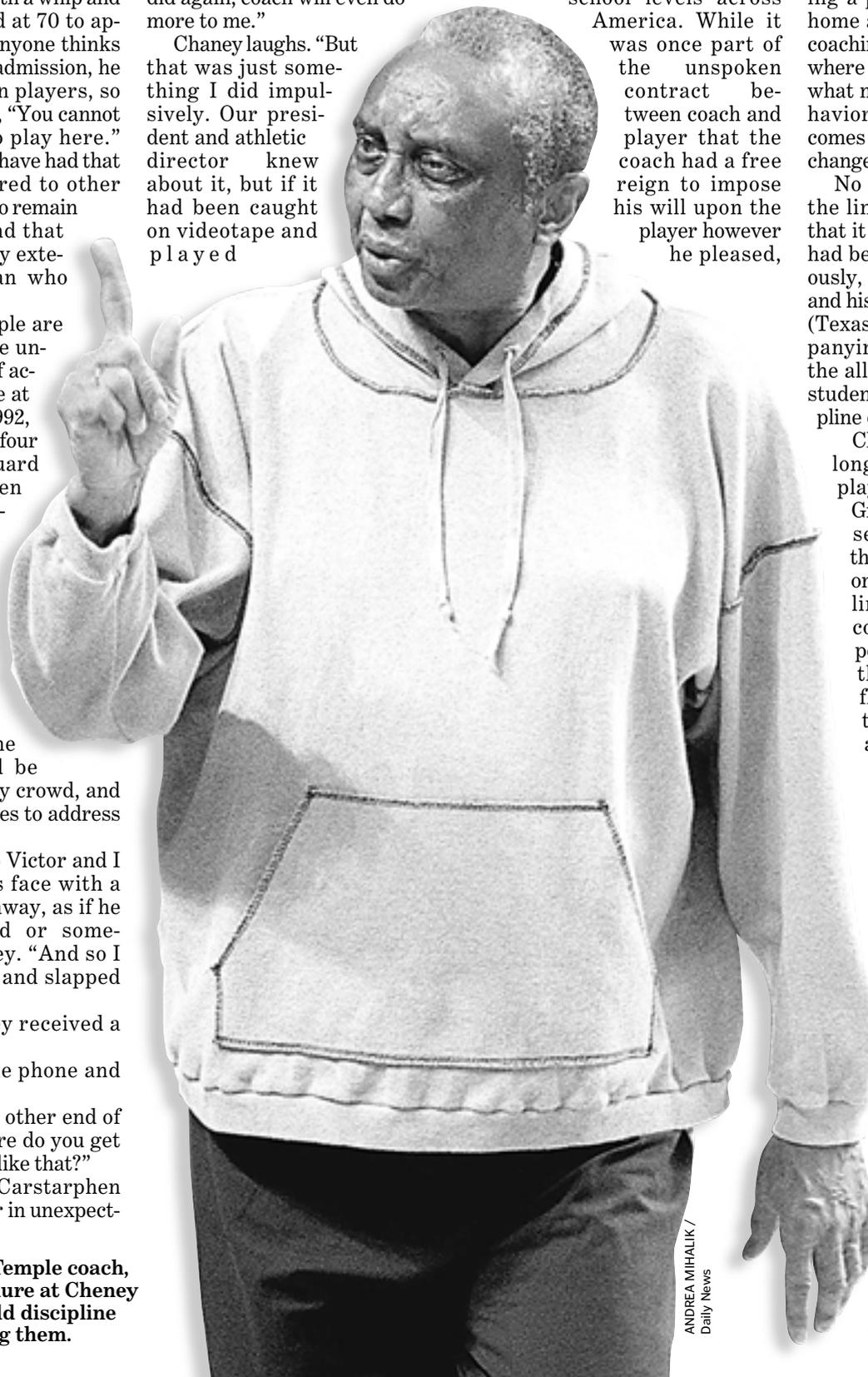
BRIAN DUROSS  
Girls' basketball Coach  
Archbishop Wood High School

**"Yelling isn't necessary. My son's high school coach never screamed at players. He has won 12 state championships. The players are told what is expected and if they don't comply they are gone or on the bench. Players who didn't play hard or improve were cut."**

ROGER NEEDHAM  
Parent

**"I don't think you should scream at any player or put your hands on any athlete. Verbally or physically."**

HANK GREENBERG  
Parent



ANDREA MIHALIK / Daily News

See **LINE** Page 108

# WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

## LINE

Continued from Page III

**“I’ve been involved in sports for 21 years as a player and a coach. When you coach at the college level you put your livelihood in the hands of teenagers. With the emphasis on winning being so great, I am not surprised that incidents like this happen. Coaches should be judged on how they mentor and develop young student-athletes on and off the arena of competition, not just how many wins they achieve. But they are not.”**

JOSE RAMIREZ  
Prep, youth coach  
Harrisburg, Pa.

**“As an athlete myself I look at abuse as coming in two forms. There’s the type of physical abuse, actually shoving players and/or grabbing them. No coach has the right to handle a player in a physical way, just as no player has the right to handle a coach in a physical way. The type of abuse that I find more prominent and at times more detrimental to an athlete is verbal abuse and negativity. I think any athlete has, at one time or another, had a coach who was constantly negative toward them and their teammates. This kind of coach-player relationship creates the environment where players are afraid to make mistakes and trying so hard not to that it affects their game.”**

TERESA ANDREANI  
Softball player  
Saint Joseph’s University

**“I guess I come down on the side of class. I’m bored with loudmouthed, footstomping, sideline careening coaches. I’m also exhausted by mediocre players whining and posturing.”**

TONY MACKLIN  
Parent

ing you guys for four years. Now lean over and give every bit of food back to me!” Chaney remembers that he used to paddle players to discipline them when he was at Cheney State, but today prefers to let offending players “die the death of a racehorse.” Which is to say: run laps. Speedy Morris, former Roman Catholic High School and La Salle University head basketball, says it was acceptable to “grab players by the collar, give them a whack and push them on the court.” Says Morris, the head basketball coach at St. Joseph’s Prep and in his 34th year of coaching: “Things you could never do today.”

What changed?

Morris says the parents.

What he and others say is that parents once supported coaches in a way they no longer do. Morris remembers that if he came home from school and announced that the nun had whacked him, he would be “whacked again by my mother, my father, even the mailman.” Today, he says that parents immediately side with their son and accuse the coach of wrongdoing. Knight adds that there has been a widespread erosion of respect for authority in society. One of his favorite words is “consequences.”

“Guys who played poorly for [legendary NFL coach Vince] Lombardi suffered consequences,” says Knight, as his exhausted players trudged from the floor at the end of a practice in October. “You have to follow through when you use that word. You are going to run up and down steps — that could be one consequence. Or another could be: You are going to sit on the bench.”

Where does Knight draw the line?

Nicknamed “The General,” he draws the line “at anything to help a player become better, even if it reflects poorly on me.” He has even challenged players by placing tampons in their lockers, which is the same stunt that played into the firing of former Catholic University coach Bob Valvano.

One of the coaches who defended Knight when he was fired for choking former player Neil Reed was Chaney, who says he and Knight are “a lot alike philosophically.” One former Indiana player who did not defend him was Ricky Calloway, who told CNN/SI that it was “OK [for a coach] to be tough on players, but

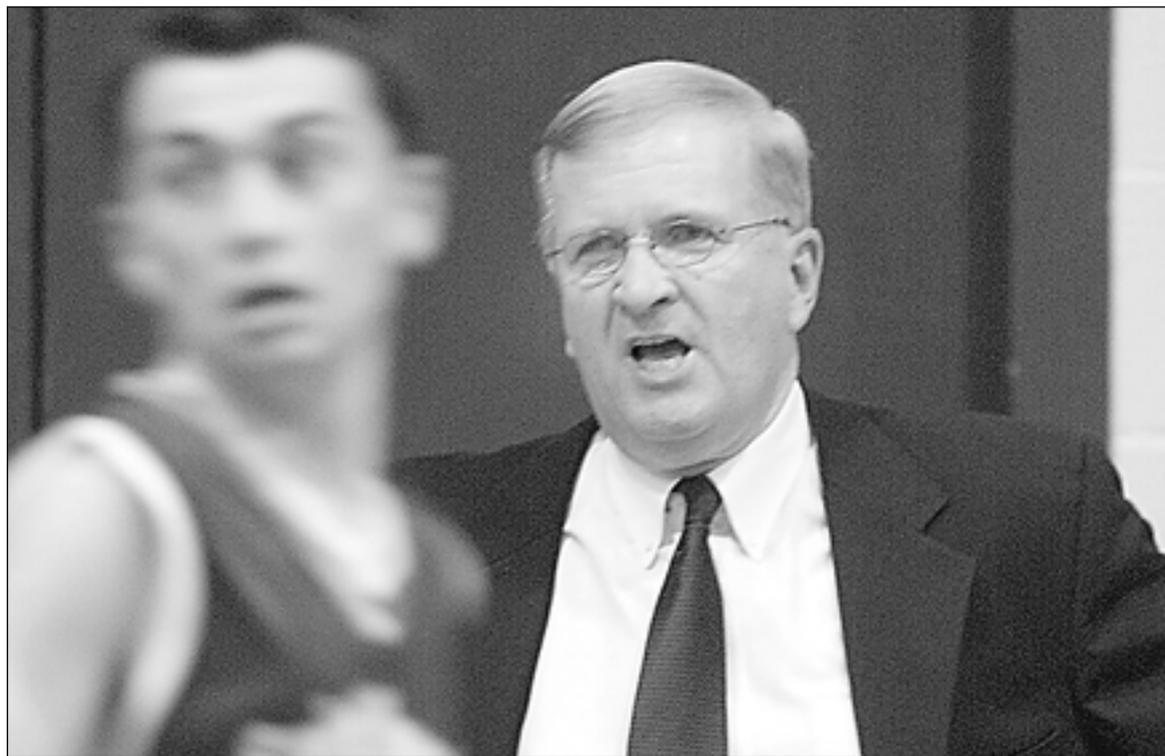
without” physical abuse.” Calloway added that the players at Indiana stopped “responding to all that stuff [Knight] does . . . that it got to the point that on our team where we just wanted the season to over.” Said Calloway, “If a parent did the abusive things he does, they would take the kid away. Or if a spouse did stuff like that, hitting his wife, then he has to go. No questions asked. But with him . . . everybody just has to be lying.”

Chaney said that when Knight was fired he heard from a few of his former players. Eddie Jones told him, “They should have gotten you. They should have seen what you did to us.”

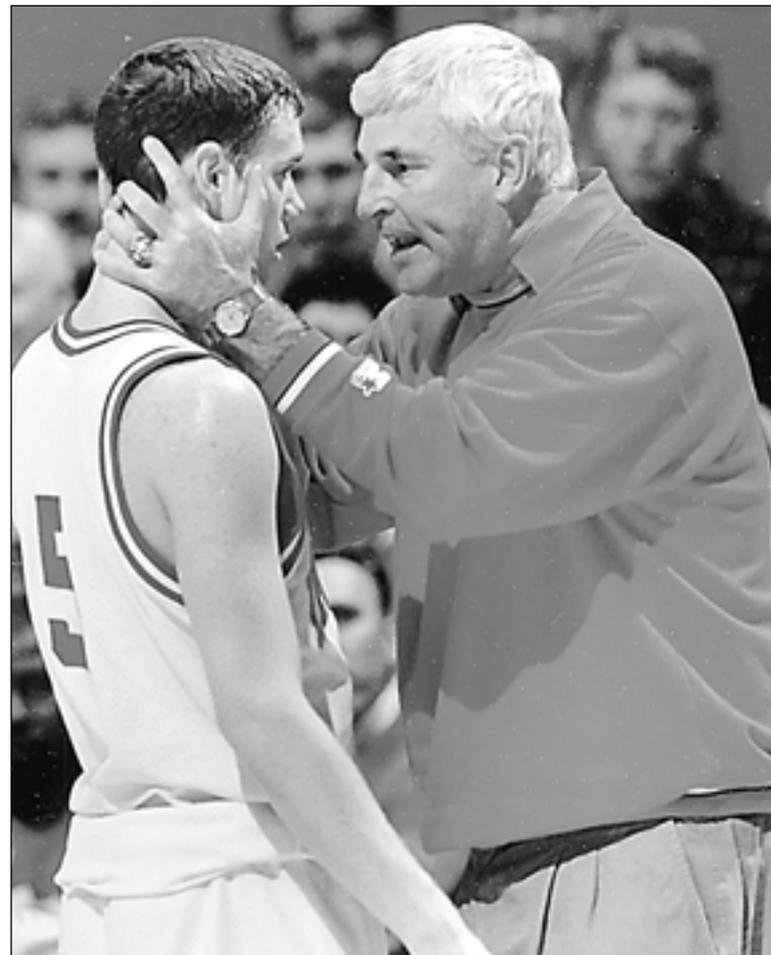
What accounts for the behavior of Knight and Chaney, both of whom are Hall of Fame coaches? To some extent it has to do with the coaching they received as players. Both remember an era when coaches yielded to no one in discipline. Morris says, “You cannot be too soft on players or they will walk over you.” And some of it just has to do with getting caught up in the emotion of the game. Says DiJulia, “Sometimes the wire just disconnects.”

DiJulia says he occasionally has had to speak with coaches on the subject of civility. “What I do is ask them, ‘Hey, what happened?’” he says. “I tell them they went too far, and usually they know it. What it comes down to is a question of civility between the coach and the player.”

So, you have to be careful today what you do and say to players, who no longer feel obliged to stand still in the face of what they



STEVEN M. FALK/Daily News



DAVID SNODGRESS/Associated Press

**Speedy Morris (top photo) says that parents are part of the reason for the change in the discipline landscape, a phenomenon that has affected the job status of Bob Knight.**

perceive to be harassment. Players have walked out on both Knight and Chaney (both of whom have asked players to leave). Players have staged boycotts; they have aired their grievances publicly; and they have de-

finied for themselves what is acceptable and what is not. What it comes down to is that players no longer “just take it” when a coach goes too far in their eyes. Says Morris, “They take it to Jacoby and Myers.” ★

# Player-coach flashpoint creates brushfires



G.W. MILLER/Daily News

There are two kinds of coaches, says Dr. Donald Nathanson, including those more worried about the crowds than the individuals.

## Doctor: Degraded athlete prone to teach others in kind

**W**HENEVER there is a report of a coach who appears to have gone too far, who abuses his players physically or verbally and is fired or reprimanded because of it, Dr. Donald L. Nathanson says he believes that the public only is seeing "the tip of the iceberg."

"There are two ways to look at a problem like this," says Nathanson, author of "Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex and the Birth of the Self" and internationally respected psychiatrist based in Philadelphia. "One is that there are always a couple of bad apples in the barrel or, in this case, coaches who are more violent than the norm. So we just say to ourselves that if we just keep an eye out for the crazy ones and push them out, we will be fine."

But Nathanson sees the problem as part of a larger system of a behavior that has crept into the culture. "It has become increasingly acceptable to use humilia-

tion to spur people to more explosive action," he says. "And coaches have come increasingly to believe that explosive action can be governed within the rules of a sport to win games."

Nathanson says it has to stop.

The consequences of using shame to taunt a player (or anyone) into performing better can be far-reaching and even deadly. "We know that a young person who is humiliated in an athletic setting is more likely to pass that humiliation on to others," says Nathanson, who has informally interviewed an array of coaches and former players during the course of 20 years of study on the subject of shame. "We know that he is more likely to humiliate his girlfriend, and his smaller, weak-

**"A young person who is encouraged to have a violent reaction to humiliation is being coached to explode when shamed by anyone."**

DR. DONALD NATHANSON  
*Psychiatrist*

er male friends. This chain of humiliation continues until it reaches its weakest link, the person who when bullied suddenly explodes."

Nathanson says that there are two types of coaches. One is the "supportive coach, who urges his players to work together, who professes his pride in them." But Nathanson adds that as athletics have become less "playful, earnest and honest," some coaches have become less at-

tuned to the value of sports as a private outlet for the individual than as a social outlet for the community.

"The coach has a vital role in the development of young people," he says. "A young person who is encouraged to have a violent reaction to humiliation is being coached to explode when

shamed by anyone. He is told that is a manly way to be."

One way coaches have challenged the manhood of players is to place tampons in their lockers. Nathanson finds that particular act abhorrent.

"A coach who does that is not saying the player is a girl but that he is not male," he says. "And therefore the only way the player can be truly male and prove the coach wrong is to behave violently on the field."

Nathanson recommends that a coach who is unhappy with the performance of a player substitute condemnation for understanding. "Take the player aside and find out why he is not playing up to your standard," Nathanson says. "The player will grow because you cared for him, not because you humiliated him into an explosive animal. Otherwise you will have a team full of frightened, unhappy people." ★

— Mark Kram

## WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

**"I think it's maybe easier to sort of see Bobby Knight striking a male player. But I think that with female players [there's a different kind of line]. I've had two daughters play high school sports, and they've seen their teammates be starters one game, not play at all the next game, without explanation. Girls have found that very hard to understand. A straightforward word from the coach would have made it much clearer than guessing or tiptoeing around."**

MARY CONNORS  
*Parent*

**"Physical abuse or threats of physical abuse by coaches have no place in athletics. If a coach can find no other way to motivate, correct or otherwise reach an athlete, the coach needs to find a new profession. [Do I yell?] Absolutely. I believe there are plenty of ways to be stern, forceful and even intimidating [if necessary] without engaging in physical abuse."**

JEANNINE CALHOUN  
*Women's soccer coach  
La Salle University*

**"I think I draw the line at any physical contact because players are looking to coaches on how to act, on the field and off. Coaches are sending the wrong message if they can't control their own emotions. I think there are more constructive ways of delivering your message. Coaches use emotion as a tool, but the spoken word is as effective, or more effective, than pushing a kid or kicking a kid."**

PAUL PERDUE  
*Men's lacrosse coach,  
St. Joseph's University*

— Paul Vigna  
vignap@phillynews.com