

SCOREBOARD SAYS RUTGERS ALUM AND SUPER-FAN CHAMPIONS FOR EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY ON GAME DAY

By Carissa Sestito RC'06

Rutgers alum Gary Noll is wild about sports—especially the Scarlet Knights. But for Noll, who has held football and men’s basketball season tickets since he was a student at Rutgers, held issue with a key aspect of his game-day experience.

“I was born deaf, so I can’t hear what the announcer says during the games,” he said.

For Noll, audience cues like facial expressions hinted at game events and significant scoring changes. But without CC, Noll relied on his eyes to follow referee disagreements, celebrity sightings, or other noteworthy occasions—occasions often relayed by an announcer through the PA sound system. At times, some sporting events offered deaf and hard of hearing fans handheld devices that offered real-time CC, but Noll said this was not always a welcome option, as it diverted his focus from the game.

“I wanted to be more a part of the game experience. I didn’t want to use a handheld or mobile CC device, because I wanted my eyes to focus on the game, and I wanted my hands free for holding food and drinks or to use American Sign Language,” he said. “So, I asked Rutgers if it was possible for them to post real-time CC at both the stadium and Rutgers Athletic Center (RAC) on the scoreboard instead.”

Like the athletes who dedicate themselves to sport, Noll became something of a game-day champion himself, providing resources, recommendations and suggestions to Rutgers Athletics about available technologies and the types of details that should be captioned.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARY NOLL

“I suggested that the PA should post CC about what the game-day announcer says about Rutgers in general, play by play details, referee calls, advertisements, upcoming campus activities, local entertainment, and about Rutgers in general,” he said.

Rutgers Athletics agreed, and—with the support and participation of the Rutgers Athletic Development, Scarlet R Club, the Rutgers Court Club, Rutgers alumni, athletic facilities, and sports marketing firm IMG Media—ultimately chose Coast 2 Coast, LLC captioning at Noll’s recommendation. The system uses a state-of-the-art stenographic equipment and software so that a stenographer can use a headset, even remotely, to translate audio feeds from the stadium into text and transfer the announcement transcripts back to the stadium scoreboard in seconds.

The system installation debuted at High Points Solution Stadium just in time for the inaugural Big Ten football game in 2014, a huge win for Noll and other fans whose game experience is enhanced thanks to CC.

“My family and other deaf fans like me will not miss anything important, such as play-by-plays, advertisements, or general Rutgers campus information,” Noll said.

Noll, who is a member of the Rutgers Court Club—the longest-standing athletic booster organization at Rutgers—said that they were overwhelmingly supportive of implementing the system for games at the RAC, as well.

Court Club president Brian Kelley said that “Noll’s passion for the implementation of programs such as CC at Rutgers events is inspiring to me on a personal level, and the feedback given to Rutgers from dedicated fans like him proved invaluable as they pushed this vital initiative forward.”



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Inch by Inch, Row by Row

Interview: Olympic Rowing Coach Tom Tehraar LC'92

By Francine Tardo RC'96

The United States women's rowing team came home from the 2016 Rio Summer Games earning their third straight gold medal. The team is coached by Tom Terhaar (LC'92), a former member of the Rutgers Crew Team. In a recent interview, Tom shared his thoughts on his accomplishments, his Olympic experiences, and the growth of the sport of rowing.

Tom also provided his thoughts on the fateful 2007 decision to eliminate crew as a varsity sport at Rutgers after a long and storied history with the university.

Before you took over the Olympic team, it had been successful in years past, but they were known for not being able to win the "big race." Can you describe a trait or two about your coaching style that you believe contributes to your success?

When I was an assistant coach, I got to see a lot of the mental challenges that can affect performance. I think I learned



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a lot about keeping the athletes level-headed. We try to neither get too happy or too upset after a race. Just evaluate it, and move on.

***Sports Illustrated* recently wrote an article about the team called "The Unbeatables." Do you feel like you are under a lot of pressure each time to come home with a championship?**

No, not really. I enjoy the racing and am pretty aware that in our sport, winning is difficult. We've been fortunate to win a lot in the 8+ but I know it will end—in the meantime, we will just keep trying to win. Having a streak isn't nearly as important to me as having the athletes perform their best on the day that matters most. One day, that will happen; they will perform their best, and we will not win, but I will still be satisfied and proud of the athletes.

Where do you display all of your Olympic medals?

Coaches don't get medals! People are often surprised by this—but if you think about it, we don't compete. We tell the athletes what they should do, and then *they* have to execute. That's why the

Olympics are so special. It's about the athletes.

Do you feel that the sport has changed over the years? (competing, training, coaching, etc.)

Yes, our sport has become much more professional. Our competitors are full-time athletes making a comfortable living with all the sport science and technology afforded to their countries professional sports. We are improving in these areas, but it is no longer a sport of "numbers trump all." It is a sport where countries will specialize. Now we have athletes from small countries such as Lithuania, who are professionals, are well-known in their countries, and plan to stay in the sport as long as they can. The time they spend in rowing makes them much more competitive. We are a growing sport, and the media coverage has also been improving.

Is there any accomplishment that you are most proud?

I try not to think about it too much, but if I had to choose a race, it would be coaching the 2000 Columbia University lightweight team at the Eastern