



BETTY BAXTER

HALL OF FAME ATHLETE

Betty grew up in Brooks, Alberta playing a variety of sports. She started playing volleyball in Grade 11 and initially didn't make her high school time but was later recruited because of her height. It didn't take long for the coach to recognize Betty's talent and within a year, would drive Betty two hours into Calgary to train with the Calgary Cals, a top club team.

Betty wanted to continue playing volleyball in post-secondary and found herself out west, at the University of British Columbia where she was a member of the Thunderbirds team that won back-to-back National Inter-university Sport titles in 1972-73 and 1973-74. In 1974 she was named BC's University Athlete of the Year. A member of the national volleyball team, Betty was named captain of the team that represented Canada at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. At the 1978 World Championships in Latvia, despite Canada having a sub-par showing, Betty was named to the All-Star team. She began her coaching career at the University of Alberta in 1978 as an Assistant Coach for the U of A Women's Volleyball team. She later moved onto become the Head Coach for the University of Ottawa's Women's Volleyball Team and took the team to the 1980 CIAU Championships, winning the Silver medal. Betty was named CIAU Women's Volleyball Coach of the Year in 1980. In 1979 Betty became full-time Head Coach of the National Volleyball Program, the first female, and the first Canadian, to achieve this position.

She has been an outspoken advocate for lesbian and gay issues in sport and the community. A strong believer in developing equity in sport, Betty is a co-founder of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and the National Coaching School for Women. She was a board member and spokesperson for the 1990 Vancouver Gay Games. As a player/coach Betty capped off an impressive career with a gold medal win in volleyball at the 1986 San Francisco Gay Games and a silver medal at the 1990 Vancouver Gay Games.



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MONDAY PROFILE

Games helping to heal wound

By KEVIN GRIFFIN

FOR BETTY BAXTER, the journey from head coach of Canada's national volleyball team to one of the founding directors of next month's gay games was a circuitous and emotionally painful one.

After competing in the 1976 Montreal Olympics as captain of the national volleyball team, she became its head coach three years later.

Then, on a day she remembers exactly — Jan. 17, 1982, Baxter was called to an in camera meeting of the Canadian Volleyball Association executive and "given termination without cause."

Baxter believes she knows the reason: it was because she is a lesbian.

"I was devastated, absolutely. I think it was the hardest part of my life. I just that job because of who I was, not because of how I did the job or any activity or behavior."

The sudden firing from her job brought Baxter's world tumbling down and led to a three-year detour away from the world of volleyball. During that time, she concentrated on women's issues.

Baxter finally re-entered organized sports in 1985 when she joined the bid to bring the gay games to Vancouver, scheduled for 1992.

Denise Howard

BETTY BAXTER: a healing process for former volleyball coach

NAME: Betty Baxter
JOB: Organizer, Celebration '90
AGE: 38
RESIDENCE: Vancouver
EDUCATION: B.S. Psychology, University of Alberta

Baxter one of a kind

By TERRY BELL

In the world of amateur volleyball, Betty Baxter is unique. It may seem odd but Baxter, the head coach of the Canadian national women's volleyball team, is the only woman in the world to hold such a position. In women's volleyball, even though women do the setting and spiking, men do the coaching.

Baxter's youthful national team was in town Wednesday for an exhibition match against the highly-regarded Vancouver Old Time Ladies, comprised of former national team players.

"I was in the system as a player and I felt at that time the players weren't being developed to potential. I was just rocky enough to think I could change things," said Baxter: before her team took the court at Simon Fraser University and dropped a 15-6, 15-12, 12-15 and 15-8 decision to the oldtimers. In the preliminary, SFU women beat UBC alumni 15-4, 1-15 and 15-7.

"Most women don't get involved in coaching because they fail to see it as a viable career. And it's difficult for those who do want to coach because most often it's men who hold the power positions in sport and so it's men who become the coaches," she said.

Baxter, a national team player for 10 years, is making the most of her chance to add a woman's touch to this otherwise man's world. She has helped develop a system of restructuring the Canadian program since taking the job as team coach in the fall of 1979.

"When I played for Canada we concentrated only on our technical performance and our level of play on the court. Now we talk with each player every day so we know what they want. Before, players were often in the program blind.

