

A 'LOSING' SEASON

The situation is a matter of where you place your values

Editor's note: This is the second of a four-part series on the Penn State swimming team.

The day after Bill Eiwien decided to retire from the Lion swimming team, he got his squash racket out of the closet and spent a few hours on the Rec Hall squash courts.

Penn State's top swimmer and a third place finisher in last year's Easterns, Eiwien confesses he completely enjoyed the break, the psychological as well as the physical release from the obligations of a decade and a half of swimming practice and competition. But when he picked up his newspaper and saw the results of the Maryland-Penn State swimming meet, the enjoyment began to fade.

Penn State's swimming team without Eiwien would be approximately comparable to the West Virginia football team without their All-America flanker, Danny Buggs. Eiwien doesn't win or lose solely on the merits of his individual accomplishments, but he does give opposing coaches a little higher degree of respect for the team.

Eiwien explained the situation leading up to his decision to retire, and his reasons for deciding to come back to the team.

"We have priority system on the team that academics are first and swimming is second," Eiwien said. "But I'm getting married in May and I'm looking to go to Law School, so there are other priorities I'm concerned with besides swimming. It's not the program itself that caused the problem for me."

"I missed a week of practice for very personal reasons. (Lion swimming coach Lou) MacNeil backed me up, and I thought I had bona fide reasons."

"When I didn't go to Kent State, I wasn't acting as a unit, even though my reasons were bona fide. But I just said personal reasons to the team. They were questioning this, 'Why wasn't he there to lose with us?' I felt I had weakened my position on the team and I felt I should get out of their way. But I didn't want to quit, this is my 15th year in swimming. I talked to MacNeil and he said talk to the team. Things were misconstrued originally, and I told them I was willing to put out. So I'm back on the team on regular status."

On a wide variety of subjects concerning the swimming team this season, Eiwien offered an equally wide variety of solutions, ideas and opinions:

John Kule, a friend of Eiwien who left the team for motivation and personality problems—"John's problem came down to the fact that he hasn't improved. He's been swimming tired and he hasn't had a chance to perform at peak. It's been so long since he's seen a good swimming time, I think he forgets how it feels. Swimming is a bitch and personal times are such an important part."

Money—"If they gave MacNeil \$70,000 a year, he would probably say OK and build a top flight program that could be the best in the East. But he was hired as an "aquatic director," not as a swimming coach. Maybe Dean Scannel would get scared if we had a good team. But I don't feel the University is concerned about a top team. We're always dressed well, we have the Natatorium and we don't stay in dives when we're on the road. We try to represent Penn State the best way we can."

With three scholarships MacNeil could spread it over five

Rick Starr

ass't sports editor



people, because you don't need a free ride. He could have 20 people on scholarship. But if you only have one, that's not enough money to do anything with. It's hard to find one superman who will always win his event, which is what would be expected.

"When MacNeil asks for money he is told to forget it, so we take our lumps from the teams that do get it."

"I could have accepted a scholarship, but I've experienced some high pressure swimming programs. At the University of Tennessee, the coach has bought you for \$2,500 and expects you to give your all for one thing, something as trivial as an athletic endeavor. Swimming isn't something which prepares you directly for an occupation or future employment, it's sport for the sake of sport."

"I'm not dissatisfied with the program here. But I have a friend at the University of Tennessee who would throw up at this program."

The schedule—"We could schedule Millersville and Kutztown and we could have a 100 per cent winning season. But it would be appalling. Here's this big school clobbering the hell out of some small team. And we would become content then with mediocrity. Our schedule as it now is, makes it impossible for us to have a 100 per cent winning season. I might schedule a few easier teams because I do think winning is important. And I wouldn't schedule some Ivy League teams."

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Motivation—"MacNeil is pretty different, he won't beg you to do anything. But he looks at swimmers who score more than others. Personally, I think he has been lacking in that area, but maybe I haven't been putting in the effort to have him motivate me. The coach is worried about points and he can't reach individual swimmers during a meet."

"There have been times when I've thought, 'If only he would give me some words of encouragement.' He knows you're there, but he'll look to his assistants to motivate individuals. And the swimmers he spends the most time with are the scorers."

"Last year, I had a recurring back problem and Dr. (Samuel) Fleagle told me to stay out of the water for a week. I told MacNeil that I couldn't practice for one day and he said, 'If you don't want to do well at the Easterns, why don't you just admit that to yourself.' It was a negative form of motivation and I said, 'I'll show him, and I went out and had one of my better practices. But sometimes this type of motivation backfires. You just have to turn to someone who will give you positive motivation.'"

Coach MacNeil—"MacNeil is a little inexperienced in developing people with talent. For example, he didn't know what to do with me between the Easterns and the Nationals. I was the first swimmer he ever took to the Nationals. But he talked to a lot of people and made every effort to help me."

"Right now we're doing something I don't agree with, we're cutting down on yardage in practice to go into the Temple meet (this afternoon at the Natatorium) fully rested. There have been times when I felt he was not a good coach, but there have also been times when I have trusted him completely. I can't say he's really a bad coach, he's just inexperienced in some areas."

"I'm sure if Rec Hall wanted to, they could buy a guy with two or three national championships that would probably be better in that one sense."

TOMORROW: MacNeil outlines his approach to the program.



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Bill Eiwien
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out of the pool
for good

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