CC STUDENT-ATHLETES ON BOARD WITH ‘YOU CAN PLAY’

Joining in with an international initiative that is gaining steam at a remarkably rapid pace, student-athletes representing three of Colorado College’s varsity athletics programs have created public-service announcements in support of the You Can Play Project.

Thirteen members of the CC women’s soccer team, as well as 10 players from the men’s basketball and ice hockey squads, were involved in producing separate PSAs that officially are being made public today.

You Can Play is dedicated to ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation. The initiative works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team’s success. You Can Play seeks to challenge the culture of locker rooms and spectator areas by focusing only on an athlete’s skills, work ethic and competitive spirit.

“You Can Play is excited to welcome the Colorado College Tigers to our team,” said Patrick Burke, one of the organization’s co-founders. “We are incredibly grateful to the athletes, coaches, and administrators at CC who helped make these videos possible, and who will continue to push for LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender) equality off campus. LGBT athletes now know they have another home at Colorado College.”

Before losing his life in 2010 automobile accident, Burke’s brother, Brendan, acknowledged he was gay while serving as the student manager of the Miami University hockey team. Their father, former Toronto Maple Leafs general manager Brian Burke, marched in the city’s gay-pride parade with Brendan both before and after his son’s death. Professional athletes from the NHL, Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association and Major League Soccer, as well as a number of colleges and universities, have helped honor Brendan Burke’s memory by becoming involved with You Can Play.

Colorado College based its commitment on the following goals: 1) Engaging the community in conversation around LGBTQ issues creating awareness and a welcoming, inclusive community; 2) Highlighting CC’s commitment to diversity and inclusivity; 3) Allowing athletes to demonstrate commitment to equality within sports; 4) Standing together with athletes and organizations internationally, who share the desire to collectively support ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes; and 5) Building upon the You Can Play Project’s mission, adding gender identity and expression, race and sex to our messaging.

“We’re always looking for creative ways to engage our entire community in the work of challenging inequality and taking ownership for the safety of all of our community members,” said Heather Horton, director of CC’s Wellness Resource Center. “I was particularly excited about the opportunity to connect with our campus athletes, because they often have a unique perspective on campus culture. As a result, when they speak out about social responsibility and justice, their message carries additional weight.

“Through the Colorado College You Can Play videos, we wanted to emphasize shared community values of respect for all people, living with integrity, and looking out for one another. I was thrilled with the earnest enthusiasm for these values that our athletes showed in making these videos.”

(more)
The PSA featuring Tiger Hockey players debuted on the video scoreboard during last Saturday’s game against the University of Denver, one of several other schools whose athletics departments also have produced similar PSAs.

Beth Kancilia, LGBTQ specialist in the office of minority and international students at Colorado College, learned about the You Can Play Project through the LBGT Higher Education Consortium and knew immediately that CC would want to get involved. When she brought it to the attention of Horton, as well as director of athletics Ken Ralph and director of athletic marketing Jessica Bennett, they jumped on board immediately.

“I am very grateful for this collaboration, bringing together so many parts of our campus community,” Kancilia said. “We certainly wanted to align ourselves with the You Can Play campaign, but we also wanted to build upon their important message to also include issues like racism, sexism, and gender identity and expression.”

According to Bennett, the project represents “everything we as an athletics department value and embody.”

She added: “This has provided an excellent opportunity for Colorado College student-athletes to stand together and use their voices to make an impact for current and futures athletes. We hope that our message is not only heard, but also adopted by everyone who is touched by this great message.”

Here is the list, team by team, with class and hometown, of the CC student-athletes participating in the project:

**Men’s Basketball**

Chris Lesnansky (So., Denver, CO); Ryan Milne (Jr., Phoenix, AZ); Daniel Webb (Jr., Louisville, CO); Justin Beradino (Fr., Fairfield, CT); Juwan Rohan (Fr., Berkeley, CA); Jake Tramutolo (Jr., Phoenix, AZ); Ian Rewoldt (Sr., Huxley, IA); Ryan Kell (So., Boulder, CO); Joe Howard (So., Englewood, CO); Doug Pierce (So., Bethesda, MD)

**Womens’ Soccer**

Heather Seeley (Fr., San Ramon, CA); Kate Scheele (Fr., Seattle, WA); Katie Uyenishi (Jr., Hawthorn Woods, IL); Hannah Peterson (Sr., Denver, CO); Hanna Berglund (Sr., Golden, CO); Yumi Nguyen (Jr., Wellington, New Zealand); Mary Bowman (So., Columbia, MO); Cody Komack (Jr., West Hills, CA); Shaina Riciputi (Jr., Los Alamos, NM); Marika Viragh (Sr., Columbus, OH); Brittney Lyman (Sr., Arvada, CO); Kecia Morway (Jr., Lake Villa, IL); Kaeli Vandersluis (So., Colorado Springs, CO)

**Hockey**

Scott Winkler (Sr., Asker, Norway); Alexander Krushelnyski (Jr., Bloomfield Hills, MI); Joe Marciano (Sr., Alta Loma, CA); Peter Maric (Fr., Milwaukee, WI); Russell Finch (Fr., Casper, WY); Josh Thorimbert (Jr., Saskatoon, SK); Mike Boivin (Sr., Delta, BC); Jordan DiGiando (So., Gahanna, OH); Courtney Lockwood (So., Breckenridge, CO); Cody Bradley (Fr., Tampa, FL)

To see the videos, visit youcanplayproject.org.

Here are the direct links:

Men’s Basketball: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-qKpwDXQ80&feature=youtu.be

Women’s Soccer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpfxPrbrmHQ

Hockey: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOBhCNIC6v4&feature=youtu.be

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