

'He sets a bad example'

East High coach spews profanity, gives off-color gifts, avoids discipline

Gary Calhoun admits he's "used some very poor judgment" but says he's gotten the message that his behavior needs to change. He's "taken steps above and beyond what was asked" by Madison school district officials.

But parents of past and present students at East High, where Calhoun teaches health and physical education and coaches the varsity baseball team, call his conduct inexcusable. Frustrated that past complaints seem to have had no effect, they've decided to go public with their concerns.

"I believe this is a man who should not be around children at all, whether coaching or teaching," says Dan Bohrod, who works in the city comptroller's office. "And you can quote me."

The critics say Calhoun regularly uses inappropriate language around his young charges. Bohrod's son Sam, who played on East's team for three years and is now in college, recalls that Calhoun made fun of gays and fat people and once chewed him out as follows: "You wanna fucking stay at this level you better fucking play a lot better than that!"

Dan Bohrod and his wife complained about Calhoun's "profanity-laced tirades," among other things, in a letter to then-Principal Milt McPike in May 2002. They called his coaching style "negative and mean-spirited." Apparently nothing was done.

In April 2003, parent Toni Pawlowsky wrote a letter to the school's athletic director ripping Calhoun for making derogatory remarks about parents and players, once telling her son to "tuck [your] fucking shirt in." She called Calhoun's behavior "inappropriate and unacceptable." Apparently nothing was done. (For select correspondence, see Document Feed at thedailypage.com.)

On April 16 of this year, after his team lost to Madison La Follette, Calhoun marched his players into center field and delivered a tirade so loud that parents sitting more than 300 feet away could hear it. Among the statements Terry Dunn, a state employee, remembers hearing: "You guys fucking tanked the game" and "You didn't have your fucking heads in the game." Another parent, Jeff Cass, says Calhoun threw his glasses to the ground and kicked them, screaming, "You guys don't give a shit." Cass, himself a longtime youth baseball coach, is appalled: "Instead of building their confidence as players, he's just demoralizing them."

Making this especially ironic, parents say, is that one of Calhoun's players was suspended for five games last season for swearing at another sporting event. And, this March, *The Capital Times* published a letter from Calhoun chiding spectators at a high school hockey game for "boorish and inappropriate behavior," including swearing. "You're a total embarrassment to the east side," he lectured.

At East's annual baseball banquet at the Avenue Bar in early June, Calhoun apologized for his outburst after the La Follette game.



Calhoun: 'I've done some soul-searching.'

From the deck of cards given to players.



But, before an audience that included grandparents, parents, players and young siblings, he also presented several astoundingly inappropriate gag gifts: inflatable female dolls to two assistant coaches who were getting married; a poster of a bikini-clad woman with the slogan "Study Hard" to a player heading to college; and two decks of "Bulging Beauties" playing cards picturing obese, mostly naked women.

"If my son would have brought pornography to school..." exclaims parent Pam Castleberg, whose son received one of these decks. "He sets a poor example for these kids," Dunn agrees. "He doesn't have the people skills to deal with kids. They don't respect him."

Calhoun says officials at East High are aware of what happened at the La Follette game and banquet. This led not to discipline but "a warning and a review." He promises his future coaching style will be more positive.

"Certainly, I've done some soul-searching," says Calhoun. "I want to assure players and parents that these events are not going to occur again." All that's happened is "in the past tense" and "I'm looking forward to the 2005 season."

Others are not. Pawlowsky says she's "begged and pleaded" with her son to transfer to another school so he won't have to play for Calhoun. And Dunn vows, "If Gary's still there when my youngest son goes to school, we'll be moving out of the district."

Let the vote out

Given the almost fanatical effort being made to register potential voters for this fall's elections, it's a wonder that no one, it seems, is reaching out to the more than 1,000 citizens who on any given day reside within the Dane County jail.

"I've never known the issue to come up," says Capt. Mike Plumer, the jail administrator. He notes that many inmates have "ample opportunity to vote in the free world," by absentee ballot, before reporting to serve their usually short sentences. But he's not aware of inmates who overlooked this obligation clamoring for ballots once inside. "Maybe our clients aren't that civic-minded," he deadpans.

Deputy City Clerk Sharon Christenson can recall only a "couple of times" where her office has sent absentee ballots to the Dane County jail. "If they are convicted felons," she adds, "they don't have voting rights."

Actually, most jail inmates are not felons, and felons in Wisconsin who have completed their sentences, including extended supervision, are free to vote. George Dunst, legal counsel for the state Elections Board, suspects there are "far fewer" people who are not legally allowed to vote but do so anyway than felons who can vote but don't, mistakenly believing they can't.

At present, even convicted felons still on supervision can probably vote and get away with it. No one routinely checks voter lists for such individuals. Dane County District Attorney Brian Blanchard "can't recall ever getting a referral" regarding an illegally voting felon.

Mike Mahoney, an assistant district attorney in Milwaukee, has gotten such referrals, and in three cases filed charges. "The court ended up dismissing them," he says. "The way the statute is worded, you have to prove the person" knew he or she could not legally vote.

Rotten to the

In case anyone is wondering, Watchdog is delighted by the first two issues of *Core Weekly*, the faux alternative financed by Capital Newspapers Inc., from the publisher's promise that "no content is too off-beat, too strange, too risky, too irreverent, too silly or too scary"; to the interview with the scanner-clutching lowlife on State Street whose affirmation of violent tendencies ("I broke a person up because she hit me first and I tore body parts off her. She's in a wheelchair the rest of her life and I put her there") is followed by the probing question, "What's with the scanner?"; to the misspelling of the name of the obscure American writer Hemingway; to editor Nathan J. Comp's lunatic endorsement of George W. Bush: "A vote for Bush is a vote for the comfort in knowing we won't hear one thing and get the other." (Can you say "weapons of mass destruction...er, related program activities"?) Keep it coming. Please.

Tear it down and start over

According to Monday's *New York Times*, Madison's Monona Terrace convention center is too short. "We used [original architect Frank Lloyd] Wright's exterior religiously," the paper quotes Taliesin architect Tony Puttnam saying, "except we made a six-inch mistake in height. There were hand-drawn drawings, and we thought we saw a zero. Years later, we blew up the drawing for an exhibition and we said, 'Whoops, it's not a zero, it's a six.'"

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Thursday 9.2

■ Madison Police Officer Russell Henderson is arrested for allegedly beating a juvenile boy in a domestic dispute. Henderson, 45, is the educational resource officer at Memorial High School, but was not on duty at the time.

Friday 9.3

■ Former Shorewood Hills jeweler Daniel Danford is found guilty of staging a 1998 robbery and defrauding an insurer of \$1.24 million. Danford, 56, will be sentenced in November.

■ Moderate Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona speaks to a pro-Bush crowd of about 160 at Madison's Inn on the Park. McCain defends the Iraq war and praises Bush's record. Numerous protesters, including a group of veterans, stand on the sidewalk outside the hotel and heckle McCain for supporting the Bush campaign, which has attacked John Kerry's war record in Vietnam.

Monday 9.6

■ About 30 families are displaced when a fire guts a multi-unit building at the Ridgewood Country Club Apartments in Fitchburg. The fire department says the blaze began in the attic, and suspects arson, but the cause is still under investigation. The 1969 building had numerous code violations and did not have a sprinkler system. No one was injured in the fire.



■ Brat Fest, the twice-annual charity event at Hilldale, sets a Labor Day weekend record by selling 162,234 brats. Coordinator Tim Metcalf says that, together with the overall world record of 189,432 brats sold over the Memorial Day weekend, "that's a ton of brats." Actually, it's more like 35 tons.

Tuesday 9.7

■ Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz unveils his \$132 million capital budget for 2005, which includes \$2.4 million to fund the city's new automated recycling system and \$500,000 for a municipal swimming pool. The budget includes \$48 million in borrowed funds, a 50% increase over last year.

■ Cieslewicz nominates Shiva Bida-Sielaff as the fifth member of the Madison Police and Fire Commission. Bida-Sielaff, who works as a manager in minority community relations at UW Hospital and Clinics, could break the commission's presumed deadlock in choosing a new police chief. The candidates are: Acting Chief Noble Wray, Capt. Cheri Maples and Sgt. Mike Koval.

COMPILED FROM LOCAL MEDIA

FORTUNES

↑ **UP:** Terese Berceau. The state rep is lauded by the Clean Wisconsin Action Fund for her a 100% pro-environment voting record; she's also named one of the top legislators of the year by the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities for her support of bills to protect municipalities' local control of annexation and planning.

↓ **DOWN:** Urban Design Commission. When the commission calls for requiring retail developments larger than 40,000 square feet to have a second story, Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz responds by calling for reform of the commission. The mayor, who has been battling a perception that Madison is anti-business, dubs the big-box recommendation the "final straw"; he wants the commission to draft a mission statement that focuses more clearly on design issues.