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Dr. Bright was right with Petry; 'Sauce' was lost

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

When the Detroit Tigers saw Kevin Saucier's career going down the drain this spring in a torrent of wild pitches, balls in the dirt, hit batsmen and walks, they turned to Dr. Deborah Bright for help.

The club flew the talented athlete, author, psychologist, lecturer, professor, corporate trouble shooter, and would-be star of TV and radio, (if not stage and screen) to Lakeland, Fla., for emergency help for their one-time bullpen ace.

Alas, what she could do for Tiger starting pitcher Dan Petry she could not do for Saucier. Though her principles of creative relaxation improved Saucier's frame of mind and control, they weren't able to work miracles. He may have found out where he was at, but he never came close to finding the plate. After being released by the Tigers and picked up by the Atlanta Braves, he announced his retirement from baseball. Still, Bright isn't willing to admit failure.

"I think success has different meanings," said the perky, energetic Bright during a recent interview from her plant-filled Farmington Hills apartment. "Success is not always related to performance in the job. Or income. Or material possessions. Success can also mean feeling good about who you are, and where you're going, and doing things because you want to and not because you have to."

Saucier, professing inner peace and happiness, is going where he wants — back home to Pensacola, Fla. — and doing what he wants — opening a combination pizza joint/batting cage. In recent interviews, Saucier claims to be happier than he's been in years — drinking less, worrying less — so maybe Bright didn't fail with him, after all.

BRIGHT, 34, was born in North Palm Beach, Fla., and was a top-notch diver at the University of South Carolina and, after transferring, at Arizona State. A bonafide Olympic prospect, her career was cut short in 1970 when she was diagnosed as suffering from retinal tears — the same injury that ended boxer Sugar Ray Leonard's career and jeopardized that of Hillier

Kent, a former world champion fighter out of Detroit's Kronk stable.

The injury stopped her from diving, but never slowed her down. Talking to her, one gets the impression she rarely slows down. She teaches two classes at Wayne State, is affiliated with the Woodland Hill Center in Troy, writes an occasional column for the Royal Oak Tribune, counsels out of her apartment, is on call for the Tigers, has written one book and articles for professional journals and travels the country extensively working with her numerous corporate clients, including Marathon Oil, the FBI, IBM and the Michigan CPA Association.

"I help people maximize their performance," said Bright, who has a master's degree in health sciences and a doctorate in adult education.

On top of all that, she runs two to three miles a day, is looking for a new publisher, pursues a local TV career and is about to go to New York to work out details of a proposed radio syndication deal. The trip to New York must wait till she returns from seminars and counseling in California, Las Vegas and New Mexico.

"I figure there are 24 hours in the day, and you might as well be doing something to fill them," said Bright. "Maybe it's pure avoidance, but I don't see myself as a workaholic. I enjoy work, but when it's time to do something else, I can . . . I'm motivated. Maybe it comes from my sports background."

"Life doesn't come to you. You have to make things happen. I don't think successful people are successful because they are lucky. Timing is important, and good skills, and the effort an individual puts into it. But I don't think anyone is successful by luck."

BRIGHT INITIATED her ties with the Tigers. At the urging of some of her clients, she wrote Bill Lajoie, Detroit's assistant general manager. The title of her book — "Creative Relaxation: Turning Your Stress Into Positive Energy" — is what she specializes in and she was sure she could apply her precepts successfully to the Tigers.

As it happened, Dan Petry, a promising pitcher, was having control and head problems. Lajoie asked Bright to step in and the rest, as they say, is history. Petry got his control back, his head screwed on straight, and in the

two years since has become one of the finest pitchers in baseball.

"If I want to throw a 3-2 or 2-2 slider in a crucial situation," said Petry of Bright's program, "I just remember the best slider I ever threw — even if it was two years ago — and I can picture that in my mind."

"Then, boom, when I go to throw, I can imagine that slider I threw two years ago. And I swear to God, most of the time that's what happens, although that doesn't mean I don't hang one once in a while. It's no payche job. It's more like total concentration and blocking everything out."

"Everyone has this skill . . . it's like a sixth sense, and Dr. Bright points out we've all had it since childhood. Now we know how to handle it."

Last year, Petry was fourth in the American League with an earned-run average of 3.22 and he set personal highs in wins (15), complete games (eight) and strikeouts (132).

BRIGHT WAS ABLE to give her principles of fighting stress their acid test during her recent divorce from her husband, Verne.

"Life sometimes hands you one," said Bright. "Like the situation where I'm no longer married. Boy, that was a great opportunity for me to really put into practice the skills that I talk about . . . when life hands you one of those rough deals, then you really know if you have the skills."

"If I could make it through that and still be a person who's vulnerable — and that's what it takes to really love another person — I think that's pretty neat. It doesn't mean that you don't hurt and feel lonely and cry — those are all there — but underneath that is the idea that I like who I am."

Bright is eager to expand her work in athletics. She said she is working for at least one other pro team but is not free to say who it is. One of her clients is a woman polo player looking to improve her game.

BRIGHT OFFERS these tips for improving athletic performance:

- Focus on what you do well in a workout and pay attention to it.
- Don't be sloppy or lazy in practice sessions. Sloppy workouts mean sloppy competition.
- Learning to understand yourself, work with yourself, enables you to then make the transition better into a competitive environment.

Bradley bags a 2- sport champ

When Alice Short of Farmington Harrison signed a national letter of intent recently to play basketball at Bradley, the university was assured she will soon be putting new numbers in its record book.

The new numbers won't be in career scoring, or rebounding, or in assists. Not yet, anyways. And at 5-foot-8 Short certainly isn't about to set any records for height.

The numbers that will go into the book haven't been decided, but what is certain is which numbers will come out. They are 38 and 8 1/2. The first is for feet, the second for inches and they stand for excellence, not in basketball but in track. Thirty-six feet, 8 1/2 inches is the farthest any woman at Bradley has thrown the shot put.

Short did better than that as a junior in high school — much better — tossing the iron ball 43-feet, 6 1/2 inches to rank No. 1 in the state. And she did better than that Thursday in a meet against Northville when she took first place with a toss of 42-4 1/2. (She took another first, too, leaving the discus 118-3 1/2.)

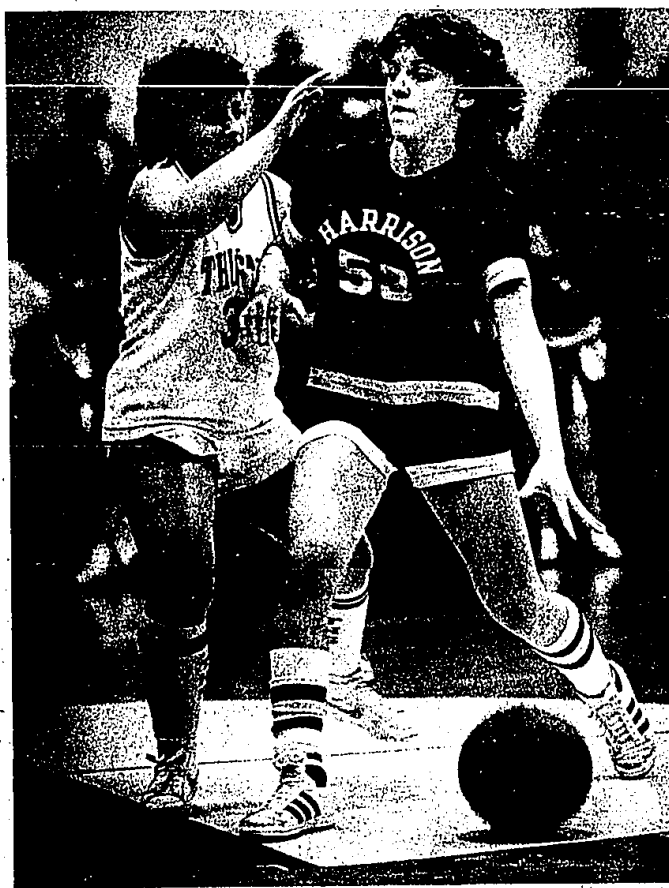
"We're very happy to have Alice join us, because she is an excellent athlete," said Bradley's basketball coach, Joe Stowell, who is also Alice's uncle. "In addition to being a fine basketball player, she won the Michigan state championship in the shot put last season and will probably win it again this year."

SHORT DIDN'T get the scholarship because she's a relative. She got it because of four very impressive high school seasons, two for Illinois Valley Central, which is just down the road from Bradley, and two more after she moved to Farmington.

In Illinois, she was something of a prodigy, averaging 24 points as a freshman and 31 as a sophomore. Her figures for Harrison were nearly as good — 17 points and eight rebounds a game both her junior and senior seasons. This year, with Short leading the way, Harrison reached the district finals of the state tournament before losing to the eventual champion, Farmington Our Lady of Mercy.

"I've always like Bradley and with my father being an alumn, it made it kind of easy," explained Short, whose dad was a swimmer at the school. "The coaching staff there is wonderful and the school itself has a great reputation, so I'm looking forward to it."

Short, a guard, plans to major in business management. She was 55 percent from the field this season and 80 percent from the line.



Bradley-bound Alice Short (53) helped lead Harrison's girls' basketball team to an 18-5 record last fall.

Favorite role? No one wants it in Observerland

By C.J. Rieak
staff writer

It's a strange paradox, to be sure, a position no coach wants to be in beforehand but all long for afterwards.

Numero Uno.

Talk to the three coaches whose boys' track teams figure to be the favorites to win this year's Observerland Relays and you'll find none want to be considered the best until after the races are run.

Field events for the 13th annual event will start at 2 p.m. Saturday at Howard Kraft Field in Redford Township. Track preliminaries are at 4 p.m. with finals at 5:30 p.m.

THE DEFENDING champion is Redford Catholic Central, which used a strong performance in the field and distance running events to take the title. But the Shamrocks didn't win without a struggle — four teams were logjammed in a seven-point span.

CC's total was 59, followed by Redford Bishop Borgess with 56, Plymouth Salem with 44 and Livonia Churchill with 62. Salem was in the position to win with the favored 400-yard relay team, but the Rocks collided with the Borgess team and failed to finish the event.

CC, Borgess and Churchill rank as this year's favorites, with Salem a darkhorse. Of course, none of the coaches will admit it.

"There are teams that have as good a chance as we do," said Churchill's Fred Price. "Borgess looks very strong. I'm impressed with their depth. And Catholic Central is in a position to make a strong bid."

"I consider Churchill the favorite," said Gene Grewe of Borgess. "They've got so much depth. That's the kind of meet it is, you've got to have depth to win."

"I LOOK AT Churchill and Borgess as the favorites," said Kevin Kavanaugh of CC. "Churchill is awfully strong and balanced, and Borgess is good in the sprints and jumping events."

With every coach putting the favorite's tag on someone else, the question is who to believe?

Churchill earns the role by virtue

of its incredible depth and a dual meet win earlier this season over Borgess. Relays and dual meets, however, are two different types of competition, a point Price is quick to make.

"We have to score very well in the field events," Price said in mapping out his team's path to the championship. "We have lots of depth but we have to score. That's our best possibility to do well."

"We're deeper than most teams and this is a depth event."

Keying the Chargers' chances in the field events is Tim Luch, who leads the Observerland rankings in both the shot put and discus.

On the track, Churchill's Erik Hansen, an exchange student from Denmark, is the area's best in the 200 and 400 meter runs. But to say Churchill's hopes rest with these two would be folly.

"I hate to start naming names because we have so much depth," Price said.

BORGESS BEST bet for victory rests with an elite group of sprinters led by John Patten, who's run 10.9 in the 100-meters. Teammate Fred Owens is nearly as quick (11.0) and there are others: Jim Holdaslaw, Marlon Montgomery and Marlon Pittman. Owens is doubtful because of a hip injury.

"If we get our best performances from all our kids, it'll be down to the wire," Grewe said. "But we've got to have everybody healthy."

Kavanaugh doesn't figure to dominate in the events that won it for CC a year ago, the discus and the shot. "Those guys are all gone, and that's 20 points to make up," he said.

But don't count the Shamrocks out. They won the Elks Relays two weeks ago, beating Borgess and Salem. Their strength is in the hurdles, with Rick Paler, and in the distance events, with Paul Buchanan the top threat.

"Last year it went down to the wire," Kavanaugh said. "I think it will again this year."

Luck will also play a role. Price summed it up best: "It really comes down to who's up for it and who has a good day. Everything has to fall into place."

So we shall see if the favored are indeed just that.