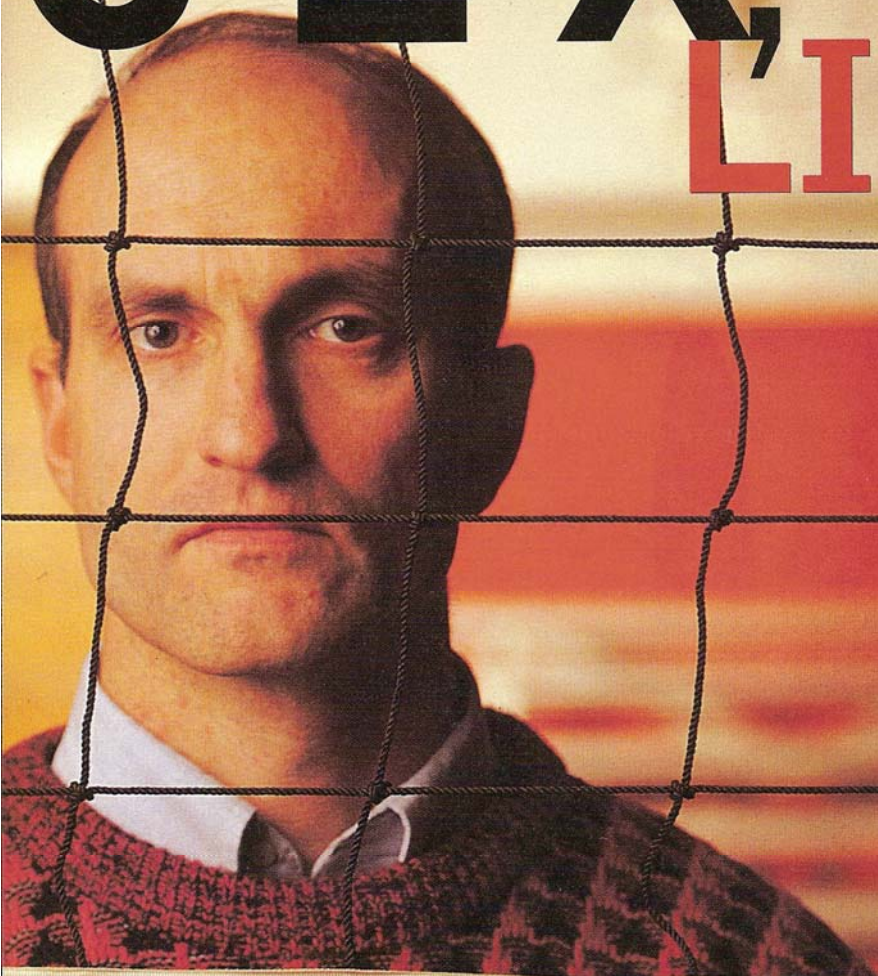


SEX, LIES,



RICK BUTLER

AND VOLLEYBALL

**RICK BUTLER BUILT THE
NATION'S BEST GIRLS' VOLLEY-
BALL PROGRAM IN WEST CHICAGO,
LANDING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MORE THAN 100
ATHLETES AND A SPOT FOR HIMSELF ON THE
SHORT LIST OF POSSIBLE OLYMPIC
COACHES. BUT NOW ALLEGATIONS
THAT HE SEXUALLY ABUSED
THREE STAR PLAYERS MAY
HAVE SPIKED HIS CAREER**

**BY
CYNTHIA HANSON**

WHEN SHE WAS 15, JULIE BREMNER ALREADY HAD THE LONG, LEAN MUSCLES OF AN ATHLETE AND THE COMPETITIVE FIRE OF A CHAMPION. AS A FRESHMAN AT ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL IN WHEATON, HER MOST URGENT DREAM WAS TO MAKE THE ST. FRANCIS VARSITY VOLLEYBALL TEAM. TO BETTER HER CHANCES, SHE FOLLOWED IN THE SNEAKERPRINTS OF MANY A CHAMPION BEFORE HER: SHE TRIED OUT FOR SPORTS PERFORMANCE VOLLEYBALL, A WEST CHICAGO AMATEUR ATHLETICS CLUB WIDELY REGARDED AS THE BEST IN THE NATION.

That was 1984. Bremner made the team, and inside of a year was well on her way to stardom. Still touted as one of the finest athletes ever to play in the program, she was named Reebok National High School Co-Player of the Year for 1987, and took a full ride to Notre Dame. She left after just a semester for a two-year stint with the women's national team, then transferred to UCLA, where she led the Bruins to the 1991 NCAA championship. But throughout her volleyball career, Bremner says, she harbored a humiliating secret: For a year and a half, beginning when she was 17, she had slept with Sports Performance coach and founder Rick Butler.

For 15 years now, 41-year-old Rick Butler has enjoyed unmatched success as a girls' volleyball coach. His program, which is primarily geared to teaching teenagers the fundamentals of competitive volleyball, has produced more winning teams and more college scholarships for its participants than almost any other women's sports program in the United States. Since Sports Performance's inception in 1980, its girls' teams have won 28 national titles, and Butler

has even sent a handful of players to the women's national team and the pro beach circuit. His methods—which center on militaristic regimen and the notion that girls can and should compete as seriously as boys—have gained him more fans than detractors.

"Rick has developed the premier junior program in the country," says Doug Beal of the U.S. Volleyball Association, the sport's national governing body.

ices (DCFS) and the volleyball association. All three women described a "coaching couch" process in which he identified them as stars, invited them to private training sessions, and eventually pushed them into sex. In remarkably similar language, each accused Butler of having abused his power and exploited her dreams. Each said that she had submitted to Butler because she believed he controlled her future, and eventually,

because she thought he loved her. As one of the women said at the hearings that would follow, "I truly believed that I needed him, that I would have nothing but a wasted life without him. I feared he would take everything away if I didn't do what he wanted."

By last July, Rick Butler and his coaching program were at the center of a maelstrom, and by the end of the month, the U.S.

Volleyball Association had revoked Butler's membership—a necessity for any coach who wants to compete seriously on a national level. Butler lost an administrative appeal, but on January second, filed a lawsuit against the association seeking damages in excess of \$1 million. He says he "dated" all three of his accusers—but only after they had turned 18 (the age of sexual consent in Illinois when one party is in a position of trust, authority, or supervision over the other) and left the program. He blames the entire mess on a grudge match with his former business partner, Kay Rogness, who helped the women find each other and present their case.

Dozens of parents have rallied to support Butler. Pat Kennedy of Barrington Hills, whose husband owns the Chicago



THE PRIDE OF SPORTS PERFORMANCE, CIRCA 1987: BUTLER, SECOND FROM RIGHT, STANDS NEXT TO PARTNER-TURNED-ADVERSARY KAY ROGNESS; ACCUSER JULIE BREMNER STANDS FOURTH FROM RIGHT.

Beal, who coached the gold-medal men's team at the Los Angeles Olympics, is organizing a U.S. pro men's league. Butler, who was an assistant to the men's Olympic team in Barcelona in 1992, was asked to coach the Chicago franchise, and Beal says, is perpetually on the short list for the Olympic staff.

But in 1994, when Bremner blurted her secret to a therapist in Los Angeles, Butler's high-flying career began a downward arc. Within a few months of her revelation, two more former players came forward and made similar allegations before the Illinois Department of Children and Family Serv-

"FOR YEARS, RUMORS HAVE CIRCULATED ABOUT RICK BUTLER [SLEEPING WITH] HIS PLAYERS," SAYS ONE VOLLEYBALL INSIDER. "BUT UNTIL [THE WOMEN] CAME FORWARD, WHAT COULD ANYONE DO ABOUT IT?"

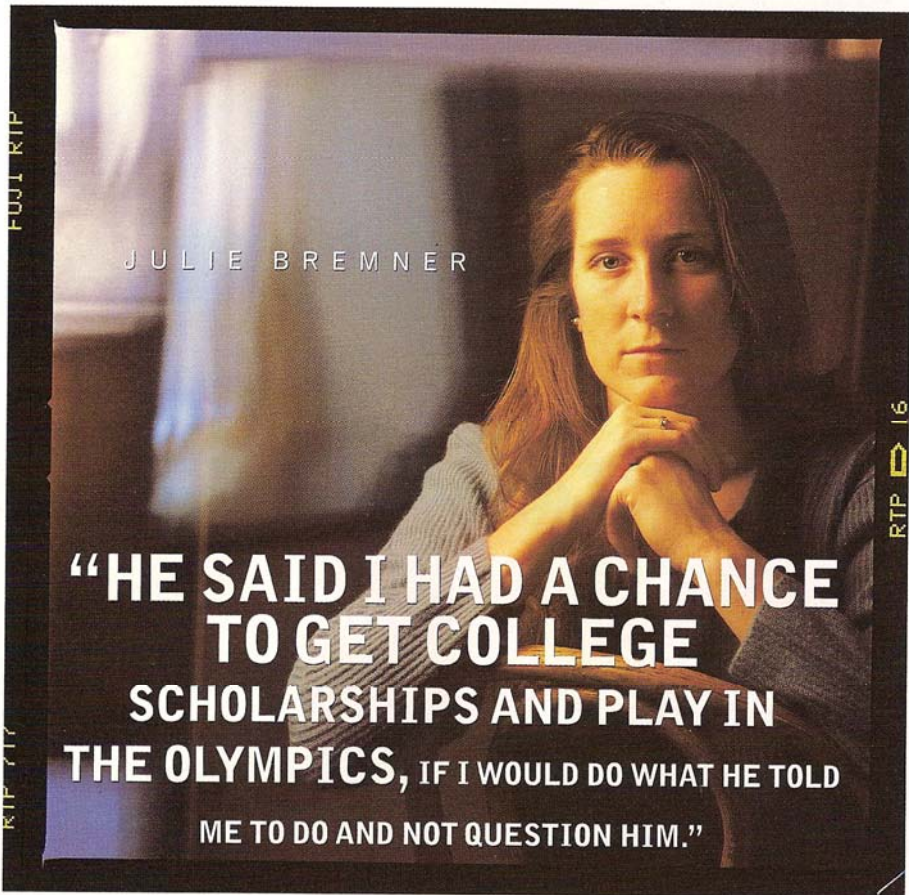
franchise for the pro men's league and whose 17-year-old daughter began her fourth season at Sports Performance in December, swears that Butler saved her child. "My daughter was 40 pounds overweight and a terrible student before she joined Sports Performance," Kennedy says. "Today, she has a 3.25 grade-point average, and there are 75 colleges recruiting her."

"We've never had a problem that Rick dated women who had been in the program," says Paul Stettin of Burr Ridge, one of 75 parents and players who waited outside July's hearings to root for Butler. "What he has done for my daughters goes way beyond volleyball. He's introduced them to a lifestyle that teaches discipline, hard work, and achievement."

Nevertheless, Butler's case underscores a problem that has increasingly affected other female-dominated sports in recent years. Though Butler is the first coach to be booted by the volleyball association for sexual misconduct, the national gymnastics association has expelled 11 coaches on such grounds since 1989; seven of them subsequently were convicted of criminal offenses ranging from indecent exposure to rape.

To complicate matters, policing the world of competitive sports is difficult—and often discouraged, even by those who should be most vigilant. "Parents see scholarships dangling in front of them and they want to believe everything's OK," says one volleyball insider. "For years, rumors have circulated about Rick Butler screwing his players. But until [the women] came forward, what could anyone do about it?"

AFTER SHE LEFT SPORTS PERFORMANCE, BREMNER SLOWLY BEGAN TO DISCLOSE HER INVOLVEMENT WITH BUTLER TO FORMER TEAMMATES. SHE EVEN TOLD HER PARENTS, WHO CONFRONTED BUTLER BUT TOOK



"HE SAID I HAD A CHANCE TO GET COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AND PLAY IN THE OLYMPICS, IF I WOULD DO WHAT HE TOLD ME TO DO AND NOT QUESTION HIM."

no further action. Not until after she got engaged in 1993, however, did Bremner decide to see a counselor to discuss the lingering effects. "I kept thinking it was my fault," says the 26-year-old, now a second-year medical student at UCLA. "I worried that unless I worked through my feelings, I'd end up having problems in my marriage."

Bremner says their sexual involvement began in 1987, her junior year. The previous year, Butler had invited her to train with his top team, most of whose members were seniors. Soon Bremner was spending long hours in the gym, in part to practice and in part to escape the turmoil from her parents' collapsing marriage, which ended in 1988.

"He said I had a chance to get college scholarships and play in the Olympics, if I would do what he told me to do and

not question him," Bremner says. "He said, 'You may not always understand everything, but I expect 100 percent loyalty.' So I started coming to practice a couple of hours early and staying until 11:30 at night."

Joy Dooley, Bremner's mother, says she should have "detected the red flags in such an intense schedule," but at the time she believed Butler's intentions were honorable. "Rick said he'd make Julie a star, and Julie wanted to be a star," says Dooley.

In 1987, Butler, then 32, took his top team to Japan to compete. Bremner, then 17, says he invited her to his hotel room one evening to talk about the team, but that when she arrived, she found him sitting on the floor wearing only a bathrobe. "He asked me to sit down next to him," Bremner recalls, (continued on page 78)

"WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT VIOLATING ANY RULES," SAYS BUTLER. "WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MAKING A JUDGMENT ON SOMEBODY AND HIS LIVELIHOOD. . . . PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT TO USA VOLLEYBALL, THAT'S WHAT I'M CHARGED WITH."

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continued from page 59

"and the next thing I knew, he kissed me and stuck his hand up my shirt. I pushed him away and said, 'Why did you do that?' He said, 'I knew somebody would come to the room soon, and I knew it would be now or never.'" Bremner left abruptly, and then lay awake all night, she says, crying and shaking with anger and fear. "I'd trusted Rick more than I trusted anybody on earth," she says. "I didn't know what to do."

Two weeks later, back at home, Bremner says, Butler told her they needed to talk—but not at the gym, because he feared other players would gossip about them. Bremner says she suggested meeting in a restaurant, but that Butler declined, insisting they needed privacy. He suggested a hotel. "I believed I was going there to talk about volleyball," says Bremner, who played setter, the sport's equivalent of quarterback. "I know how dumb that sounds now." She went to the hotel, and within seconds of entering the room, she says, Butler started coming on to her. "I said, 'I don't believe in premarital sex,'" she says. "Then I started shouting, 'No! No!' but he kept saying, 'Trust me.' I tried pushing him away but I couldn't stop him. Somehow he got my jeans off and had intercourse with me."

For the next 18 months, according to Bremner, Butler pressured her into performing oral sex and intercourse in a variety of venues, including the empty gym after practice. She says he rented pornographic movies and masturbated in front of her. "I felt totally disgusted," she says. "I thought I'd done or said something to lead him on. In a sick, twisted way, I tried to pretend what he was doing to me was OK. I tried to make myself like it, and I pretended he wanted to marry me. I even thought I was in love with him, because he said sex equaled love."

In 1993, after her therapist told her that California law required mental health professionals to report incidents of child sexual abuse if the alleged perpetrator still had contact with minors, Bremner decided to take action on her own. She called the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The "witch hunt," as Butler calls it, had begun.

"SPORTS ARE SO SEXIST," RICK BUTLER SAYS. "THE ATTITUDE HAS ALWAYS BEEN, 'BOYS PLAY TO WIN, AND GIRLS PLAY FOR FUN.' WE SAID, 'WE CAN DO BETTER.'" He is wedged into the corner of his beige sectional sofa in his modest Warrenville

townhouse, where he lives with Cheryl, his wife of two years, and Kyle, the baby boy they are trying to adopt. Butler's waxy, angular face briefly breaks into a smile just once during our three-hour interview—when told that he has been described as "stoic." "I'm no-nonsense and goal-oriented," he says. "As I tell our players, 'You can be the best or you can be one of the rest.'"

It's an overcast, humid morning in early August, less than 24 hours after Butler has been suspended from the U.S. Volleyball Association. He is a tall, sinewy man with a receding hairline, and today he wears faded blue jeans and sandals—the uniform of relaxation. He is anything but relaxed, however, as he discusses his coaching career and the allegations that threaten to destroy it. "The process has been corrupt from day one," he says. "I would like this process to be governed by common sense. I would like [the volleyball association] to look at the whole picture, the histories. It's never been about sex. It's always been about power and revenge."

He says he had "a very good relationship" with Julie Bremner—after she left the program—and calls her accusations "crazy." Though he doesn't remember the accommodations on the trip to Japan, he says that as a rule, the team didn't stay in hotels, and suggests that Bremner is jealous of his wife.

Butler came to volleyball relatively late. He grew up on a farm in rural Oregon, where he "lived for" football, basketball, and baseball. At the University of Redlands, in Redlands, California, he played defensive back and studied history, planning to teach and coach football after graduation. But through his college girlfriend, a Chicago native, Butler met Bob Gajda, a Glen Ellyn physical trainer who was working with the U.S. Men's Volleyball Team, and his career path soon took an unexpected turn. He accepted a job as a fitness consultant at Gajda's Sports Fitness Institute. "I didn't know what volleyball was when I came here," says Butler, who was 24 at the time. "But I saw the U.S. men versus the Russians, and I fell in love with the dynamics of the game."

In 1980, at Gajda's suggestion, Butler, fellow Chicago fitness consultant Kay Rogness, and then-Northwestern University women's coach Jerry Angle organized a girls' volleyball team to compete in the national championships of the Amateur Athletic Union. The ten-girl team won, prompting Butler and his colleagues to form more

teams the following year. The partners eventually named the program Sports Performance Volleyball, Inc., and in 1982, when Angle left, Butler took over as head coach. In 1995, 220 girls and boys competed for Sports Performance, but the emphasis remains on the girls' game, where there are more college scholarships to be harvested.

From the beginning, Butler was the most relentless kind of coach. He spent weeks observing teams in Japan, which dominated women's volleyball in the early 1980s. Back at Sports Performance, he drilled the girls in passing, digging, and spiking, effectively shaping them into what one former player dubs "little robots."

Butler is unabashed about his methods. "Regimentation is the only way to train a group," he says. "To play at a high level, you can't say, 'Do your own thing and develop your own style.' I believe, firmly, that most breakdowns in team sports come from individual breakdowns. . . . That's especially true for girls, because they aren't supposed to work very long and very hard. It comes back to the attitude 'I'm not afraid to go to the gym for three or four hours.'"

He unquestionably gets results, and his services do not come cheap: The elite players pay about \$3,000 a year to compete at Butler's Great Lakes Center, the sprawling, full-service training facility he opened in 1991. To play on the top team at Sports Performance, athletes must commit to training five or six days a week, seven months a year. Parents are banned from practices, which Butler regularly schedules on Friday night—and he benches anyone who skips to attend high-school dances. Players who criticize Butler or Sports Performance are immediately expelled from the program. And makeup is completely forbidden. "We ran extra sprints if someone wore nail polish," says Jeane Erlenborn, now 25 and a graduate student in public health at UCLA.

The girls also are required to weigh in before every practice. "Weight was a big issue," recalls a former player who is now an elementary school teacher and traces her persistent eating disorder back to Butler's stringent requirements. "No one talked about how they were making weight. Some girls threw up before practice. I tried not to eat during the week; I'd gorge on Friday, and then I'd take laxatives."

But for those who advance to Butler's senior girls' team, Sports Performance offers great rewards. The girls travel throughout the country and sometimes

overseas, and 165 have received a total of more than \$10 million in college scholarships. The players who excel do so by accepting the game as their religion—and Butler as their guru. The 1986 team bought him a T-shirt that read GOD.

With some distance on the program, however, some of its alumnae have begun to question their faith. "It was like being in a cult," one 26-year-old former player says. "Rick made the rules, and if you stepped out of line, he'd humiliate you verbally or punish you physically. He'd throw balls at you until you couldn't [return them] anymore."

"It was almost a status symbol to play injured," says Emily Peterson, 25, who suffers from chronic back pain from volleyball injuries. "Rick was a no-pain, no-gain coach."

Butler professes bafflement at such re-

of the team for disobeying him at practice and threatened to send her home. Humiliated and terrified, she was exiled to the equipment van, where she sobbed all the way to New York. "When Rick called me to an upstairs lounge in the dorm, I thought, Oh, no. What's next?" recalls the woman, who is now married and lives in another state. "He said, 'I'm sorry I had to do that to you. You have to obey my coaching and trust me.'" Then, she says, Butler kissed her on the lips. She was frightened, she says, but didn't know what to do.

A few weeks later, he invited her to his house in Glen Ellyn to eat Chinese food and discuss her athletic progress. While she was there, the woman says, Butler pressed her into having sex and, she notes, did not use a condom. "I had no con-

speed skater. She joined Sports Performance in 1982, and, like Bremner, she quickly warranted private coaching and a spot on the elite team. "I wanted to be the best," she says. "I was willing to do anything to be the best." A reedy woman, she looks years younger than her 28, especially when her voice trembles and her eyes puddle with tears as she talks about Butler. "It's hard to imagine being so serious about something at such a young age," she says. "I was an easy target for Rick."

The first time she had sex with Butler, she says, was in the fall of 1983, when she was 16. She says she accepted his offer to help her write a paper at Kay Rogness's townhouse, where he was renting a room. "I assumed, as did my parents, that his roommate would be home, too," she wrote

"IF YOU DO SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME REPULSED AND SICK, I DON'T KEEP COMING BACK AND TALKING TO YOU," BUTLER RAGES.

"I DON'T BORROW MONEY FROM YOU, I DON'T WORK FOR YOU, I DON'T CALL YOU, I DON'T GO OUT TO DINNER WITH YOU. IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE."

marks. "The girls always talked back," he says. "They didn't have to be there. They could have left at any time. As we tell our parents, this program is not for everyone. It's for a select few."

THE MOST SELECT OF THESE SELECT FEW, BUTLER HIMSELF READILY ADMITS, BECAME THE OBJECTS OF HIS ROMANTIC ATTENTIONS. THE FIRST OF THE THREE accusers to have been involved with him, who asked that *Chicago* not use her name, says she tried out for Sports Performance because she wanted to become "the best volleyball player in the world." After three years as an outside hitter for Sports Performance in the early eighties, she won a scholarship to a Division I school. She even played for the Chicago Breeze, the short-lived professional team Butler coached for its debut season in 1987.

The woman says Butler first made advances in the summer of 1981, when she was 16 and Butler was 26, on an overnight stay at Syracuse University en route to a tournament in Montreal. The day before, on a practice stop at Western Michigan University, Butler had berated her in front

of the team for disobeying him at practice and threatened to send her home. Humiliated and terrified, she was exiled to the equipment van, where she sobbed all the way to New York. "When Rick called me to an upstairs lounge in the dorm, I thought, Oh, no. What's next?" recalls the woman, who is now married and lives in another state. "He said, 'I'm sorry I had to do that to you. You have to obey my coaching and trust me.'" Then, she says, Butler kissed her on the lips. She was frightened, she says, but didn't know what to do.

A few weeks later, he invited her to his house in Glen Ellyn to eat Chinese food and discuss her athletic progress. While she was there, the woman says, Butler pressed her into having sex and, she notes, did not use a condom. "I had no con-

control at all," she says. "I did not want to do it, and I didn't know how to do it." When he continued to initiate sex with her in numerous places, including the bathroom of a train in Germany, she submitted. "I was too afraid to tell anyone about the abuse," the woman says. "What if I came forward and no one [in the volleyball community] believed me? What if they believed me, but did nothing about it? What if my teammates ostracized me? I didn't want to be shunned."

She left for college in 1983, but continued to associate with Butler, even after graduation. "When I was drafted by the Chicago Breeze, it was either play for [Butler] or end my volleyball career," she says. "I'd never forgotten what happened. I'd just calloused over all the hurt Rick had caused me." The woman bristles at Butler's contention that their relationship was fully consensual. "Did I say no? Of course I did," she says. "I would say, 'No, please. No. Not now. Not here. No.'"

The next of the accusers, who also agreed to be interviewed on condition she not be named, grew up in the western suburbs, the daughter of a wrestler and a

in the statement to the volleyball association. "But when I got to his house, I found that it was just the two of us." After a pizza break, she claims, Butler backed her against a wall and kissed and fondled her. Then, she says, against her will, they had sex. "I was scared to death," she says. "Scared to tell him no, scared I'd get pregnant, scared my parents would find out and what they would think of me."

The woman says the sexual relations continued until she won a scholarship and escaped to a Western university. She remembers one particularly awful incident on the way to a national tournament in Rhode Island: On the bus, she says, Butler asked her to sit next to him in the front seat. She thought they were going to talk strategy, she says, but instead he placed a pillow over her lap and began fondling her genitals. "I was completely trapped and humiliated," she wrote in the statement. "I felt dirty, ashamed, powerless." Still, she did not report the incident.

Today, she says, the trauma caused by the intimacy lingers. "There are days when I don't want to be touched," she says. "Even a little kiss on the cheek from my hus-

band triggers bad memories. I feel dirty."

Butler says he never did anything wrong. "Did I ever have sex with them?" he asks. "Yes, but not when they say I did." He insists that each of the three was 18 and out of the program when romance blossomed, and that all sexual relations were consensual. He doesn't remember much about the first woman—their relationship was less serious, he says. But in the case of the second woman, he says, there was even discussion of marriage. "I went out with [her] in the summer of 1986," he says, "and sat down and picked out six names for our kids. Three boys and three girls—one of the names was Charley."

Butler recalls celebrating Thanksgiving with the woman's family in 1986, and claims that she worked for him every summer while she was in college. "She told numerous people at [school] she wanted a family, she wanted to marry me," he says. "In 1987, she came to me to borrow \$725 to rent her apartment. In 1990, she called and asked me out to dinner. We went to the Chili's in Naperville. . . . If you do something that makes me repulsed and sick, I don't keep coming back and talking to you, I don't borrow money from you, I don't work for you, I don't call you, I don't go out to dinner with you. It doesn't make sense."

On occasion, Butler's outrage renders him almost incoherent. "You're telling me I have to answer to charges that we didn't have any rules for, and also, how can I answer charges that are 8 to 14 years old?" he blusters. "How can I prove where I was on this day or this day or this day? . . ."

"In 1987, the criminal statute in Illinois said the age of consent was 16. So now I'm answering charges about sex with a minor, but I'm not answering to charges that I violated any laws. But the U.S. Volleyball Association says we're not talking about breaking any laws. We're not talking about breaking any laws, not talking about violating . . . any rules, but we're talking about making a judgment on somebody and his livelihood. . . . Public embarrassment to USA Volleyball, that's what I'm charged with."

But a series of letters Butler wrote to the second woman undercut his assertions about her age at the time of involvement: "It seems like no matter how much we are separated I can't ever get you out of my mind . . .," he wrote to her in January 1985, when she was 17 and he was

on leave from Sports Performance to work as an assistant coach at Western Michigan University. "I think I've loved you from that first day at Burger King when I asked for your heart and soul and you gave it to me. Your [sic] such a special person in my life. I'll love you forever."

Another letter, dated May 1985, concludes: "I've seen you go from someone who was totally dependent on me to someone who I could sit and talk with for hours and never think about you only being 17. You went from someone I loved to someone I fell in love with."

IN APRIL 1994, AFTER JULIE BREMNER CALLED DCFS WITH HER ALLEGATIONS AGAINST BUTLER, SHE TELEPHONED KAY ROGNES. FOR NEARLY A DECADE, Rogness had been Butler's colleague, friend, and landlord. But by the time Bremner contacted her, their relations had been acrimonious for years. Butler says the tension began over disparate business goals in the mid-1980s. "I wanted to coach at the Olympic level, so I had to develop a business that would enable me to take off work if the national team said, 'Can you come out for three or five weeks?'" he says. "The organization wasn't going in that direction." After Rogness left, he says, Sports Performance really took off. "She thinks she should have part of this," he says.

Rogness, who is 54 now, insists that their dispute centered strictly on her disapproval of Butler's intensive, intrusive coaching methods, and above all on his sexual relations with adolescent athletes. By 1986, Rogness says, Butler confirmed her suspicions by admitting to her that he'd slept with players. "I was absolutely astounded," Rogness says today. "And I was scared [by the legal implications]." Butler says no such conversation took place.

Rogness says she went to the DuPage County state's attorney's office with the information, but was told nothing could be done unless one of the girls came forward. She then began a lengthy process of disentanglement from Sports Performance.

Three years later, Butler offered her about \$40,000 for her half of the company. After further negotiation, they settled on a buyout for an undisclosed sum. (Sports Performance, Inc., is a not-for-profit enterprise, but its sister organization, Training and Publications, which

runs volleyball camps and coaching seminars and produces videos, isn't.) By 1990, when Rogness resigned all affiliation with Sports Performance, she was attending law school in Denver, Colorado. She says she does not harbor any grudge against Butler. He disagrees: "Kay has made it absolutely clear that she hates me."

Rogness says today that she had been ready to help Bremner for years. "Julie and I had breakfast in 1990, and I said, 'I'm pretty much aware of what the situation was between you and Rick,'" says Rogness. "I told her to call me if she ever needed any support." When the call finally came, Rogness was comfortably ensconced as an attorney in Denver, and as the director of that city's Front Range Volleyball Club. When Bremner asked her if she knew of other players who had slept with Butler (she wanted to direct them to DCFS investigators), Rogness immediately turned her attention to the case.

Rogness says she had long known of at least two other women with whom Butler had had sexual relations. On Bremner's behalf, she called them, and the three former players began a long series of telephone calls that evolved into informal therapy sessions. They discovered that they had had much in common as teenagers: natural athletic ability, galloping ambition, flat chests, freckled faces, and brown hair, which they wore in ponytails. (The three also bear an uncanny resemblance to Butler's 33-year-old wife, a coach at Sports Performance.) For each, Butler was her first sexual partner. Over several weeks, the women came to realize that Butler had used identical tactics to cultivate their trust, isolate them from teammates, and persuade them not to talk: None of the women had gone to an authority during their relations with Butler.

Experts who treat sexual predators and their victims say delayed complaints are typical, especially when the perpetrator is well respected and holds power over the victim. Few relationships fit that pattern so well as that of coach to star athlete. "Coaches hold a revered place in the mythology of American sports," writes Joan Ryan in her 1995 book *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes: The Making and Breaking of Elite Gymnasts and Figure Skaters*. "Coaches of elite children's sports, by spending the bulk of every day with their athletes, can influence these

children more than their parents or their teachers at school."

"[Butler] may have had some wonderful qualities that attracted these girls to him and made them willing to put up with [the sexual relations]," says Sharon Lamb, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Bryn Mawr College and author of the forthcoming *Blameworthy: Victims and Perpetrators of Abuse and the Problems of Responsibility*. "On some level, the girls may have felt flattered, but also abused. It's likely [Butler] had a distorted view of adolescent girls, picturing them as older and more able to make choices. I can see why an adolescent girl would have terribly mixed feelings about turning him in."

Judith Herman, associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and

the case against Butler as "indicated for risk of harm." This means authorities believe the evidence supports the allegations, and that the information will be kept on file for five years. Butler has appealed the classification.

Because the statute of limitations for pressing charges or filing suit had expired for all three accusers, their only remaining avenue of retribution was through the sport's governing association. In June, volleyball officials and coaches, including Rogness, convened in Tulsa for the U.S. Volleyball Association's annual meeting. Rumors about Butler's sexual misconduct spread like wildfire. Later, Rogness began a letter-writing campaign to lobby for his disqualification.

"The facts indicate [Butler] is not fit,

porary restraining order to nullify the expulsion until the case is settled.

Butler is also under criminal investigation by the DuPage County state's attorney's office. Though it's too late for Bremner and company, if a more recent accuser comes forward, Butler could be indicted for aggravated criminal sexual abuse, a charge that carries a minimum jail sentence of four years.

Meanwhile, the volleyball association's ruling means that Butler cannot register as head coach or sit on the bench during tournaments it sponsors (which dominate the junior volleyball arena), and that he will almost certainly not coach in the 1996 Olympics. But it has not noticeably reduced the volume of business at Sports Performance, or

JULIE BREMNER'S YOUNGER SISTER, WHO LIVES WITH THEIR FATHER, STILL PLAYS FOR SPORTS PERFORMANCE. "SHE KNOWS I DON'T WANT HER IN THE PROGRAM," SAYS THEIR MOTHER, "BUT SHE IS GOING TO BE THERE WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT."

author of *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), says victims often put off making accusations against an abuser until years after the relations have ended, and even then, it often takes another forthcoming victim to inspire them to do so.

When Julie Bremner began making phone calls, that's what she found out. "I really wanted to forget the whole thing," admits the second woman Butler slept with, who refuses even to look at a volleyball today. "But when Julie called, I was seven months pregnant. I said to my husband, 'What happens if we enroll our child in a sports program, thinking it's the best and it's safe, and our child ends up getting molested?' I decided to speak out because if someone had information about a program our child was in, I'd want them to come forward. And I also didn't think Julie would be believed."

"Victims will do for others what they wish they could have done for themselves," Herman explains.

IN MAY 1994, AFTER INTERVIEWING BUTLER'S ACCUSERS, QUESTIONING BUTLER IN THE GYM, AND EVALUATING A BLISTERING FIVE-PAGE REPORT FROM KAY Rogness, DCFS investigators classified

ethically or morally, to be a coach," Rogness wrote to Rebecca Howard, chair of the U.S. Volleyball Association's Ethics and Eligibility Committee. "Therefore, at a minimum, [the association] should refuse to endorse him by cancelling his membership in the organization."

Thirteen months later, after investigations at the regional and national levels, and two sets of investigatory hearings, Rick Butler became the first volleyball coach in history to be expelled from the association for sexual misconduct. Under the ruling, he can reapply for membership in five years, but is prohibited from coaching girls under 18 for the rest of his life. "The act by a coach of having sexual intercourse with a junior volleyball player entrusted to his care," read the ethics committee's verdict, "constitutes such immorality, lack of judgment and unacceptable behavior as to cause USA Volleyball, at minimum, public embarrassment and ridicule by its merely having taken place."

Butler appealed the decision in October. But the volleyball association's executive committee upheld it. At press time, in addition to filing suit, Butler had asked the Cook County Circuit Court for a tem-

Butler's interaction with underage girls.

Even Julie Bremner's mother, Joy Dooley, still has a daughter at Sports Performance. Bonnie Bremner, who lives with her father, plays on Butler's elite team. "Bonnie is right where Julie was, in terms of not understanding the power she is under," Dooley says. "She knows I don't want her in the program, but she is going to be there whether I like it or not. The minute she gets to college and gets some space from the program, I hope she'll see the big picture."

But the "big picture" at Sports Performance may never become clear. For many of its players, being coached by Rick Butler has altered the course of their lives positively and permanently. For others, it has been devastating. But for all the girls, the experience is unforgettable. "When Rick paid attention to you, it made your day," recalls one of Butler's former players who used to defend Julie Bremner against rumors that she was sleeping with him. She pauses and takes a deep breath. "Since I heard the truth about Julie and Rick," she continues, "I've thought a lot about what I would have done in her situation. I can't say with any certainty that I would have said no."