

Success scheme has Bahr on top of American scene

The Bahr from within Jellystone Park continually searches for picnic baskets. The Bahr from Penn State also searches, but instead of picnic baskets he prefers to savour something more satisfying — perfection. The main difference between the two besides the fact that not many bears cut grass, play golf, rectify kickers, smoke cigars, or do the polka, is that the man involved in soccer is more likely to succeed.

To state that nothing succeeds more than success is to actually say that nothing succeeds more than Penn State soccer coach Walter Bahr. Not only has his involvement in soccer as a player done so much for the growth of the game in America, but the hallmark of his success is also to be found within the circles of coaching college soccer. His continued enthusiasm and dedication as a first class coach remains as the trademark of his illustrious career.

Not only do people take note of an occupation which stretches from below the bleachers at Jeffrey Field to the confines of Rec Hall and White Building, but also to a secluded home situated in the middle of a golf course. Soccer is intended to be played within the same atmosphere that surrounds a close knit

family. Coach Bahr is fortunate enough to experience both, his team play as a family, his family as a team.

His son Chris played Penn State football and soccer and is now a placekicker for the NFL Cincinnati Bengals. His younger son Matt is still chasing Chris' records on the football field and setting a few of his own. Matt also played professional soccer this summer for the Colorado Caribou and is now on the Tulsa Roughnecks squad. Coach Bahr's daughter, Davies, was on last year's national championship Lady Lion gymnastics team and is now on the volleyball team.

When many a father would be proud of a son or daughter earning any kind of sporting recognition, Coach Bahr could be forgiven for standing in the limelight with the wealth of talent available within his household. Instead, he prefers to play the role of a father and leave them to decide their own individual goals and career aspirations, yet offering sound advice if and when the need arises.

Coaches in America have often been likened to people constantly hungry for success. Some coaches will do anything and everything to be nationally acclaimed No. 1. Their methods in some instances have not been observed since

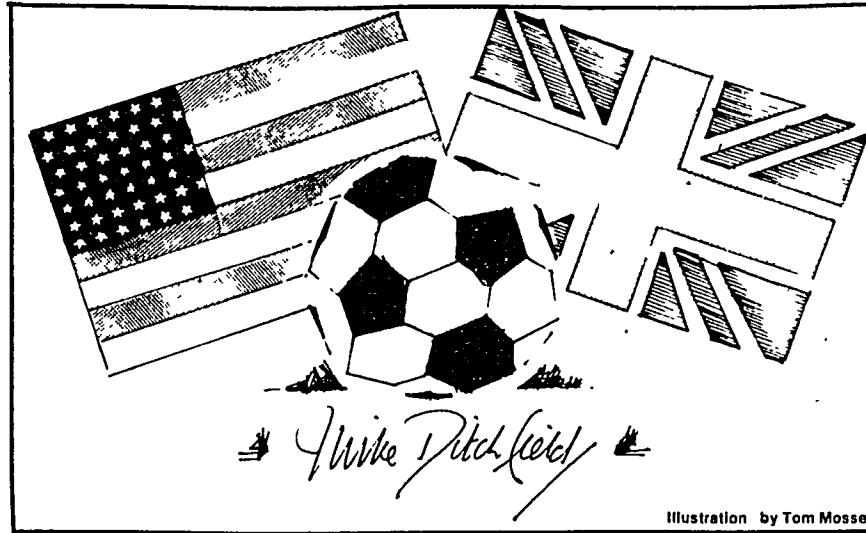


Illustration by Tom Mosser

the abolition of slavery in the 1800's. Coach Bahr is a man reluctant to involve himself in any Lombardic ethics. Instead, he prefers to respect a player's playing ability in the same way that he expects players to respect his coaching ability. It is this two-way facet that in my mind undoubtedly holds the key to his immediate and future success. Coach Bahr has always maintained that players must rise to his level of thinking. This is not a domineering mode of

thinking. It simply encourages players to reach a higher level of aspiration through setting their standards high in the hope of achieving greater things. Giving credit and respectability to Coach Bahr is like the presence of the notorious spring rain; it is both abundant and forever flowing. I have yet to meet a coach with as deep a sense of concern for the well-being not only of his players, but of everyone whose path he crosses. For someone who is continually

inundated with mail from prospective soccer material, continually active with soccer and football, continually active with social engagements, he still finds time to respond to any plea for help, give a word of advice, or simply converse socially.

One coach was often heard to state that once ounce of information is the equivalent of one ton of practice. This may well be true in theory but the truth of such must be seen in its practical application. In England, college coaches are still reluctantly pushing with this ton of practice. In America, coaches similar in calibre to Coach Bahr push ahead through this information ounce approach. The results are slowly emerging. College soccer standards are improving with each game in America, while the English system still finds itself situated on a plateau with little visible signs of elevating itself.

Having worked with many top-class coaches in England, I have observed

different approaches and styles of coaching. Although I have only been in America on one previous visit, the standards do vary. In England many coaches will say one thing to your face and do the complete opposite behind your back. There is one coach in England who I know for a fact would sell his own grandmother if it was in the best interest of his team. There may exist coaches in America with similar ideas, but as yet I have not come across any. All my views and opinions are based on what I have actively seen, none more so than at Penn State. Here, there is a man well-known and well-liked by many, a coach whose reputation is renowned and respected by all.

It would not surprise me in the least if on meeting President Carter, someone in the audience whispered quietly, "Who's that guy over there talking with Coach Bahr?"

Mike Ditchfield, a native of Lancashire, England, is an assistant Penn State soccer coach.

Correction

The Daily Collegian incorrectly stated yesterday that the Penn State Rifle team lost to Youngstown University last weekend 2,639 to 2,637. Actually it was Penn State that gunned down the Youngstown team by the same score.

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