

# SU's quick cure: Chop wrestling

It's not as if Syracuse University is dropping Shakespeare in providing English majors freedom to study the cultural contributions of Stephen King or by all means Danielle Steele.

Plenty of colleges besides SU, God forgive them all, have downgraded Shakespeare from being a requisite. But none have dumped the course, and terminated the professor.

Syracuse's wrestling program wasn't as lucky. Tuesday's sudden ax detaches Bainbridge High graduate Ed Carlin after his combined 40 years as Syracuse wrestler and head coach. Left twisting in the wind are perennial heir-apparent Gene Mills, once No. 1 in the world at his weight, and second-year assistant J.J. Stanbro of Johnson City.

Not to mention the entire wrestling squad. Carlin counted 18 of the 22 shedding tears when he broke the news at Tuesday practice, and he declares the other four too stunned to cry.

Title IX was a wonderful step toward giving my generation's daughters and granddaughters equality with males in school and college athletic opportunity. It mandates that the school or college provides a fair shake unless it is prepared to lose its federal aid. Also face NCAA penalties. And risk the dreaded L-word: lawsuits.

The problem is that, on the college level, what's fair shake for the goose often is causing a shakedown for the gander. Unless, he plays the revenue-producing amnesty of Division I football or basketball.

With the belated introduction of softball at Syracuse in the spring of 2000 A.D., there'll be 12 women's sports at SU. At the end of the current semester, men will be down to nine — seven if you lump outdoor track, indoor track and cross country.

"It's a disturbing trend, because the purpose of Title IX is to add women's sports, not to cut men's," NCAA official Kathryn Reith told a Syracuse sports writer.

Perfect Title IX (and NCAA) compliance matches percentage of student body with percentage of athletes, or at least in the same general range. Last year, 51 percent of SU students were female, while accounting for only 32 percent of Orange athletes.

Even in 2000, it'll still be a projected 59-41 imbalance for the men, 100-man football squads making perfect compliance almost impossible.

But another form of number — the one involving dollar signs — is the biggest factor in dropping wrestling and men's gymnastics.

Enrollment is down, costs are up. In the five-year presence of Chancellor Kenneth Shaw, nicknamed Buzz, tightened budgets have chain-sawed more than 500 jobs off the SU payroll.

Syracuse athletic director Jake Crouthamel says that the addition of women's lacrosse next year and softball is impossible without the annual \$700,000 that wrestling and men's gymnastics programs are costing.

The cost of living in Crouthamel's domain is staggering considering that's where all Carrier Dome receipts go, other than the tenant's substantial lease payments to Dome management.

Basketball home attendance led the nation 11 straight seasons before slipping behind Kentucky last winter; Dome football aver-



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aged more than 48,000 tickets — third best in SU history — for the past fall's six games.

Yet Syracuse can't support an existing agenda that hasn't had hockey since the Ice Age and dropped baseball a quarter-century ago, tennis and golf later.

Meanwhile, Cornell University men have 17 sports, women 18, including polo teams for both sexes. At Colgate, it's 11-11; at Ithaca College, 11-12; Binghamton U. 10-9; Hartwick, 10-10.

At Binghamton, absence of football, makes compliance quite easy. But none of the others has quite the Syracuse problem. Other than academic scholarships, Ivy League (Cornell) and Patriot League (Colgate) regulations permit financial aid only according to parental need. Same with NCAA Division III regulations.

At Syracuse where, with board, room and tuition worth \$25,000 a year, the 85 full rides in football alone mean an annual \$2.2 million giveaway before the other millions in expenses.

Of course Penn State likewise goes the ungodly limit that the NCAA permits in football scholarships, and still supports 15 men's intercollegiate sports (14 for women). But PSU has (a) state funding, and (b) a 98,000-seat stadium.

When asked if Syracuse victory over Miami and the resultant Orange Bowl slot's \$7 million bonanza would have saved wrestling, Crouthamel's response to my financial innocence was, "No way! Don't budget on windfall income or (if it doesn't materialize) you're absolutely dead."

Wrestling, in which Syracuse's six NCAA champions include full-back Art Baker of the 1959 national football champions and successor Jim Nance, is a popular nationwide scapegoat in the Title IX ripple effect. Since 1982, Division I wrestling programs have dropped from 146 to 94. In the same period, women's soccer has gone from 22 to 211, Syracuse among its 1996 newcomers.

Tim Jenks, coach of the Greene wrestling team that is unbeaten in its last 44 dual meets, was a SU standout for Carlin in the mid-1970s. "You've got to be kidding," he recalls his dismayed reaction when Greene teachers relayed the news Wednesday morning.

Greene boys now have 10 sports, one more than Syracuse men henceforth. And that's before the coming addition of a Greene swimming pool.

Boys swimming coinciding with his wrestling season, Jenks observes with a laugh, "Of course, in this case I think we should only have a girls swim team."

More seriously, federal Title IX creators' unintended equivalent of throwing out the baby with the bathwater is that in making deserved room in the tub for the ladies, too many laddies are going down the drain.

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