

Cathy Finneran survives in men's game



Cathy Finneran gets some help on her floor exercise from coach Cecil Woodruff (left) and a Schoolcraft teammate.

By Scott Adler
staff writer

Imagine this: The men's team you're on is the only one of its kind in the nation.

Now imagine this: You're not a man.

Livonia's Cathy Finneran knows what it's like to be one of a kind. She is the only female gymnast on the Schoolcraft College men's gymnastic team — the only men's junior college gymnastics team in the country.

But that doesn't bother her. In fact, she enjoys it.

"It's fun," said the 19-year-old freshman from Stevenson. "All the guys are like brothers. They've been great and they've helped me a lot."

Finneran said competing with the men has been different, but enlightening.

"The guys don't cry and they're more gutsy," she said. "I think that's helped me. They help spot you and they help you take chances."

Sophomore Jerry Marcussen said he had doubts when Finneran came onto the team, but she's proven herself.

"I thought, 'She's not going to be able to cut it,' but she has and I'm very impressed," Marcussen said. "She's done a great job."

It's a "little different" having a woman on the squad and Marcussen admits the men have to watch their phrasology.

"We try to watch how we put things," he said. "You know, cutting the sexist language and stuff."

Finneran is happy that she

gymnastics

has been accepted by her teammates and Marcussen said she is considered just one of the guys.

"I give her a lot of credit for what she does," he said. "Not many girls would do what she does. Not many could. We give her flex, but everybody gets that."

Finneran saw posters around campus about the men's team and decided she wanted to workout with them. Schoolcraft doesn't have a women's gymnastic team.

"She asked if she could workout and I said yes," coach Cecil Woodruff said. "After about a month, I checked out all the rules and talked to a number of people to see if they'd have any problem with a woman performing."

They said there would be no problem as long as it was with men's rules.

Woodruff then asked Finneran if she would be interested in competing with the team and she happily agreed.

"I just told them (my parents) and they were happy that I could get back into gymnastics," she said.

Finneran admits playing by men's rules is more difficult and, consequently, she said she is only strong enough to perform the floor exercises.

"THERE ARE harder requirements in men's gymnastics," she said. "There is no dance and the tumbling is more difficult."

Despite the difficulty, Marcussen said Finneran is doing a great job and

is a nice addition to the team.

"She does what she can do and that helps us out a lot," he said. "She is consistently in the 6s and 7s and that helps out our team."

Finneran's highest score came during a meet against University of Michigan when she scored a 7.2.

Because Schoolcraft is the only junior college-level men's team, the Ocelots are forced to compete with four-year schools like U-M, Eastern Michigan University, Kent State and Notre Dame. But that type of competition doesn't inhibit Finneran's drive or team spirit.

IT WASN'T ALL gravy for Finneran, however, as she experienced her most embarrassing moment as a men's gymnast.

The judges salute the men gymnasts before they perform and last week when Finneran stepped up to perform, she awaited the judges' salute. When there wasn't one, she waited a while longer until finally the judges threw up their hands wondering why she wasn't performing.

"They thought I was on the girls' team," Finneran said. "I'm nervous enough before going out there and then that happened. It usually isn't embarrassing."

Not all the judges reacted that way, though. While it is unusual to talk with the judges, Finneran recalls a judge at EMU that gave her some kind words.

Schoolcraft gymnastics program in final year

By Scott Adler
staff writer

Cecil Woodruff gave birth to the Schoolcraft College men's gymnastics team and now he has to watch it die.

Woodruff started the program in 1971 and has been its only coach. This is the team's final season because of a combination of factors.

Woodruff had planned on resigning after this season because he plans to return for his master's degree in mathematics. When Woodruff decided to go, the administration re-examined the program, and because of the lack of participation and the lack of adequate competition, it was dropped.

"I'm sorry to see it go, but there are no hard feelings," Woodruff said. "I

can see the administration's aspect of it, too."

When Woodruff started the team, it was one of some 20 junior college teams in the country. Last year there were four in the Midwest, and this year there is only one — Schoolcraft.

"It's hard to keep coaches going in this sport," he said. "You can't do it with part-time coaches on the college level."

One of the problems for gymnastics coaches is the extensive time it takes in practice, about three hours per day. Another problem, especially for junior colleges, is the lack of high school men's gymnastics.

"When I was a freshman at Ionia, there were 15 teams in the state," said Schoolcraft sophomore Jerry

Schoolcraft sports

Marcussen. "This year there are five."

Woodruff agrees that the number of male gymnasts is dwindling and he attributes that to the way the public views gymnastics.

"It's a lack of understanding by the public," he said. "They see someone do it, and they say, 'That's nice,' but they think they could never do it. It's like a freak show at times. People believe that not everyone can do it."

SCHOOLCRAFT, BECAUSE it is

forced to compete against four-year schools, doesn't win many meets. It's only win so far this year was last weekend at Notre Dame.

That hasn't dampened the enthusiasm of Woodruff, however.

"We don't talk about winning," Woodruff said. "We always try to win our meets. But individually we can better our own scores and try to beat certain individuals. We stress a personal victory more than a team one."

It is that type of approach that has

made Schoolcraft's program a special one despite its lack of impressive numbers. And it is that type of coaching his gymnasts won't forget.

"I give coach Woodruff a lot of credit," freshman Cathy Finneran said. "It wasn't easy having me on the team, especially because of road trips. It takes a lot out of their funds to have me there. But he's a patient coach. The most patient coach I've ever seen. I'm really disappointed they're ending it."

Marcussen said he will also be sad to see the program go.

"I'm kind of bummed out," Marcussen said. "It's really a good program and a lot of kids go on to other things."

One of those kids is Jerry Reighard,

a gymnast on the first-ever Schoolcraft team who is now the head coach of Central Michigan University women's team.

IF THERE'S anything Woodruff has done with the program, it's forming it to the needs and demands of his team.

"Most students work and go to school and I've tried to adjust our schedule to that," Woodruff said. "We try to accommodate as many as we can. That's what a community college is for."

Redford resident Dave Shannon, a first-year gymnast for Woodruff, is sad to see the program end, but he said that his coach has given him the gymnast bug.

GC coach gets Ocelot job

Tom Teeters, head volleyball coach at Garden City High School for the last three years, was recently named the varsity volleyball coach at Schoolcraft College.

He will retain his coaching position at Garden City. The Cougars are Northwest Suburban League champs and sport a 35-6 overall mark this season.

This marks the second time around for Teeters, who coached the Ocelots during the 1977-78 campaign. Schoolcraft won the conference

volleyball

championship last year and has three returning lettermen.

"I'M HOPING to pick up some Garden City and North Farmington players," Teeters said. "Livonia Franklin has some good players, too."

Teeters said his goal is to take the

Ocelots to the national tournament in Florida and recruiting is the key.

"Each year has to be a good year recruiting," he said. "It's more important for a two-year school than four-year schools. Every year is important for recruiting because there are no rebuilding years with a community college."

Teeters also coached at Wayne State University for two years, Livonia Clarenceville (seven years) and a state Class B championship, Farmington Hills Mercy (one year).

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