



GAY OR PLAY?

The difficult world of sports and homosexuality

GRAPHIC BY KACEY MINNICK/GUILFORDIAN

BY LANE MARTIN
STAFF WRITER

On Feb. 15, U.S. national soccer player Robbie Rogers announced on his personal blog that he was gay. However, his next move would turn even more heads.

"Now is my time to step away," said Rogers on his blog. "It's time to discover myself away from (soccer)."

The ramifications of being openly homosexual in a competitive environment can lead to difficult situations. Athletes might feel pressured to quit the team if rumors about homosexuality become incessant.

Even at a place as accepting as Guilford, homophobia can go unnoticed in the world of athletics.

"We're privileged to have a campus that is fairly accepting," said sophomore lacrosse player Sam Cole. "I think that athletics is an area that still struggles regarding sexuality."

"There's a sense that the people on your team should be your brothers and that they should be the people who are going

to stand by you. Some people think that homosexuality is going to get in the way of that."

"I'm aware that the football team had members leave," said sophomore women's rugby player Becca Bacewitz. "Football is stereotypically masculine, and I think they have some homophobia on their team."

"(Homophobia is) certainly not on my team, and I wouldn't be cool with it if I had heard about it," said women's lacrosse head coach Sarah Lamphier. "I haven't heard about it on any other sports teams here."

"I would say that there are many women on my team who are out and they have been very accepted by their teammates."

"(The women's rugby team) gets a bad reputation ... which is kind of annoying because we're not all gay," said sophomore rugby player AC Canup. "We joke around about it in a good way. We actually calculated the gayness of the rugby team, and it came out to about 34.5 percent."

Cole cites the importance of support in creating a cohesive team.

"I think that (gay athletes) should be

treated the same as we treat everybody else," said Cole. "If there's a guy who's a great athlete and a good friend to everyone else who happened to be gay, I don't think anyone would have a problem with that."

However, Cole thinks it might destroy team chemistry if teammates are gay.

"I think that the negative effects wouldn't come from them but would come from people's negative stigma on them," said Cole. "Where if people have strong feelings about homosexuality, they could possibly mess with the way the team works together and how cohesive they could be, but I think that's similar to any situation where people will have strong opinions on the choices people make."

There's a growing feeling of acceptance among Guilford's fan base.

"(An athlete being openly homosexual) would change my opinion in a positive light," said first-year baseball fan Harrison Houlihan. "I would be very impressed that someone would be courageous enough to be openly homosexual."

"You should treat people based on their

talent, not their personal life," said junior rugby fan Alex Morales.

Being homosexual in today's society presents numerous obstacles. Affiliating yourself with a sports team complicates that situation even further. Not even the accepting halls of Guilford, committed to its core virtues, are safe from homophobia.

"When you get on a sports team, you're always working toward a spot," said junior football, rugby and track and field athlete C.J. Green. "Suppose you had a player who was the greatest running-back in the nation, but he was openly gay. Other players would probably crack on him and bring him down so they could go after his spot."

Still, within Guilford athletic teams you may find support and approval.

"It doesn't matter about your orientation or who you like or things like that, at the end of the day if you're on a sports team with me, you're part of my family," said Green. "So I've got your back, and you've got my back."

"It doesn't matter if you like boys, girls, dogs or cats. We're still on the same page."

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Yay or neigh to Guilford equestrian team?

EXPENSIVE PRICE DETERS COLLEGE FROM INTEREST

BY ANNEY BOLGIANO
STAFF WRITER

When you were looking at possible colleges, what do you look for? A strong program in your intended major? What about a specific sports team?

Five schools in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference have something Guilford doesn't: equestrian.

The demand for an equestrian team, an expensive sport, is too little to prompt serious consideration.

"In my years at Guilford, I am unaware of any requests or interest in an equestrian team," said Aaron Fetrow, vice president for student affairs in an email interview.

Guilford's lack of an equestrian does not seem to be a deterrent to potential students.

"In my 17 years (of working at Guilford), I've fielded one or two questions from a perspective students regarding an equestrian program," said Dave Walters, sports information director and assistant director of athletics.

Adding sports to the athletics program is not a foreign concept.

"In the past 10 to 12 years, the college has restored cross country, track and field and added indoor track. Softball was restored in 2003," said Walters.

Certain factors must be taken into consideration when adding a sport to the college's athletic program.

These include student interest, cost, opportunity to schedule competitions and facility issues.

"What is the value to the college?" asked Walters, as an example of a question that should be asked when examining the possibility of adding a new sport.

Budget concerns are especially pertinent right now.

"The sports information office has the lowest operating budget it has had in my seventeen years here," said Walters. "This tightness of the budget suggests that money may be tight throughout campus."

Walters said that if the school could add another sport, he would wish it to be women's golf.

"We have a strong golf tradition at this school," said Walters.

"Plans are in the works for a golf center on

campus. It is in the fundraising stages."

According to Walters, it would be ideal if the future golf center could benefit both women's and men's teams instead of just the men's team.

Even when schools do have equestrian teams, they aren't necessarily attractive to all riders.

"When you have a horse and are on a team, you usually have to let the horse be a part of the team's horses too," said Carolyn Van Houten, winner of the North Carolina State Equestrian Championship and junior at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, in an email interview.

"Which means that your very expensive, very sensitive horse is taught bad habits by other, less-advanced riders."

Van Houten opted not to join her school's equestrian team.

"I have a lot of friends who went to college to ride on an NCAA team often on scholarship, but that was never my dream," said Van Houten. "Horse people tend to be a little like cat ladies — obsessed."

For now, it seems that too few Guilford students and potential Guilford students have an obsessive love for those very expensive cats, and with no demonstrated interest the athletic administration's focus is elsewhere.

It looks like Guilford will continue to say "neigh" to an equestrian team.