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Budget cuts force SVC to suspend volleyball, golf

Sports may reinstated when coaches' stipends return

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Sports Editor

M O U N T V E R N O N — There will fewer sports teams competing this year at Skagit Valley College.

Budget cuts forced the school to suspend volleyball and golf for the year, dropping its sports program to 13 teams.

The suspensions of the sports, the first at the college since the early 1980s, were difficult for athletic director Gary Knutzen.

"Especially when you spend your life building it up, then having it knocked down," he said.

Knutzen, who started coaching at the school in 1963 and became athletic director in 1968, knew early in the year he would have to tackle budget cuts for the upcoming school year.

He and his coaching staff met several times to discuss how to handle the cuts.

A t o n e p o i n t , t h e y thought they would have to suspend as many as seven teams, said Knutzen, and at another thought that cuts to student fee waivers for each of the 15 teams would do the trick.

"We hoped that was going to be it, having everyone take a cut," he said. "Then we lost some (teams)."

K e l s e y S w a p p , w h o played and coached volleyball at Skagit Valley College, was disappointed when she heard the school had to suspend volleyball and golf.

"I felt bad for the current players that had another year to play," she said. "What are they going to do now?"

Players can compete at another school, but that may mean longer commutes or moving — two things many students can't afford.

Swapp understands that the year, a reduction in fee waivers for athletes and a cut in Knutzen's summer salary.

The volleyball and golf programs were put on the cutting block, said Knutzen, because Keltner and Graber weren't coming back. That left the coaching positions open.

And neither program had many returning players — volleyball had three tough decisions had to be made, but that doesn't make it easier to take.

"I felt bad for Gary to be put in that position to cut a sport," she said. "Every sport is invaluable."

The athletic department had a budget last year of \$78,000 to cover coaches' contracts. It had to get down to \$25,000, said Knutzen.

It did so through elimi— said Knutzen. Part of the budget probnating the coaching stipends of volleyball coach Mishel Keltner and golf coach Daniel Graber for lems come from what is usually considered a plus at Skagit Valley College. While other community colleges may offer two or three teams, Skagit Valley had been offering 15.

"Part of the problem is that we're not big enough to have that many," said Knutzen.

Knutzen has reason for hope, however.

The student budget committee has voted to pick up the cost of coaches stipends for the 2011-12 school year out of student activities funds. The student activity funds already pay for such things as game officials, uniforms and travel.

The students paying for more should help the school bring back volleyball and golf for the 2012-13 school year.

"I'm always very hopeful," said Knutzen. "I think we can get them back."

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