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Interview with Doug Bolstorff, Professor of Physical Education and Coach

Doug Bolstorff

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Oral History Project

Interview with: **Doug Bolstorff**
Professor of Physical Education and Coach, 1958-2000

Date: **June 12, 2008**

Place: Doug Bolstorff's home, Eagan, Minnesota

Interviewer: Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007

Interview run time: 1:00:48 minutes

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Interview with Doug Bolstorff

Kayla Burchuk, Interviewer

**June 12, 2008
Doug Bolstorff's home
Eagan, Minnesota**

KB: My name is Kayla Burchuk and I am a Macalester student, Class of 2010, conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Thursday, June 12, 2008, and I'm interviewing Doug Bolstorff, professor of Physical Education and coach in his home in Eagan, Minnesota. So if you could first please state your name and when you were born and how old you were when you first came to Macalester, and also where you were born.

DB: Frank Douglas Bolstorff. I was born in Austin, Minnesota. I'm seventy-six years old and came to Macalester as a part-time assistant, I think, in '57. Did that answer all the questions or did I forget one?

KB: How old were you when you came to Macalester? Could you estimate?

DB: Let's see...I would guess twenty-seven years old.

KB: Great. And just to start out what is your educational background and what were you engaged in directly prior to coming to Macalester?

DB: I started at the University of Minnesota. I ex-ed off every major I didn't like and ended up in Forestry, graduated in Forestry. But I was also an ROTC, so I ended up in the Ordinance Corps in Aberdeen, Maryland for two years. While I was there I played a lot of sports. I was fortunate; I didn't have to go to Korea. So I played about three different basketball teams, including in the Eastern League, a semi-professional league, and played in the base team—played everything. Which is a good prelude to being a physical education major, since I was playing racquetball, squash, tennis. Tough job. I was the assistant S-3, which meant I was in charge of the fire range, which there wasn't one. So I had to spend my days doing something. So I ended up after that two years deciding that I wanted to be a coach and teacher. Had to return to the University of Minnesota, where I thought I'd end up teaching science, as I had a Natural Science major. And while I was doing that [was] involved in Physical Education classes and needed a job, and ended up at Macalester being an assistant coach to Gill Wilson.

KB: Interesting. Can you tell me anything about your basketball experience prior to coming to Macalester? For example, on the All Army team, or your one year on the Detroit Pistons?

DB: Yeah. I was playing on the base team, of course. And they selected after the army tournament a group to play in—two army teams in Olympic trial. So I was on the number one team with... Sam Jones was probably the premier player on that team. And we played the Navy, the Air force, and the Marines. And the winner, which we weren't, continued on. And I played on a team in Baltimore in the City League with a guy by the name of Sam... I can't remember his name, he used to play for the old Chicago Bulls. He got me involved with the Eastern League, and then there was a referee in the Baltimore City League that coached the

Detroit Pistons, so that's how I ended up being drafted by Detroit. In those days there were eight teams in the NBA, and ten players on each team. So I ended up being one of the top eighty. Today I'd be making five million dollars, instead of five thousand. So, that's...and about two months, three months into the season they hired someone else. Another one of my being cut situations, of which I am very experienced.

[3:57]

KB: And how did you hear about the part-time assistant coaching position at Macalester?

DB: I have no recollection at all.

KB: No recollection? Alright. What do you remember about the hiring process at Macalester?

DB: No much about that either, except I already knew everybody in the department and just applied for the job. And [it] seemed like a fairly lengthy period of time before they made a decision. I was already involved in the program and knew the players and maybe they advocated for me. I don't know. No idea.

KB: Was there any reason you chose to come to Macalester specifically?

DB: Well, it was probably the top job of any opportunity I could have. I had a couple of high school offers. One was at Stillwater, and one...I can't remember the other.

[04:53]

KB: Okay. When you first came to Macalester, what was your impression of the college? What was the campus like? The students? The administration? The faculty? And kind of the overall culture of the school when you came?

DB: When I started the finest building on campus was Health Services. That was the premier architectural delight. Physical Education facilities were acceptable, probably in the top half of the conference. The faculty, of which I think probably eighty-five percent of the people were faculty, fifteen percent staff—it's a little different now—were icons. I mean, these people were so good that you would find students hiding outside the door just to listen to the lecture, that weren't in the class. Ted Mitau, for example, O.T. Walters was another just...hero on campus, and most of the faculty were that way. They were all like sort of brothers and sisters. They were really a close-knit group. Every noon most of the guys gathered in the pool hall for lunch, played a little pool and talked things over. Faculty meetings were required, you had to attend. The students were solid and, by and large, mostly very serious about what they were doing.

[06:30]

KB: Very interesting. What was your impression of the Physical Education department when you first arrived?

DB: I had a lot of respect for each member, and we had Pat Wiesner and Dorothy Michael, were two gals. Both were very competent and serious about their work. Gareth Wilson was the doctor and did most of the academic courses. Ralph McAlister coached several sports, as I did.

It was very typical to everybody in the MIAC—we all coached several sports and about the same number of staff people, or faculty.

KB: Interesting. What can you tell me about the Physical Education students?

DB: High quality students, serious about what they were doing. Another aspect of the program then is that every student was required to take six semesters of physical education. Required. So I got to meet all the students in school. It was a unique feature and probably a [unclear] one for the students. Made a lot of work for us.

KB: Interesting. What was the curriculum and the class offerings in the Physical Education department at that time?

DB: Whatever—I can't precisely document what they were—but whatever was required for a major. I taught five activity classes and one academic class, and Gareth taught most of the academic classes. We all had significant loads in those days in order to cover fifteen hundred students; we taught a lot of classes. They'd even have classes outside in archery, in order to get everything done.

KB: What were the requirements for the Physical Education major?

DB: I don't know. Whatever the state required for the major.

KB: Whatever the state required.

DB: I can't precisely off the top of my head put it together.

[08:50]

KB: What can you tell me about the health component in the Physical Education department?

For example, I understand there was a men's hygiene class?

DB: I didn't teach it. I taught, my academic class, was Anatomy and Athletic Care and Prevention of Athletic Injuries. I taught that for forty years or so.

KB: Interesting. And what was that course like?

DB: Well, I guess I told everybody in my class that if they did everything as we talked about it in class they'd probably live ten years longer. So we covered everything including, you know, how to prevent injuries, how to keep yourself fit and how to treat injuries if they occurred, along with the anatomy component. Later I taught Psychology of Coaching and a few things after that. It depended on our staff situation.

[9:56]

KB: Interesting. What were the major differences between men's and women's PE?

DB: Well, the only major difference would be that there were no women athletics teams in those days. In terms of requirements, courses, and everything it was identical.

KB: Interesting. What was the state of athletics when you arrived on campus?

DB: I'd say typical MIAC. We were probably in the middle of the pack, or slightly below, in everything at the start. It evolved quite quickly to a superior position with the advent of the DeWitt-Wallace money.

KB: How did the money influence the status of the teams?

DB: You see, along about...oh I can't remember, early sixties, we had a new president and a new provost, and they [were] influenced or rewarded by DeWitt-Wallace, so the buzzword on campus was "steeple of excellence." So, if you were a Biology department you were supposed to be the top Biology department in the country. And that evolved into every discipline on campus. So we were supposed to be good, and the way they asked you to succeed was they gave us budgetary money so that we could do the things that we thought were necessary to succeed. They eliminated the track and football fields, so we got a new track and football field and it was probably the best around. And we had good budgets. My budgets in '69 were larger than they were in '89. I'm probably the only living person in the state to have dinner with DeWitt Wallace.

KB: Wow. What can you tell me about that experience?

DB: It was an experience. It just was a brief two-hour interlude. I found that he was very interested in Macalester, loved Macalester, and loved us to succeed in athletics. And he was very supportive.

[12:47]

KB: Interesting. What athletic teams and programs existed at that time?

DB: No women's team. In addition to current men's programs, we had ice hockey and wrestling and...I think that's it.

KB: How would you describe the athletic facilities?

DB: Well they were at the upper half of MIAC athletic facilities in the sixties. Maybe top...certainly top third, maybe better than that, maybe top quarter. So that was a plus.

KB: How would you describe athletics' role in overall campus life back then? Was it a big factor? Were there a lot of events? Were sports events well attended?

DB: Fairly well attended, but they weren't a focal point. The student body was very similar to the current student body. The people who were most interested were the people involved in the athletics themselves. It wasn't ...the sun didn't rise and set whether we won or lost, I guess, for the student body.

[14:11]

KB: To kind of move into discussing your coaching career, how did you come to be the head coach of the basketball program?

DB: Gil Wilson resigned, took a job in business in Iowa, and I applied.

KB: How would describe the basketball program when you began?

DB: Well...we've never had the best talent in the league. The talent we had when I arrived was probably middle or below MIAC caliber. We had to do some hard work with some people who weren't great players. It gradually improved each year. That's all I can say, it got better each year.

KB: I understand your team was one of the earlier teams to have black players at the college level in the 1960s. Is that true?

DB: Probably, probably true. Although...I probably shouldn't tell you this. You try to [do] everything you can to recruit players. I thought, well, we'll make a big trip and people will be happy about playing down South. So I wrote some schools in the South and they agreed to play, and then when I got the contracts they said, "You can't have black players on your team if you play us." Which surprised me being a Northern Minnesotan, not having experienced the racial problems. I was very naïve. I remember even being in the service and we'd go play somebody

and on the way home, this is Maryland, the guy I'm sitting with on the bus was never hungry. And I'm so dumb because I didn't figure out that he couldn't go eat. So...anyway. Our first black player was not a starter, I think he just played on the JV team. His name was Carl Lumbly, you ever watched him on movies? Carl is in movies, he's a movie star. Our next three black players were on the same team. Jim Bennett was from La Marque, Texas, was a National Achievement Scholar. I think he's got his PhD and teaches up in the state of Washington. Michael Davis on the same team, he's a federal judge in Minnesota. And Tom Hardy was on the same team, although he went to UMD on scholarship and couldn't play there; he never got in the game. He came to Macalester, and we played UMD, we beat them by thirty-five and he was the leading scorer. And he's in Washington, D.C. and has a major job out there in government; I don't know what it is. So those are the first three black players, all on the same team. But I don't...black players may view me differently, but I view black players as the same as white players. I don't see any real difference. And I've been in a lot of black homes all over the country and black parents treat their children just like white parents treat their children. I don't know that...

KB: Did you end up taking that Southern trip?

DB: Yeah, we took the Southern trip. Probably shouldn't have. I guess, if I were going to be politically correct today I wouldn't have done it. But at that time we had no black players so I didn't pay much attention to it.

[18:21]

KB: So you mentioned recruiting practices. What were recruiting practices then compared to now?

DB: Well, as my wife would attest, it's a fourteen-hour-a-day job. And when you coach three sports that means you're [working] seven days of the week. You don't have a chance to get out and travel as much as you'd like, so you end up on the phone 'til ten o'clock at night. In those days I had a key to the admissions office so I could just go over there and make calls. It's busy and Macalester's a difficult place. And it varied a lot, we had some good periods, most of the time we had some very bad periods in terms of recruiting opportunities and what we could offer. It's very difficult when you're an academic school and can't give academic scholarships. So everybody that's admissible at your place can get money at Luther, or Oberlin, or Grinnell, or Wash. U, or [unclear]. Big money. So you've got to compete. Some problems.

KB: In the absence of funds what did you use as incentives to attract new players?

DB: Well, there was a period where we had great budgets, and we had some opportunities that other schools didn't have in the middle sixties. They decided that people involved in extra-curricular activities, if they were really bright, could have full need and grant, no work-study, not loan. That worked pretty well. We had some great teams. If we were in the Big 10, we wouldn't finish last, probably seventh or eighth.

[20:20]

KB: I was just going to bring up track actually. You coached the track and cross-country teams to a series of championships in the 1960s. What can you tell me about that era and that program?

DB: Well all of our sports were very successful. We had good budgets; we were able to travel south for Spring Break, for example. I found out when I first coached track, I could make out workouts for our athletes to take home with them for Spring Break, came back and it took us until the end of the year to get back to where we were just before. The first track meet I ever saw and the first cross-country I saw I was coach. In '68 or '69, if there were Division 3, we would have been national champions in both track and cross-country, it wouldn't have even been close. At the same time, my basketball team I was coach of the year three times in that era in the state, we were NAIA then. That includes all the schools including the state school. So we had programs and we had pretty good players and we worked hard, and then funding came to town.

[21:45]

KB: Can you tell me about that?

DB: Well, that's the end of Macalester's golden era. We went from being the best off-school in the country, '68/'69. If I'm competing with Carleton, I didn't even have to work hard, everybody came to Macalester. Funding was lost and we went in the tank, in three years we were the worst off-school in the country. Our department went from twenty to six.

KB: So the faculty cuts of that era really hit the PE department hard?

DB: Well, twenty to six. And the six people were doing the same work as twenty were doing. And our budgets went from great to zero practically, and we had women's sports and it was a traumatic time. The biggest problem would be illustrated I guess by a young man from Bovey, Minnesota who I was recruiting in basketball who told me that his neighbors told his mother that if her son went to Macalester she'd never speak to him again. So until all the high school counselors in that era retired we had a tough time.

KB: What were those counselors reacting to? What about the school's image was...?

DB: Alright. The EEO program, you know what that was? Free ride, plus eighty bucks a month for every student. Supposed to be ninety, ended up being about a hundred and forty a year. The person in charge, as I understand it, was a minority person who decided that if a person could go to another college he wouldn't be admitted to Macalester, or she wouldn't be admitted to Macalester. So what we had admitted to Macalester were people who were not admissible at other schools. An interesting mix. Fights with chairs in intramurals, guns in the locker room, a tough... I think in '70 I had the top eighteen players in the state apply to Macalester and zero came. So it was just a tough time. We lost fifty in a row in football. God couldn't have won a football game. It was just that tough. And it lasted for a long time, you know, it all depends on—any success depends on the total package. When we were successful we had administrative support, the admissions director understood what things were about, and we were supportive. Then we had just the coaching staff trying to do it on their own, with occasional lapses.

[25:08]

KB: And I understand several years previous to that the department had undergone other changes because it had transitioned from an academic department and it had lost its status as an academic department. Can you tell me anything about that?

DB: Well, we're like a yo-yo. The school decided in this "steeples of excellence" era we were talking about that anything that enabled you to have a job after you graduated would be axed. So we're axed as a department, Nursing was axed as a department. Elementary Education, I think, was axed as a program. Then toward the end of "steeples of excellence" they hired an athletic director by the name of Dale Hanson who got our major reinstated, so we're back to being a major again. Then the funding year came along and we're down the tubes again, we no longer have a major. What we ended up with was a certification situation so that education people like a math teacher who wanted to coach on the side had to meet certain physical requirements to be able to coach, and we kept those academic classes the whole time. That's the story. A yo-yo.

[26:31]

KB: Can you explain to me how you ended up receiving tenure?

DB: I think at the time I was at Macalester at the end of six years you either were canned or you got tenure. I think in my sixth year, or seventh year, whatever it was I got tenure. Which is different than now, sometimes you can be hired with tenure if they want you bad enough.

KB: Interesting. And when the department was finally taken off of the “steeples of excellence” as being an academic department, how did that affect the curriculum of the department and also your duties as a coach and teacher?

DB: Well, the curriculum didn't change much for me because we still had the certification program that enabled people to coach and teach. So my classes were pretty stable, except we had fewer activity classes because the requirement was dropped for the six semesters. So that eased a little bit. The biggest problem and the biggest low then became just the recruiting aspect of it . Because you could spend hundreds of dollars and get nothing in return. It's really very hard to talk someone into coming to Macalester for ten thousand dollars more than to go to Luther or Oberlin.

KB: Are there any other changes that stand out in your mind that affected the department and the school as you kind of passed into the seventies from the Flemming era?

DB: Not really, it was just very, very difficult. It was kind of interesting. I had some problems—I probably had a little too big an ego... I thought I could probably win with anything...you can't. The first EEO program we ended up with about ten black players. But the man who was in charge of this EEO program didn't want any 'gladiators' on campus.

KB: What do you mean by 'gladiators'?

DB: Athletes. So you couldn't recruit. With eighty bucks a month I probably could have beaten UCLA if I was smart enough at it. I'd've written some coaches and tell [them] to have guys apply and not mention they were players. But I didn't do that. I got one player from a friend of mine who coached in California and had him apply in August—EEO guy went on vacation—he was a great player. But my center on that team—Jim Mitchell, later became my assistant coach—didn't talk to me for the first two years. Quitman Pinkett didn't play in high school, came out for cross country and said, when I started coaching both mornings cross country, evenings basketball, he said, "Can I try basketball?" 5'9", pretty good player. But we managed to get into the play-offs with that group their second year. Athletics are a fragile thing. The mental part is so important.... I should do a lecture to Professor Egge's economics class and tell them how to train businessmen the athletic way. But I haven't done that yet, I've tried to do it but... You know, you can lie and be successful in athletics, did you know that? I didn't know it either, but I found out one day. I had a quarter-miler who wanted to break fifty-seconds in the quarter. You know, that's a big thing. This guy was a tremendous worker, was so motivated, and we went to the Drake relays and he ran his leg in fifty flat. So I lied, you know I said, "Oh, you ran forty-nine, eight." And he ran under fifty every time after that. So it worked that well I did it a couple other times, and it worked every time. So there are times when you can be successful and not tell the truth, but the mind is so important in what you're able to achieve. That's off the subject, but I thought I'd tell you that one.

[31:18]

KB: No, I think it's important. I mean, those sound like they were difficult times. Can you tell me more about how during that kind of turbulent time at Macalester you motivated students?

DB: Oh you just try—if they believe in you, you can be successful. This team that I was talking about, mostly black players, not particularly talented, but quick... My center wasn't very good but he could scare the heck out of people because he looked thirty years old and he was tall and he could jump. But I remember we were about two wins, four losses, and UMD came down and it was a close game and we tried a trap at the end, we're down by three points or something. And that worked, and we got within one and time was up. They still had the ball, we changed to a different kind of a trap situation with more of a gamble, and sure enough we intercepted and made the winning lay-up. And after that we won ten straight, because they believed in everything I said. "Coach, can we do that now?" So, that's pretty good. Same team next year, St. Thomas has a powerhouse. Seven foot five center, George Mikan's son playing guard. They come to our place and we beat 'em by ten, so we're 4-0 Saturday night. Monday night Saint John's comes, plays a poor game, we lose in overtime. They weren't very good, we lose in overtime. Found out later our guys had a big birthday party Saturday and Sunday night, I think we won two games the rest of the year. When we weren't that great, but everything was mentally right, we could win. So the mental aspect of it—if people don't believe in you, you just can't succeed. And if you're losing, they don't believe in you. Two percent of people are energized by defeat, ninety-eight percent are energized by success. That's why Minnesota plays podunk if they can't— If you win it doesn't matter who you're playing, the players believe in you, and they play better. My first thought as a coach was, 'cause I've always felt this way, if I played somebody and they're better than me it would make me better. So I scheduled some pretty tough teams the first year. Dumb. Schedule weak teams. You don't get better by losing, because most people aren't built that way. Some people are. Paul Mausling's built that way.

Paul Mausling is energized by defeat and several are, but not everybody. But I often thought that I should tell everybody about this, because what happens when you apply to medical school and they turn you down? What do you do?

KB: You give up.

DB: Yeah, but what could you do? Ask the admissions director what I should do to rectify the problem, change it, then next year apply again and you'll make it. And I can remember three of my students who this exact same thing happened to, and I told them what to do and they did it. So everybody could be energized, it's just they don't think it's an option.

[34:55]

KB: That's great. Just to kind of change gears a little bit. What prompted you to leave Macalester between 1977 and '83 and to coach a season at Saint Olaf?

DB: Well, I wasn't coaching basketball. Their person there was just taking a sabbatical, which at Macalester you never dared a sabbatical. And so I thought I'd see what it was like, as I suspected it might be at another MIAC school. I went there and found out that what I suspected was true.

KB: What did you suspect?

DB: They worked about one-tenth as hard for about ten times the result.

KB: How did that work?

DB: Well, I was just there for a year, and we might have had a pretty good year except our center went skiing over Christmas and broke his arm. And he was our premier player, so it wasn't as good as it could have been. And I coached track there also and had some real success with those guys, so... I found out that it was a real easy life compared to what we were going through.

KB: How were they able to work so little yet have so much success?

DB: The school has got... If you're an Ole, your kids go to Saint Olaf. And it's not very—it's a beautiful campus, the Admissions department emphasizes recruiting athletes. My badminton class down there, probably I could have taken five of the guys and had a better basketball season than I was having at Macalester. It was a lot of athletes. St. John's, what 95% of their student body are high school letter winners? I mean if you've got a hundred kids out, you're going to have ten that do what you ask them to do. If you've got ten kids out you're going to have one that does what you ask them to do, or two, whatever. And then that's the key; everybody on the team has to be on the same page and they all have to do exactly what you want them to do, then things go well. And most young people aren't inclined to do what older people ask them to do. So you have to have a little bit of a club.

[37:22]

KB: How did you end up returning to Macalester?

DB: Well, it was just a one-year leave.

KB: Oh, I got that wrong! Okay. So what year did you end up returning?

DB: Next year.

KB: Oh, '78?

DB: And then I coached a long time, the last year I coached was probably one of my best recruiting classes but I didn't get to coach them because... I think they changed—they removed me again in February or March. I had a good center, a Division One transfer was going to come, and the leading scorer in the United States.

KB: Wow. What year was this?

DB: I don't know, whatever, last year it was that I coached. [] I remember [him]. He's from a little town in Oklahoma; I spent many nights driving through Oklahoma. But it was a hard situation to find a guy like [], who was bright and parents on welfare and is a good athlete. You know? It's hard to find those guys. So you search around until you find one, then you can compete financially.

KB: Because you were able to offer [him] a need-based scholarship?

DB: Yeah, well, his parents were on welfare.

KB: So he could go to the school?

DB: He goes to the school basically free, and he's a really good player and he's really bright. But it's hard to find that combination.

[41: 17]

KB: I understand you took the teams on regular, I think every other year, to Hawaii on Christmas break?

DB: For a while. And we had to earn our own money to do that. It was just a recruiting device, it wasn't anything. It's not much fun for coaches to baby-sit for two weeks or a week.

KB: Your record and coaching style were sometimes criticized, what was the source of these criticisms and how did you deal with them?

DB: Having an ego. I know what I'm doing and I know that I'm doing it correctly. Every coach, if you look in the paper today, you're going to criticize everybody if you lose and support you if you win. It sort of goes with the territory. And I knew that what we were doing was the best that was available in the world today in terms of how we played the game—how we were

supposed to play the game. We were doing things in the sixties that they're just starting to do five or six years ago nationally. So I'm not...with the talent we had we played the best style of basketball we could play, but if you're not successful you're not going to... The players don't believe in you, the fans don't believe in you, my best friends wouldn't believe in me. I mean, Karl Egge's my good buddy in Economics, and I'm sure Karl had lots of negative things to say about my coaching. That's just the way life is in sports.

[43:15]

KB: We talked about the seventies and how that was a really difficult time for the school and the Athletics department as well. But heading into the eighties and nineties you see kind of some financial rejuvenation at the school, rebuilding. How did that, in your opinion, affect the overall school and also the Athletics department?

DB: Well, again, it's the total package. You have to have the school wanting to succeed, admissions giving the kind of help they can, financial aid competing with the Carletons, and the Oberlins, and the Grinnells. You know we were in, originally, DeWitt Wallace's will for half. We ended up getting zero, and then it went back to twenty percent.

KB: What happened?

DB: Well, funding dropped us to zero and probably Davis brought us back to twenty percent. I'd rather had half. So...thing have eased off. You know, as a school it's in probably the best, one of the best, locations in the country. It's a wonderful physical plant; I've always been a real

admirer of the faculty and the students. So it's got so many things going for it, we just had this negative blurb that popped up. You know, one of my students once (and this is in the bad period), made sixty thousand dollars his senior year. A lot more money than I was making. And went to school full-time and played basketball. Now where can you do that if you're at Northfield or Saint John's or Moorhead? The opportunities in the Twin Cities area are really great for internships. It's a real selling point I think. I mean, we lost Interim term, but during that era some of our students'd be working, interning at the University of Minnesota Medical School to try and be doctors. And there's just so many things that can happen. A real plus for a young student at our school. So it went from the best [unclear] school in the country, to one that was going to fail, to one that's probably near the top again. Yo-yo.

KB: At the time you retired in the late nineties, 2000, where was the school and the Athletic department then?

DB: Well I think it's better in terms of reputation. All the high school counselors have retired that remember us from being a drug haven. So...the facilities, the location, and everything are so wonderful that I would assume that, given support, athletics can climb back up again.

[46:32]

KB: What do you think of the new MARC Center?

DB: Haven't seen it. I've heard...one of my good friends said it's an amazing place. You know, I've always been a lifelong advocate of mind and body combination. I think the physical

aspect of life is so important, and so for our student body to have this facility, I think it's just exceptional. One time when I wasn't coaching basketball, I don't know if you know this or not, but I took an Interim class, one month. And I thought, "Well, I'm just coaching track, so I'll build my track team by spending a month running." But the curriculum committee wouldn't buy that, so I had to devise a course that could do that. But the course had to be open to everybody. So we called it "Mr. Controversial." And we took a school bus to Texas and lived on the beach for a month. Mr. Controversial was an Australian by the name Percy Cerutti who was diagnosed with potential death from drinking and everything else at forty-four, gave up his job, lived on the beach, and became a vegetarian and ate nuts and just worked out all the time. He became a marathon runner and he lived to eighty-something. So we duplicated that. These guys and gals all lived on the beach in tents, and they did five hundred push-ups a day and a thousand sit-ups, and ran fifteen miles. Vegetarian lifestyle. And we found a location that made it impossible for them to cheat. And it was quite an experience for these young people. We had thirty kids in a school bus and did it for two hundred bucks for the whole month, total cost. You know, I think it really helped a lot of young people.

KB Wow. How has your time at Macalester influenced you as a teacher and coach?

DB: Well, I don't know. I think it...probably...I don't know that it made me different than I'd be any place else. I had real admiration and appreciation for some of the—many of the faculty members. I appreciated the opportunities students at Macalester were given as opposed to students, say, at the University of Minnesota, the kind of individual attention. And these had more, I don't know...there's just something better about it. That's all I can say I guess.

[50:12]

KB: How would you describe your coaching style after so many decades of coaching?

DB: Well...as you probably guessed a little bit, I'm a fundamentalist and I'm sort of stubborn, but I'm not nasty. We had two training rules: be at practice on time and don't swear. That was all. But give everyone a chance.

[50:50]

KB: How have you seen student athletes change over the years?

DB: Well, each year, each decade, or each period of time, probably entering students are a little, have a little more ability, more advanced, I guess. When I first started coaching I guess I decided that farm kids were going to succeed at a higher rate than suburban kids. [laughter] You know, I mean a high school kid isn't going to make it on his ability; he's going to have to improve. And he's going to have to work hard, and we had a lot of success with kids with farm backgrounds.

KB: And why do you think that is?

DB: They've had to work hard all their lives. I don't know. It's just a thing I observed.

[51:57]

[Person off-camera]: That's really interesting about the interim course though, I hadn't heard of that one before.

KB: Yeah, that sounds fantastic.

DB: Yeah, it was designed for me originally to try to better the track team, but it turned out to be a really valuable thing for people nationwide. Actually, we had kids from the West Coast in it, kids from all over. I can remember a gal that came because her boyfriend was on the trip. But you know what? She was in medical school after she graduated, I saw her on the track after that for years. Yup, round and round.

[52:35]

KB: Yeah, the new MARC (Macalester Athletic and Recreation Center, before formal naming Leonard Center) does look pretty amazing. It's just, it's gigantic.

DB: Yeah...I just hope every student in the place gets involved. You know, when I first started and every student had to take six semesters of PE, that was a real plus. I had a gal once that, it took me three weeks to get her to hit a bounced ball. In tennis class, beginning tennis? Bounce it, and she'd swing and miss, bounce it and she'd swing and miss. I think she ended up, her senior year on the tennis team.

KB: Wow, really?

DB: It wasn't a very good tennis team, but she was there. So those things, I think, are really, really valuable. That's probably more important to her than anything she did.

KB: I really liked what you said about being motivated by defeat. I think I'm going to remember that.

DB: I think everybody should remember that. I mean, it's happened. I told you this, three people have asked me about it, they didn't get into medical school, one was physical therapy, I said, "Well, ask them. Try again." They did. I mean, I learned that from a few who were athletes that were that way. I mean, if they had a bad race they'd run home from the race, I mean, they were really mad. They're just energized by defeat. Chris Ford. But it's not a high percentage. If I'm a football player, what do I do if I get beat? I go in the weight room right after the game and start lifting. But not many people do that. So many young people, they apply to something and they don't get it so they try something else, they wouldn't really have to. If you want it, you just keep after it.

[54:49]

KB: So, as we were saying, we were just kind of wrapping up the interview with some reflection questions. And I was wondering, what are some of your proudest accomplishments from your time at Macalester?

DB: Well, I thought about it, and it was a hard one to respond to, but I guess in the early seventies, [Jack] Rossmann maybe had a study of all Macalester faculty. And the study asked

students who was the one faculty member who most influenced you or, I don't know exactly the words, and I was in the top twenty-five percent of that stuff. So I guess that was a plus.

KB: That's great. Another question that wasn't on the list, but I noticed throughout the interview that you remember so many names of students you worked with. I was wondering if you had any additional stories or memories about relationships with students that you had had?

DB: Probably more than I can respond to.

KB: Right yeah, it's a lot.

DB: You know, there are students who—shooters who didn't like to play defense or something and it was sort of conflicting as we went through four years. And three years later they write me a letter and say, "I wish I could be your assistant coach." That's happened many times. And I've had many letters from peoples saying "thank you" sort of things like that that are a plus. The young people like Gordon Cochrane who was 5'8", 129, and slow and didn't play in high school, was all-conference. And he's a lawyer in Chicago and he's taking young kids under his wing, minority kids, and he's done a lot of things like that. You know, there's the sad stories like the Bill Gilmans of the world, recently died of ALS. That's just a terrible disease, and he was so brave. And...his teammates really supported him to the end. That's a sad one. There's just innumerable things that have happened over the years that just...I just right off the top of my head can't recall them all, but interesting things have gone on. I still get together with some of, you know, the young guys. And faculty. Probability Seminar coming up next Tuesday.

[58:11]

KB: Yeah, I was going to ask you, what's your relationship to Macalester today?

DB: Well, my best friend was Jerry Webers who just passed, and we spent a lot of time together. Our seminars include several Mac faculty. Probability seminar, poker game. So I'll see several faculty there. Occasional bridge games with a group, we used to be more regular than we are now. Actually, the last event I went to last December, I think, I wandered in and thought maybe I was at Augsburg. I mean, I recognized about three percent of the people there [laughter]. The turnover is just beyond belief. So...it won't be long before I won't know anyone. I used to play chess with Emil Slowinski once and a while. I don't think he plays anymore. So it's...I hope to get into the new building, probably not to watch a game but I want to be there, experience everything.

KB: Yeah, it's opening in August. And, just before we conclude, I was wondering do you have any other memories or thoughts you'd like to add to the record?

DB: ...there was a quote that stuck in my mind a while back. Someone was asked why do you teach, and his answer was, "Where else could one find such wonderful company" or something like that. I guess that's it. Can't think of anything else.

KB: Thank you so much, this was really wonderful. Thank you very much.

DB: You're welcome.

End of interview [1:00:48]