

Analysing the Impact of the Women in Coaching Apprenticeship Program

The Women in Coaching Apprenticeship Program (WiCAP) was established in 1999 for qualified women coaches. Now in its third phase, WiCAP has provided opportunities for women coaches to work with their national team programs leading up to and during the 1999 Pan American Games, the 2002 Olympic Games, the 2002 Paralympic Games, the 2002 Commonwealth Games, and various world championships. Currently, its participants are working toward the 2003 Pan American Games and the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



Laura Sollberg
photo credit Mariann Domonkos

To those who ask why special treatment for women coaches, the simple answer is that what is happening today is not working to increase the number of women in coaching or to motivate those who do coach to stay involved. Does anyone really believe that women prefer to have less recognition, less power, less money, and fewer choices than male coaches? The combination of discriminatory practices in sport and women's position in society as a whole means that women are disadvantaged in the sport system. We need policies and programs that can change the system. A different approach is needed, and that includes creating programs such as WiCAP that are designed specifically to address women's experiences in coaching.

In this issue of the Journal, Rose Mercier explains why WiCAP was developed, outlines the program's evolution, and describes the expectations and obligations of each partner and participant. Penny Werthner shares the insights of five WiCAP participants. Dru Marshall writes movingly about her experience as a WiCAP mentor coach.

As this article clearly identifies, WiCAP is a vital and effective program that has had a deep and lasting impact on the apprentice coaches, all of whom are committed to carving out careers in the profession they love. Nor can there be any doubt about WiCAP's capacity to effect important and positive change for both the apprentice coaches and Canada's sport system. Long may WiCAP continue. — Sheila Robertson

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Analysing the Impact of the Women in Coaching Apprenticeship Program

by Rose Mercier

A flagship program of the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), the Women in Coaching Apprenticeship Program (WiCAP) focuses on increasing the number of women coaches at the national team level of sport. The design intentionally incorporates fundamental elements for bringing about sustainable change for women in under-represented areas. The goals and design of WiCAP have been well conceived, drawing on different analyses, examples of which have been featured in Vol. 1, Nos. 1, 2, and 6, and Vol. 2, No. 3, of the Journal. Here we more fully explain the purpose behind this design, beginning with the three rationales for WiCAP.

Rationales

Women are under-represented

In Vol. 1, No. 1, we noted that the [Sport Gender Snap Shot \(1997-1998\)](#) Survey Report published by Sport Canada (May 1999) presented a sad story about the representation of women as national team coaches. Only 44 of 257, or 17 per cent, of national coaches employed by national sport federations (NSFs) were women.

This story line did not change appreciably despite the expectation that Sport Canada set out in its Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF). When the results of the first SFAF cycle were reviewed in the [2001 Evaluation Report on the 1996-2001 Accountability Cycle](#), also published by Sport Canada, it was noted that 31 of 38 NSFs reported under-representation of women in coaching at the national team level and that of the remaining seven, four had predominantly female participation. "Despite a variety of initiatives, there has been no discernable increase in the number of women coaching national teams. NSFs have introduced mentoring opportunities, targeted training, and/or financial support; however ... even organizations that wholeheartedly embrace the importance of having more women coaches are confounded by the lack of real progress."

Clearly, one rationale for WiCAP was to address head-on the continuing lack of women at the national level of coaching.

Sustainable change through a collaborative approach

In Vol. 1, No. 2, we pointed out that "the underlying issues related to increasing the representation of women in coaching are deeply rooted in the cultures of sport and individual sport organizations. The factors that serve as barriers to increased numbers of women coaching at all levels are interrelated and mutually reinforcing." The SFAF Evaluation Report reinforced the reality that "a sport system where individual women coaches or even individual sport organizations must negotiate their own solutions will not bring about change. ... [O]nly a collaborative, systemic, and integrated approach will yield a broader vision about women coaches and make possible the necessary structural changes."

Although WiCAP is not the complete answer, its multisport perspective makes possible the transfer of best practices, provides program and educational support to individual coaches, and supports the resolution of problems that would otherwise be impossible for a single NSF. The apprenticeship program provides a modest financial stimulus to encourage the development of technical and leadership skills and competitive experience. It brings together partners — CAC, Sport Canada, NSFs — whose enlightened leadership creates the possibility for real change. To date, these organizations have demonstrated the commitment and willingness to be accountable that has made it possible to sustain the apprenticeship approach.

Point	Intervention
Women lack national-level coaching experiences	One of the prerequisite components of the apprenticeship learning plan is the inclusion of opportunities to attend, observe, assist, and coach at international competitions. These opportunities provide the apprentice with an understanding of the coaching demands of the international arena in her sport.
Isolation among women coaches persists	A key value of WiCAP is the network that develops among the women coaches. This network is a positive force during the program and continues, providing a system of support long after the program ends. The program has also been valuable in fostering excellent connections among the apprentice coaches and current women national team coaches. It provides a forum for exchanging ideas and addressing gender-specific coaching challenges.
There are few women coach role models	Graduates of WiCAP become role models for other women coaches; they also learn the power of being role models through the leadership seminars, which emphasize that one of the most powerful ways we learn about leadership is through observation of others. Current national team coaches also serve as role models for the apprentices.
There is less pressure to change existing coaching model to address women's realities	The leadership seminars enable the apprentices to develop skills to bring about positive changes for themselves and other women coaching in their sport. They help to develop an analysis of the larger picture of coaching and the barriers that women face.

Program Evolution and Building Blocks

Each of the three phases of WiCAP has been and continues to be unique, but each has had the same goals. Note how these goals fall out of the analyses:

- Provide qualified Canadian women coaches in selected Olympic, Paralympic, and Pan American Games sports with advanced training opportunities and major Games' coaching experience and prepare them for future coaching opportunities in international competitive events with national teams.
- Facilitate an increase in the number of women coaches who will have access to international Games' coaching experience.
- Provide apprentice coaches with the opportunity to experience training and team selection activities prior to major international Games.
- Support apprentice coaches in their ongoing professional development through seminars and practical experience.

Similarly, the program elements reflect the analyses and have remained constant since the beginning:

- Support the NSF, which is essential to facilitating access to the mentor coach, and include it in national team projects.
- Through the mentor coach, support the coaching goals of the apprentice coach by creating opportunities, sharing knowledge, providing feedback, and making connections.
- Create a learning program that includes on-site coaching opportunities and coaching development such as tutored completion of NCCP Level 4 or 5 tasks.
- Provide seminars that bring together the apprentice coaches and facilitate development of key leadership skills and the completion of Task 17.
- Establish a supportive network among the apprentice coaches.

The Chronological Evolution of WiCAP

The Pan American Games Coaching Apprenticeship Program (1998-99)

The Pan American Games Coaching Apprenticeship Program (PAGCAP) was a 10-month pilot, introduced to take advantage of Canada hosting the 1999 Pan American Games in Winnipeg and the relatively easier access to accreditation in a "hometown" event. The ability of an apprentice coach to be part of the on-site coaching preparation process during major international Games and competitions is critical in developing an understanding of the dimensions of coaching at national team and international competition levels. The apprenticeship program offered the often-elusive access to competition and the Athlete Village, although this access was not universal. The apprentice coaches agreed unanimously that their participation was incredibly educational. Some were integrally involved as members of the coaching staff, others were observer-coaches who played support roles, and others had more limited access to the team. Nonetheless, all came away with important learnings.

The apprenticeship program began with a two-and-a-half day seminar in November 1998 in Winnipeg. The objectives were to begin the process of building a supportive network, develop leadership skills, and refine the learning program of each coach.

The learning program is the heart of WiCAP. It acts as a plan for the apprenticeship period and includes three basic elements: international competitions, national team training, and personal professional development. The most successful learning plan involves collaboration among the apprentice coach, the mentor coach, and the NSF. The development of a learning plan is challenged by the often differing goals of each coach and the specific goals of the Women in Coaching Program. With limited resources, it is tempting for the NSF to see WiCAP simply as a way to offset travel costs for an additional coach/manager to an international competition. If mentor coaches are not involved from the beginning, they may be reluctant to include the apprentice coach in meaningful ways or openly share information until a level of confidence and trust develops. An apprentice coach may have a general idea of goals and only minimal ideas of how to achieve them. Needless to say, most learning plans go through several editions before they become useful.

A successful learning plan

- clearly identifies the goals to be achieved: What aspects of coaching does the apprentice coach want to focus on developing? What specifically does she want to be more capable of doing?
- includes a combination of learning opportunities, not exclusively competitions or training camps, but also select professional development such as one-on-one completion of key NCCP tasks and attendance at a sport-specific international coaching conference
- makes creative use of the available funding, combining opportunities and taking advantage of emerging circumstances. The learning plan is a tool to maximize learning but should not be so rigid as to prevent change.
- is reviewed and improved throughout the program

Immediately after the Pan American Games, the coaches assembled for a second seminar that took place just outside Winnipeg. The seminar provided the opportunity to debrief on the Games' experience while it was fresh in everyone's mind and to reflect on how the apprenticeship program had prepared the apprentices to take advantage (or not) of the Games coaching opportunity.

Long-Term Apprenticeship Program (2000-2003)

Following the success of PAGCAP and building on the lessons learned, the Long-Term Apprenticeship Program (LTAP) was unveiled. Expanded from 10 months to three years, LTAP presented many opportunities as well as some challenges. This program began in the fall of 2000 with the objective of having apprentice coaches involved through the sustained development of a national team toward a multisport competition or world championship.



The Long-Term Apprenticeship Program coaches at Wakefield, Que.



Moira Marshall, coach of 2002 Olympic bronze medallist Cindy Klassen, participated in LTAP.

The apprentice coaches met in Calgary during Sport Leadership 2000 for the first leadership seminar and refinement of their learning programs. From there, coaches were involved in their personal programs through the end of May 2001, when they gathered in Wakefield, Que. At that time, several coaches were working toward involvement with the Canadian teams going to the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, an opportunity that was generally the result of LTAP, although there were exceptions such as **Moira (D'Andrea) Marshall**, who was a key member of the speed skating coaching staff and would coach **Cindy Klassen** to the 3000m bronze medal.

By the third seminar in the fall of 2002, it was evident that one of the key elements of a successful program was the combined commitment of the NSF and the mentor coach. Apprentice coaches whose NSF supported LTAP were proactive and helped resolve problems that arose. Sometimes, however, the apprentice coach became an afterthought in NSF planning, was overlooked, or in the worst case, encountered obstacles in carrying out her learning program.

Expectations of the NSF include

- endorsing apprentice coaches for their sport based upon identified criteria
- providing opportunities for the apprentice coach to work with the national team in training and competition environments
- promoting the program
- assisting in planning the learning program
- providing some financial assistance to the apprentice coach through national team funds
- committing a minimum of \$1,200 toward approved mentor coach expenses in the second year of the program (new for the 2003-2005 phase of WiCAP)
- participating in ongoing and program-end evaluations
- providing accreditation, where appropriate, for the apprentice coach at major Games
- developing and implementing a grassroots Women in Coaching Program to ensure the ongoing recruitment and development of women coaches

At the heart of a successful apprenticeship is a strong working relationship with a mentor coach who is willing to embrace the role. Mentoring does not come naturally to most people, and WiCAP depends upon the ability of the mentor to work effectively with the apprentice. Some work hard at this role, while others struggle. The mentoring relationship depends on having a vision for the apprenticeship program and what is possible to achieve, but, more fundamentally, it requires strong communication skills. It is important to be able to establish an open two-way exchange, to share knowledge, to act as a sounding board, to deliver helpful feedback, and to encourage self-reflection in the apprentice coach.

A mentor coach

- shares a vision of coaching and provides insights
- provides advice and counsel
- supports and encourages the apprentice coach
- helps develop self-confidence and improve self-esteem
- creates a safer environment for taking risks
- ensures that there are crisis or failure control plans
- shares insights on the politics of sport and organizational culture
- acts as a role model
- introduces and delegates tasks that will challenge an apprentice coach's current beliefs
- provides opportunities to reflect critically on issues and situations, make objective decisions, and develop a strong work ethic
- delivers constructive feedback and critical analysis

Another important learning was the importance of the apprentice coach taking responsibility for making her program work for her. This task is easier said than done, but is nonetheless essential. The apprentice coach's responsibilities include

- being dedicated to improving her current knowledge and competency level
- assessing her individual needs and current abilities
- preparing, assessing, and modifying her learning plan
- taking the initiative in her professional development
- actively participating in the mentoring relationship
- taking full advantage of the training and assistance offered
- being willing to accept and follow through on the mentor's advice
- respecting the rules of confidentiality
- developing and utilizing the skills of ethical and professional conduct

National Team Coaching Apprenticeship Program (2003-2005)

The learning to date is expected to help improve the current version of WiCAP — the National Team Apprenticeship Program (NTCAP), a two-year program that began in the summer of 2003 with the announcement of 12 successful coach applicants. The new apprentice coaches bring strong coaching experiences and high expectations to NTCAP. They are ready for an intensive, two-year program that has the same basic elements as the first two programs but has been improved with experience. All have assigned mentor coaches and learning plans that will help guide their efforts in gaining experience critical to their development as national team level coaches, and all will attend two leadership seminars.

It is worth noting that the seminars have been one of the consistent elements of WiCAP. The seminars have always been highly valued by the apprentice coaches, not just for the content, but also for the opportunity to connect with each other. Without fail, each program has fostered a strong, supportive, enduring network among the apprentice coaches, who recognize similarities of goals and ambitions and whose coaching experiences resonate with each other.

Key Partners

In addition to the NSFs, Sport Canada and CAC are important partners with specific roles.

Sport Canada provides financial assistance through New Funding for Sport to offset the program costs and program consultation. It also participates in ongoing and program-end evaluations.

The CAC provides financial assistance to offset program costs, assists in identifying and selecting the apprentice coaches and mentor coaches, follows up with apprentice coaches throughout their terms, supervises the apprentice coaches, communicates with the partners, promotes the program through the CAC Web site and [Coaches Report](#), provides technical expertise in program design, communicates with the Canadian Olympic Committee and other major Games organizations as required, and participates in ongoing and program-end evaluations.

The Graduates

WiCAP has an impressive list of graduates who continue to coach in a variety of capacities. This unique and much-envied program has attracted the notice of Australia, Norway, England, and New Zealand, all of which are also searching for ways to increase the number of national team coaches. For reasons chronicled in many issues of the *Journal*, women coaches face significant challenges in entering and staying within the realm of a country's top coaches. Through its three phases, WiCAP attempts to address some of those challenges, including gaining exposure among the top coaches in their sport, building a network of support in their sport and among other women coaches, and creating focused activities to accelerate their development as coaches.

For more information on the WiCAP graduates, visit the Women in Coaching Web site at www.coach.ca/women/e/apprenticeship/.

The Future

WiCAP fits well in the sport environment being shaped by the Canadian Sport Policy. It responds to the need for strategies to address the barriers faced by women coaches in becoming a more visible face in sport. It addresses the need to increase the professionalization of coaches. And it requires the communication and collaboration of key partners.

The lessons of WiCAP have been applied to the unique program offered during the Jeux de la Francophonie (see *Journal*, September 2001, Vol. 2, No. 1) and may yet be developed into a program targeted for Canada Games coaches. But for now, it continues to be a significant force in developing a new generation of women coaches, ready to take their place in the ranks of Canada's national coaches.

Coaches Rate WiCAP

by Penny Werthner

Beth Ali



Beth Ali, based in Toronto, was part of LTAP. She holds a full-time job as a program manager at the University of Toronto (U of T) in the Faculty of Physical Education and Health. Before being selected to LTAP, she was head coach of the U of T women's varsity field hockey team and the Field Hockey Ontario women's high performance program, and she became an assistant coach with the women's national team in 2000. It was LTAP that ensured that she continued, in an official capacity, as an assistant coach with the national team from 2000 to 2003, working closely with **Dru Marshall**, then the team's head coach, as her mentor (see below, The Joys of Being a Mentor Coach). During this time, Beth assisted Dru with talent identification camps across Canada. She travelled extensively with the team, including an Americas Cup Final in March 2001, where the team placed third. When Dru left to devote her energies to her work as a professor at the University of Alberta, Beth was responsible for implementing and monitoring the training program for the team — from March 2001 to July 2001 — until **Butch Worth**, the new national coach was hired. Beth has continued as the assistant coach, working with Butch and coaching the team at the 2002 Commonwealth Games and the 2003 Pan American Games. From March 2003, in preparation for the Pan American Games, Beth took a leave of absence to work with the team and develop its physical training program and a strategic plan for the next four years.

The apprenticeship program enabled Beth to take an International Hockey Federation coaching course in Perth, Australia, which she successfully completed. "I would not have been able to pursue my international certification without funding from the apprenticeship program."

The Women in Coaching Apprenticeship Program ensures that each coach works closely with a national-level coach as a mentor. Beth worked alongside Dru in that capacity. Beth herself has gone on to mentor two young field hockey coaches, **Sherry Doiron** and **Ann Doggett**. What began as an informal mentoring with Sherry, who has been part of the National Coaching Institute (NCI)-Atlantic, an Atlantic regional coach, and a junior national team assistant coach, has developed into a more formal process as Sherry becomes part of the two-year NTAP. Ann has been involved with the NCI-Ontario, and Beth has been working with her at the Ontario Training Centre. She is an assistant coach of the U of T team and an assistant with the senior Ontario team.

"LTAP has given me an invaluable opportunity to work at and really come to understand the high performance environment in women's field hockey," says Beth. "I feel that as a result of this program and what I have learned in the three years, I am now capable of coaching the senior national program. I feel confident in my abilities and I know what is required to work successfully at this level of field hockey."

Heather MacFarlane



Heather MacFarlane, who grew up in Portage la Prairie, Man., was a competitive swimmer and began coaching swimming at the age of 18 years. She attended the University of Manitoba (U of M), obtaining a BA in philosophy and psychology. She also attended the NCI in Winnipeg and coached at the U of M from 1997 to 2002 with **Vlastimil Cerny**. Encouraged by Sport Manitoba, she applied for and was accepted into PAGCAP and was able to be part of the Canadian swim team at the 1999 Pan American Games. During her apprenticeship, Heather was part of the coaching staff for the 1999 World Short Course Championships in Hong Kong. She was also part of LTAP and attended the Mare Nostrum Tour in Europe and several World Cups with the athletes from the Manitoba National Swim Centre. In January 2003, she was an assistant coach with the junior national team competing in Australia at the Australian Olympic Youth Festival.

"The apprenticeship program provided me with so many opportunities to get exposure to international competition, coaches, and athletes, and for those with the national program to get exposure to me. As a result of this program, I believe I have gained respect in the swim community, from both athletes and other coaches, and I now have the opportunity to talk with these coaches at every meet I attend. There is no doubt in my mind that these opportunities would not have occurred without the apprenticeship program. I now have a much broader picture of athlete development and what it takes to coach at the different levels of our sport. I think you often just get snapshots of what is required, but I was able to see the complete picture of what it takes to be an athlete at the national and international levels and what it takes to coach at those levels. The program has definitely made me a much better coach."

Heather moved to Quebec and the Université Laval in 2002 to coach with **Michel Berubé**. "I met Michel in Hong Kong in 1999 and I really liked his philosophy of coaching and his skills. I have been an assistant to Michel at Laval's swim centre, responsible for a number of athletes during training and competitions. At this time, I'm not sure what is going to happen regarding my future with the national program and the centre because my funding has been cut. I will be coaching with an age-group program developing young swimmers next season. It is not exactly what I had planned, but I will still be doing what I love — coaching."

Helen Radford



A competitive curler, **Helen Radford** was urged to take a chance, leave her teaching job in Halifax in 1999, and move to Calgary to play and coach out of the Canadian Curling Association's (CCA's) National Training Centre. Encouraged by **Gerry Peckham**, the CCA's high performance director, and **Bill Tschirhart**, the national development coach, she applied for LTAP. "Gerry was so helpful in the application process and really wanted curling to be involved in the Women in Coaching Program. He was, I think, looking for someone who had initiative, and because I had moved here a year earlier to take advantage of the opportunities at the national centre, he felt I could be successful. Throughout LTAP, he presented me with many great opportunities and helped figure out how to get me on as a paid part-time coach."

As part of her apprenticeship, Helen went to the 2001 World Junior Curling Championships and shadowed the team leaders of both the women's and men's teams. Although the CCA was not able to get her accreditation for the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, she went and observed as much as she could. "The leaders, coaches, and teams made me feel welcome, and I learned a lot from watching, observing, and, when possible, asking questions. I certainly saw the Olympics from many perspectives and observed how individuals dealt with the immense stress of competing there."

Helen continues to coach at the training centre and is one of the CCA's national coaches. "The apprenticeship program provided me with tremendous opportunities to work in my sport on national and international levels. While I took the first step by moving to Calgary, there is no doubt that without LTAP, I would not have the knowledge and skills of high performance coaching in curling that I have today."

Laura Solberg



Laura Solberg, who has a home in Winnipeg, travels across Manitoba and Saskatchewan as retail territory manager for Shell Canada. She began her athletic life in the sport of water skiing, competing with the junior national team, and then went on to coaching and completing a number of NCCP Level 4/5 tasks. She obtained a degree in economics and criminology at the U of M, worked at Sport Manitoba as a provincial coach, and worked in Italy for eight months teaching water skiing. When she came back to Canada in 1993, Laura began playing ice hockey on the Manitoba provincial team and started coaching at the peewee level of girl's hockey. She became head coach of the U of M's ice hockey team in 1997. What began as a way to stay fit and have fun has turned into a deep commitment to coaching ice hockey.

In 2000, Laura was a fully certified Level 3 coach and applied for LTAP. Although the Canadian Hockey Association was not very supportive of her application, the coaching staff of the women's national team was. "The apprenticeship years have been a great learning experience for me. In the 2000-2001 season, I was involved in all the national team training camps and worked closely with the three coaches — **Danièle Sauvageau**, **Wally Kozak**, and **Mel Davidson**. I helped with team dynamics and did some video analysis for the team. I attended the 2001 world championship with them, and when the national team centralized in Calgary in fall of 2001, I really tried to have Shell Canada relocate me to Calgary. Unfortunately, that was not possible, but the coaches and team included me in everything including coaching discussions, planning, video analysis, and pre- and post-game discussions. I also attended the Salt Lake City Olympics, although I did not have accreditation. I went to all the practices, which was invaluable learning, and purchased tickets for the games. LTAP and Sask Sport supported me, and LTAP provided me with an incredible and invaluable opportunity to work with the national team, travel to the Olympics, and learn from the high performance athletes and coaches in our sport.

"With these experiences and the exposure and skills learned, very much as a direct result of LTAP, I have been an assistant coach with the under-22 national women's team, first with **Karen Hughes** and then with **Margot Page** as head coaches. I have now set my sights on coaching at the university level, continuing to learn from our best coaches and athletes, and also coaching at the national level. I continue my own learning by online mentoring of five women coaches; one is in Prince Edward Island and the others are in Saskatchewan. We plan practices, discuss drills, and talk about issues we all face. It works very well, and we all learn to be more effective coaches."

Sherry Vanin Robertson



Sherry Vanin Robertson, based in Edmonton, Alta., was part of PAGCAP in 1999-2000. She had been a national team coach with Synchro Canada since 1991 and head coach of the Edmonton Aurora Club. "The one-year apprenticeship program enabled me to work with the National A Team and to be an apprentice coach at the 1999 Pan American Games in Winnipeg, where we won double gold. PAGCAP was also really instrumental in providing me with the opportunity to go, as an apprentice, to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, where I was one of four coaches working with the team." During this time, Sherry travelled regularly from Edmonton to Toronto, where the National A Team was based.

Sherry is still very much involved with Synchro Canada's national team program. In 2001, she was head coach of the National B Team, and in 2002 she was head coach of the Commonwealth Games team in Manchester, which won two gold medals. Sherry also gave birth to Lucas in February 2001 and Sophia in January 2003. She is continuing to work as a national team coach and is consulting for clubs. In July 2003, she took the B Team to Switzerland, where they won four silver medals. She had the whole family with her at this competition, with her husband caring for the children while she coached — managing breastfeeding around her team's training and competitive schedules.

"The apprenticeship program gave me the opportunity to experience our sport at the highest level — Olympics and Commonwealth Games. It helped me to be aware of all the resources, both in synchro and in our sport system in general, that I could access to learn more about all aspects of high performance coaching. The program also provided me with a network of fabulous women coaches in other sports whom I continue to stay in touch with."

The Joys of Being a Mentor Coach

by Dru Marshall

When I was asked to be the mentor coach for **Beth Ali**, I jumped at the chance. I believe very strongly in the importance of female role models for young women and knew that we had a lack of high performance female coaches, not only in Canada, but also around the world. If young women can at least see the possibility of a woman being a national coach, the door is open for them to aspire to the position. I was very fortunate in my personal development as a coach to have very strong female mentors in **Marina van der Merwe** and **Kathy Broderick**, two former national women's field hockey team coaches, and so was happy to have the opportunity to give back to someone I really believe in.

Just as Marina and Kathy had done with me, I recognized that my job as Beth's mentor was not to produce a cookie cutter version of me, but rather to create an environment in which she could recognize her potential. One of the biggest lessons I have learned in life is that there are hundreds of ways to do things, and typically more than one right way. Part of my job was to help Beth find her way. When she first started as an apprentice coach, we shared what we each thought were our personal strengths and areas for improvement from a coaching perspective. This allowed me to put Beth in situations with athletes where I knew she would be confident and successful, and where athletes could see her shine. It also allowed both of us to direct discussion and opportunities so further learning could occur.

We planned Beth's first year such that she travelled extensively in order to have exposure to the four primary pillars of performance — technical, tactical, physical, and mental — at the national and international levels, where distinct differences are apparent. Being on the road together also gave us the opportunity to discuss all of the intangibles that are involved in coaching, particularly dealing with the politics at all levels. As a national coach, you are always busy. Having Beth as an apprentice coach and then as an assistant coach within our program was not an "extra" duty for me; rather, it was extremely helpful, because there was another set of eyes and another mind to bounce ideas with back and forth. At times, Beth was the initiator of our discussions. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the two-way communication that develops between the mentor and apprentice. I think both Beth and I learned things through this experience. While they might have happened otherwise, with LTAP they were guaranteed. An unexpected benefit has been the continuing relationship that Beth and I have developed. We are good friends who provide a strong support system for one another, with an almost innate understanding of where each other is coming from. Since retiring as national coach, I have watched Beth's continued development from afar and know that she will make an excellent national coach one day, in part because of the experience with the apprenticeship program.

Beth and I had a successful mentor-apprentice relationship for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was involved in the planning of Beth's program, in conjunction with her, right from the beginning, and so I knew when we would have good opportunities for learning to occur. Secondly, we had great support from Field Hockey Canada and the Women in Coaching Program. Finally, the athletes in our program were open to the idea. We had purposefully created an atmosphere within our program where ideas from a variety of sources could be shared, and when Beth joined us, athletes were open to receiving her input. I would strongly encourage other coaches to be involved as mentors — you will be richer for the experience.

Editor's Note: Women in Coaching's online mentor program welcomes additional mentors in all sports. For more information, contact www.coach.ca/women/e/mentor/index.htm.

About the Authors

Rose Mercier



Rose Mercier established her independent consulting business after a 20-year career in the management and leadership of sport. An experienced facilitator in leadership and organizational development, she works with a wide variety of organizations within and outside sport. Her clients include Speed Skating Canada, Volleyball Canada, the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, the Aboriginal Sport Circle, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Swimming/Natation Canada, Water Polo Canada, the Canadian Child Care Federation, the Coaching Association of Canada, and Sport Canada. She has served on various national committees and is a member of the board of the Social Planning Council of Kingston.

Penny Werthner



Penny Werthner, Ph.D., is a practicing sport psychologist who works with many national team athletes and coaches. She is the team sport psychologist for the national canoe/kayak team and the national aerial freestyle ski team. She is an assistant professor in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa and is currently researching how coaches and athletes learn most effectively. A leader and innovator in international sport and in women and sport issues, Penny is a NCCP Level 4/5 presenter for Task 7, 8, and 17. She is a former Olympic track and field athlete who represented Canada internationally from 1970 to 1981.

Dru Marshall



Dru Marshall has a doctoral degree in exercise physiology and is the assistant dean, undergraduate program, in the Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Alberta. She coached within the national field hockey program for over 20 years, and was the head coach of the national women's field hockey team from 1996 to 2001. She is one of three field hockey coaches to have achieved NCCP Level 5 certification and has won numerous coaching awards. She is the author of many publications and technical reports and has conducted research on a wide range of topics including eating disorders in high performance athletes, coaching women athletes, and obesity and health.