

Press Release- Teri McKeever January 31, 2023

Today I was informed by AD Knowlton of his decision to terminate my employment as CAL's Head Women's Swimming and Diving Coach. A position I held proudly since August of 1992.

There was not one day in the last 30 years where I questioned what my job was. I was charged with recruiting exceptionally talented young women and coaching them toward the goal of winning an NCAA National Championship. I loved my job, especially the challenge of taking an individual sport like swimming and making it about the team's accomplishments. I invested my whole self into this mission of excellence in the pool, classroom and beyond. I am proud of being the only female in swimming history to lead women to not one, but four national championships and the only woman ever selected to serve on, not one, but four USA Olympic Swimming Coaching staffs.

During a 30-year career there are always those who take issue with my coaching style and me personally. I am a woman holding what is traditionally a man's job and double standards come with the territory. I also know for those that struggled with my coaching, there were far more who had their lives positively changed by their experience. I greatly value the bonds I made with hundreds of young women and look forward to continuing to witness their successes.

I deny and unequivocally refute all conclusions that I abused or bullied any athlete and deny any suggestion I discriminated against any athlete on the basis of race, disability or sexual orientation. There were and should be consequences for violating team rules, not showing up for scheduled appointments, misusing resources, not giving an honest effort and behavior that was not congruent with their individual or our team goals. But those consequences were not applied because of who someone was, only for what they did or didn't do that hurt the team and the culture we were working hard to sustain.

I am terribly disappointed and saddened at the way in which the investigation process was conducted. I have been an open book in my coaching methods and administration knows and have fully approved of how I coach. Given that knowledge, the lack of support by CAL's administration has been heart breaking. I am the only coach, again female coach, to be subjected to a month's long investigation examining every mistake made over 30 years.

I leave Berkeley knowing I made a difference in hundreds of women's lives. My life's work has always been to empower women to see their strengths, understand their talents and learn skills that will fuel their success beyond their time in the pool. I wanted them to believe that as a female, they can do anything they set their mind to, but they'll need to learn how to lift one another up and, in many fields, they'll still need to be at least twice as good as their male counterpart. I now take that work beyond my time in Berkeley.

Today, I am more committed than ever to stand up for young women who deserve a structured high performing athletic environment where there are standards of excellence and to encourage my fellow coaches to demand policies to prevent bias-driven complaints from athletes. While I am disappointed in the way my CAL Career will conclude, I wish to thank and celebrate the many student-athletes and staff that made my time in Berkeley a true blessing and gift.

Tom Newkirk, McKeever's attorney and specialist in gender bias stated.

The process leading to this decision has been one of the most disturbing displays of double standards and enabling of gender bias directed at a female coach. This is compared to over 220 documented examples of female coaches investigated or terminated because of bias-driven claims just like Teri McKeever. Today, the standards of great coaching have been lowered to a point where all coaches, male or female, should be afraid, very afraid. If you are a good coach who holds your athletes accountable, you are next.

Teri cooperated at all times with what turned out to be witch hunt to examine every mistake made over 30 years when no male coach has ever been subjected to that type of investigation. When the soccer coach at Cal got complaints, he was allowed to keep his job and to "learn" from his mistakes. Berkeley would not provide that same respect to a woman like Teri. Berkeley refused to look at how males are coaching and refused to examine how Cal is treating female and male athletes differently. How can a woman defend herself from gender bias when her employer refuses to even look at how men are treated? Berkeley knows better and women deserve better.

Teri is an open book who does not coach in secret and administration knew she has not abused anyone. Jim Knowlton knows how Teri coached and both indirectly and directly approved her coaching methods. If this investigation stands and confirms that Teri McKeever is abusive or discriminates, then every male coach at Cal who coach exactly like she does is an abuser. Every student who has suffered, transferred, or sought mental health counseling should now come forward.

The coaching profession is at a crossroads. The complaints made about Teri were largely the result of gendered differences in how she was judged as a female but also based on gendered evaluations of female athletes. The complaints were also the result of a lack of resources provided to help coaches manage the mental health challenges of athletes. Coaches are all at risk as they seek to walk the line of great coaching compared to what any disappointed athlete or parent can now claim is abuse.

Teri will be filing suit to expose the manner in which gender has affected not only the evaluation of her coaching but harmed and continues to harm both female and male athletes. Female athletes, including those who complained, have been treated in a patronizing manner by this administration. Male athletes who need actual help with mental health are being ignored. Male coaches, who are not abusing anyone must now be fired. Teri is committed to finding the answer to this national problem that is destroying not only female coaches but coaching as a profession.