

Bruce Fossum

August 6, 2001

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is Monday, August 6, 2001. We're in East Lansing. I'm Jeff Charnley, interviewing the former men's golf coach, Bruce Fossum, for the MSU Oral History Project. The sesquicentennial of the university is coming up in 2005, and this project is part of that sesquicentennial celebration.

Coach Fossum, you can see we've got a tape recorder. Do you give us permission to record the interview today?

Fossum: I certainly do.

Charnley: I'd like to start first with some general questions about your personal background and educational career. Where were you born and raised, and where did you go to school?

Fossum: I was born and raised in Ashland, Wisconsin, right up on Lake Superior. I went to high school there. I graduated in 1945 and I decided to go right into the University at Wisconsin, at Madison. I was still seventeen; I couldn't get in the service yet. I turned eighteen. I got a semester in and I played on the basketball team, even as a freshman.

Then in January of 1946, I went into the navy and I was in what they titled then a naval reserve, because of an ear deficiency, which I didn't even know about, by the way. In August, I'm on board a small ship in the San Francisco harbor and I get word that all reservists have to be discharged by August 31st. So I was actually in the navy for just about exactly six months.

It so happened that the timing of it was great because I was able to get back home and get right back into school again. So I went to Wisconsin. I graduated in January of 1950, and during

that time I did play basketball at the university. I got a degree, a bachelor's of science, and my major was physical education, with a minor in science.

Then in the year '49-'50, I stayed on to do graduate work and then I got my degree in January of '50. During that year, I coached the freshmen basketball team at Wisconsin. The head coach at that time was Harold "Bud" Foster, and he asked me to do that. It was kind of a good break from the standpoint of establishing a résumé and going on into coaching.

Then I signed a contract to coach basketball and teach at West Bend High School just outside of Milwaukee, which I did for three years. I coached basketball, cross-country, and baseball, and I taught general science and some physical education. Then in '53, I moved to Green Bay West High School in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and I coached basketball and golf.

The golf part of it is another story. I won't even go into that, except that I started as a caddy when I was eleven years old, and became a decent player. I had never thought of teaching it until I got the Green Bay job and I kind of picked it up from there. But that's where I met Mary, and we were married on June 12, 1954, and I stayed there and I taught biology, basically, and physical education, and I coached the sports that I said.

I had success in basketball, and I got a call from Michigan State in the late spring of 1959, and they wanted me to come over and interview for the job of assistant basketball coach. Fordy Anderson [phonetic] was the head coach at that time, and [Clarence L.] "Biggie" Munn was the athletic director. We--I say "we"--Mary and I decided that we would do that, and so I took the job. They asked me if I wanted it and I said, finally, yes.

Then we moved over. I came over ahead of Mary in July and then she moved over, finally, when we had a place to stay, in August of 1959. It turned out to be a wonderful move on both of our parts, I'll put it that way, because we had two girls at that time and it was not a hard move at all, from the standpoint of distance and so on. We were close enough to Wisconsin where we could get back when we wanted to.

But it provided an opportunity for me to learn under a very, very good head coach. His

offensive ideas in basketball at that time were top of the line, shall we put it, and it gave me that opportunity to learn under him. My job, basically, was scouting and recruiting. At that time we didn't have video, where they could exchange. Nowadays, I guess all they do, with all their modern electronics, is record all the games of teams that are going to play and put it all together and break it down. It's a fantastic thing they're doing today with that.

Charnley: Did you use film at that time?

Fossum: We used film of our home games, yes, 16-millimeter. But my job was to go on the road and scout the team we were going to play the next time around. So I spent a lot of time traveling, and when I was home, obviously, I was coaching.

All the roles then, as coaches, were dual. We had to teach and coach, and I taught in the physical education department, and I taught whatever the department wanted me to teach, and it involved a lot of stuff.

Then in 1965, Fordy was fired, and I was offered coaching jobs, which there's no need to get into, in basketball, but Biggie called me in and wanted to know if I would take over the golf program, because I had already been helping the golf coach. His name was Jack Brotzman, and he was ready to retire. I was in charge of the P.E. golf program, the learning program, in our P.E. program. Biggie just thought that that would be a good thing and I could take my recruiting skills and that type of thing, along with my golf knowledge, and put it to work, because the golf program was really down. They weren't do much with it, and Biggie wanted to pick that up a little bit.

So I did it, and at the same time I got a boost in my rank, shall we say, from assistant professor to associate prof. That all happened in '65, but it kept me on a nine-month program instead of a twelve-month program, plus the boost in rank and a boost in salary, too. But that put me into a whole new life. It was totally different.

I got out of basketball because--well, for a lot of reasons. I felt that it would be really tough to move on into a major college situation. And you know how you are when you're young; you want to be the best, I mean, if you've got drive, which I had. I just felt by taking over this golf thing, that I could do that, and that's what happened. I just took it and ran with it and built it up.

It led to a lot of other good things, things you probably have read about in that little book. But I gradually moved up the ranks from the standpoint of coaching in golf, and I became the chairman of the NCAA Golf Committee. I worked through the ranks there and I chaired that organization for five years. I became president of the Golf Coaches Association and a lot of other good stuff that went along with it. So that's about the history.

Charnley: We'll go back quite a bit, even going back to high school. What did you find in high school sports that was appealing?

Fossum: Well, the competition. I was a good athlete. I was blessed. In high school, I made the all-state team in basketball; I made the all-state team in football; I was a receiver on the football team. We played everything in those days. I ran track, ran the hurdles and high-jumped in track, and even played on the tennis team. I won twelve letters in high school, but just the competition was something that I dearly loved.

Charnley: Was Bud Foster the coach at Wisconsin all the time you were there as a student?

Fossum: Yes. Well, this was, of course, in high school.

Charnley: Right. But later on, in college.

Fossum: Yes, he was my coach all the way through.

Charnley: What was Wisconsin's record? I don't mean the exact numbers, but did you win the Big Ten?

Fossum: In 1947, we won the Big Ten championship, and that's the last conference champion that Wisconsin won. In fact, in '97 we had a reunion of that team back in Madison, and six of us showed up. Some had passed away. A lot of the guys that were on that team were really true veterans, guys that had been through a lot of stuff in the war, a really tough group. I was kind of the youngest one, because I was lucky to be in the service for such a short period of time. It was a wild and woolly group, but, boy, they could play.

Charnley: And you played as a freshman?

Fossum: I played as a freshman before I went in the navy, for a semester, and when I got back out, and the first year I got back, all the other guys were coming back. So I played JV ball for one year. They did that then. And then I played varsity the last two years.

Charnley: When you went into teaching, did you have any point in your life when you thought that you did want to be a teacher and a coach?

Fossum: Oh, I knew that when I was in high school. I knew I wanted to coach when I was in high school. And for the same reason, it was the competitive attitude that I took on, but I wanted to work with young people. In fact, my high school coach, Roy Melvin by name, a great man. He just did so much, not only for me, but all the kids that he coached. Encouraged me to do that. He says, "You're good at it." He had me working with kids when I at the high school level,

working with seventh and eighth grade kids and so on. He said, "If you want to, feel like it, you're good at it, you should go into it."

Charnley: So he was an important early mentor.

Fossum: Oh, yes. Very important. Yes, between him and my father, why, those were the two guys.

Charnley: Was your father an educator?

Fossum: No. My father had his own business. He sold and repaired radios, sold and repaired bicycles. He started off around the First World War with a motorcycle shop, and then as motorcycles kind of petered out when the automobile was coming in strong, then he got into the bicycles. And in the service--he had been in the army--he learned radio, and he became very good at that. We sold fishing tackle, and it was kind of a mixture of stuff that we did, but we repaired outboard motors. He was a fly fisherman and that's where that comes in. Every Sunday was our Sunday. We'd go fishing. That's kind of how I was raised.

Charnley: He encouraged you in sports, too, your father?

Fossum: Oh, positively. Oh yes, yes. He was a pretty good athlete himself, and when he was younger, they didn't have all the opportunity that we started to have a little later. He was very encouraging.

Charnley: You obviously played Michigan State.

Fossum: Oh yes.

Charnley: Anything you remember about when Michigan State came to play Wisconsin?

Fossum: Yes. I had one of my best games. I think I scored sixteen in that game. That's when they had Branham [phonetic] and those guys. '48, I think it was, we played them.

Charnley: So you had been on the campus then, as a student? You'd been here as a student, playing, in Jenison [Fieldhouse]?

Fossum: No, I don't remember playing in Jenison. I'm talking about playing in Madison. That's the only game I can remember.

Charnley: That sounds like a good one to remember.

Fossum: Yes.

Charnley: Your years as assistant coach, you talked about some of your duties and that sort of thing. Were there any MSU stars that you recruited, personally?

Fossum: Yes, there were quite a few players that came in. The basketball teams we had in the early sixties were middle-of-the-road-type. We were a very high-scoring team. Remember, I alluded to the fact that Fordy was a very good offensive coach. We lacked a good defensive philosophy that prevented us from being really good. I didn't recruit Horace Walker, but he was here when I first came. And Lance Olsen and Tom Rand, who eventually coached here, too, by the way. They coached the freshmen team, each one of them. They both went on to become very

wealthy people in other works.

But the one I remember the most is Stan Washington. He was really a truly great basketball player. I could name a lot of others, but I remember Stan so well. He lives in Lansing, and his son played at Western Michigan. As I say, the recruiting classes for five years, I recruited all of them. Pete Gent [phonetic] was another one. Recruited Pete. Pete went on and played football, by the way, with the Dallas Cowboys, and he wrote a couple of books on professional football.

Charnley: What was it like playing in Jenison?

Fossum: Great. Oh yes. You had the court right there and the floor was raised. It was kind of unique. Of course, we had that at Wisconsin, too. But it was a tight crowd and the place was always filled up. Raucous, you know, and the band was tight right under the deal. It was more like a big high school place to play. You know, the arenas we play in today, why, they're all like Breslin [Student Events Center], and everything is a little more distant. That was wonderful to play there.

Charnley: Have you kept up with basketball as a fan?

Fossum: Yes, strictly. When I became the golf coach, they wanted me to continue teaching. I was teaching the basketball coaching course. I was teaching techniques courses in basketball and golf. In fact, I started a course in coaching and teaching golf when I became the golf coach. So my teaching assignments changed considerably when I became the golf coach. It was more lecture, demonstration, that type of thing, and more of a professional attitude in the teaching, rather than in something in the gym or in the bowling alley. So I did continue that, along with coaching the golf team. I don't think I would have done it without the teaching part of it.

Nowadays, the coaches now, like Stacy _____ with the golf team, the ladies, and Mark _____ with the men's, that's all they do. They just coach, recruit, that's it. But all of our guys, like [Stanley] Stan Drobac and Grady Peninger, you probably talked with him or will talk with him. Stanley Collins and even Duffy [Dougherty] and those guys, everybody taught, taught classes. Rather unique.

Of course, it was all men's athletics then. There were no sponsored women's athletics. So it was kind of more of a fraternity of coaches, and we were very close and we had a lot of parties, a lot of fun together, and our wives got to know each other. It was a lot different than today. Not that then was any better than it is now, but it was a lot tighter, a lot closer. Everybody was really close.

Charnley: We talked a little bit about your golf career. Did you have any guiding strategy in your approach to golf? Obviously, score well.

Fossum: In coaching at the college level, the whole key is in recruiting. I could give you a couple of analogies, but I'll leave those out because I'd have to use words that wouldn't fit too well. You have to have talent to begin with, and therefore the biggest job is recruiting. The second is obviously your knowledge of the game so that you can teach, and I thought I was pretty good at that and I have become much better since, since I started, that is.

But I read a lot, I talked with good teaching professionals a lot. I exchanged coaching information with some of the top coaches in the country. You just get better and better at what you do, but it comes right back to recruiting kids that had talent. I always tried to recruit young men that were good kids, good competitors, good kids. Obviously, they had to be good golf players or you wouldn't touch them, but if they were snotty-nosed kids like a lot of kids are, especially in golf, because it's such an "I" sport, that I wouldn't touch them. I just didn't want them around. And that paid off, too. Good athletes, good loyal kids, kids that wanted to help

each other and root for each other and work hard. And again, they had good talent to begin with, so it's a matter of polishing it and teaching them more about playing the game instead of how to swing a golf club.

Charnley: In the early years, you had some success, and you said you had to rebuild or build the program. What was your approach? How did you accomplish that?

Fossum: The first thing I did was organize it more on the basis of any organized athletic team. Before, they were kind of on their own and did what they wanted in the winter and so on. I organized a winter program, the first time they'd ever done that, with weight training and the whole business. I had done that at the high school level, and I couldn't imagine them not doing it here. And yet when I put in the training program, we had a physical therapist here on campus. His name was Jim Allen, and he was good. I went to Jim and I said, "Jim, I want to develop a program at this level, involving stretching, weight training, and cardiovascular. Would you help me?" He watched me swing the golf club a few times and developed some exercises that would specify the golf swing.

We put together a program. I wish I'd brought some, because I still have copies of it, but stuff that every team does today, but we were doing that back in the sixties. The kids loved it. They had never gone through anything like this, these golf players. Some of them, of course, had played basketball and football, and they said, "Yeah, this is great." We did stuff together and we trained hard, under a very controlled program, and the program just got better and better and better and better. We got it to a point where we won a Big Ten title in '69 and then we kept on playing very well.

The problem in those days, golf wasn't the popularity that it is today and there weren't that many good players, so the recruiting process, it was tough. There was a lot of competition for the best players. Sometimes you won, sometimes you lose.

Charnley: Did the Southern schools have an advantage?

Fossum: Terrific advantage, because in those days, to get on a pro tour, you really had to be at the top of your game and a lot of good Northern players went South for that reason, so they could play all the time. That was an obvious thing that you competed against.

Charnley: When you took over, what schools were the powerhouses?

Fossum: Purdue. In the Big Ten?

Charnley: In Big Ten.

Fossum: Purdue was strong, and Indiana.

Charnley: Who were their coaches?

Fossum: Bob Fitch was the coach at Indiana, and Sam Voinoff was the coach at Purdue. I told Sam when I took the job, in kidding me, I said, "I'm coming after you, Sam." We got to be really good friends. He was a gruff old guy, but, boy, he was just a marvel.

Charnley: Did you coaches play? Were there any outings or anything that you played?

Fossum: No. When you go to a golf tournament, that's work time.

Charnley: In those early years, you said you started the winter program. How did you approach

practice, and what was a typical way you got your players ready?

Fossum: If there was something general that the team was lacking, say, short game, whatever, we'd schedule a group meeting and we'd go on a practice green and we'd talk about it. We did a lot of that together. The teams were relatively small. You could get eight or ten kids around a green and work on something. But I kept it pretty individual. If somebody needed help with something, we'd go to work on it.

In the wintertime, everybody did the same thing. We'd hit ball. We had indoor nets over in the IM Building and so on. But gradually we increased those facilities and got those better, too. Then we'd go on a spring training trip together down in the Carolinas, and try to get our games in shape before the season.

In those days, too, we didn't play much in the fall. Nowadays, they split season. They play a lot of important tournaments in the fall, and then in the spring they play and lead up to the conference championship and the NCAAs.

Charnley: Is the NCAA in June, or is that earlier?

Fossum: Late May. Then I started the tournament here, the very first year that I coached, and I called in the Spartan Invitational. In 1995, they changed the name of it to my name, and they called it the Bruce Fossum Invitational. They did the same thing with Mary, by the way, and her tournament is in the fall.

Charnley: I don't mean for you to remember everyone or exclude anyone, but who were some of your memorable players?

Fossum: Well, the best player that ever played at Michigan State is Len Jansen [phonetic]. Len

is the head pro up at Egypt Valley. He was All-American three times. He played through 1970. That particular team was the one that had won the Big Ten the previous year, and there were a number of great players on that team. Rick Woulfe was a great player. Graham Cooke. Rick, by the way, is a--I keep in touch with these guys--he's a civil lawyer down in Fort Lauderdale and he's a big-time court lawyer. He's good, too.

Charnley: Still keep up with his game?

Fossum: Graham Cooke, he was an All-American. He's a golf course architect in Canada. Listen, I could name a ton of them. I'm just naming you some All-Americans that we had. Brad Highland, he's in insurance and real estate down in Orlando, Florida. I saw him a couple of years ago. We played golf together down in Orlando.

Charnley: Did many of your players go to the pros?

Fossum: Some were on and off a little bit. Not anybody regular, no. Most of my guys--well, a lot of them are still in golf, that are golf professionals. But a lot of them are professional men. A lot of lawyers, doctors and lawyers. Almost all of them highly successful in what they're doing. Really, I'm very proud of them. My son played for me, too.

Charnley: Oh, he did?

Fossum: Oh, yes. He played from 1981 to '85.

Charnley: When did you start him with a golf club in his hand?

Fossum: Oh, gosh, when he was one and a half, he had a little cutoff club, hitting balls against the couch. But he became a great player, too.

Charnley: Did he continue at all?

Fossum: Well, he still plays a lot. He's with an investment firm here in town.

Charnley: What's it like coaching your son?

Fossum: We got along good. He had to earn his way, and he did that. See, in golf, if you're in doubt about two people playing, you put them on the golf course and let them go play, and the winner makes it and the loser doesn't. It's that simple. You let the golf clubs do the talking. He had to go through all that, see. But he ended up playing a lot. Up to the point he graduated, he had played in more golf tournaments than any player in Michigan State history. Then another kid came along right after that that played in more, a boy by the name of John Cozier [phonetic].

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Charnley: How would you describe Forest [H.] Akers [Golf Course], in terms of facility?

Fossum: When I first started there?

Charnley: Yes.

Fossum: Well, it was probably one of the top three in the Big Ten, at that time, and we really didn't have that much compared to what we have now. Holy smokes. I mean, it's really

something. But Ohio State had the finest college facility, maybe in the country. Michigan had a great course. In fact, we have more university-owned golf courses in the Big Ten than they had anyplace in the country. Indiana had their own course, Illinois had their own course. Minnesota had their own. The only teams that didn't have their own golf course was Wisconsin and Northwestern, and they had to play at the local country clubs. And until we built Forest Akers, and that was brand new in 1958, the year before I came, so I'd been with the golf course practically for its whole history. They played at Walnut Hills. But right now, we have maybe the best collegiate golf facility in the country, right now, 2001. Best practice facility. The golf course is probably as good as any of them. Overall, it is maybe the best deal in the whole United States.

Charnley: Did you have any input on any of the changes?

Fossum: Oh, no.

Charnley: That was golf architects?

Fossum: They brought in Arthur Hills [phonetic] in '95 and he made the changes in the golf course that we now know. Now they're putting up that--they've got the hotel built on the far end of the course, and they've got the pro shop and conference center just about done. They're going to wait until October and move the whole pro shop over to the new place at the hotel, and then reroute the golf course. It's all very exciting. But they won't do that until maybe in October, this year.

Charnley: Toward the end of the season.

Fossum: Yes, right.

Charnley: Would you say that competitive golf at the college level changed, over your career, or has it changed?

Fossum: Yes, there are more players, more good players. We had a lot of really good players at that time. On a college team then, if you had three really good players and then they're battling it for the other two or three spots, competitive spots, that was about it. Now, if you don't have five good player that can flat play, you just don't get it done. It's like all the sports. There are more people, better training, better equipment, better golf course to play on, better teaching, better organization. Everything is better today, no question about it. And yet, I'm sure I could take those kids I named for you earlier and they'd have no problem playing today, because they were great players.

Charnley: Did you have any walk-ons, or somebody who maybe didn't have much experience prior to coming, or just raw talent? Did you ever have that, or not in golf? It doesn't come easy.

Fossum: No, no. We always gave the walk-ons a chance. We'd have a cut procedure, where if they could make a certain score, they get to play another round, and then you had to gradually narrow it down like a triangle. Once in a while I'd keep one or two of those kids on the golf team, but nowadays Mark is limited, I think, to ten players. That's his maximum. And every one of those kids is on a scholarship. See, they get five scholarships today. When I first started, we got two, only two, so we had to kind of split them.

Charnley: In the course of your career, did you see changes in how you approached the game?

Fossum: Oh, yes. As a teacher, you start off, when you're young, with kind of a methodology. This is the way to get it done. In the early seventies, I was doing a lot of work with the National Golf Foundation and I did a lot of traveling around the country, putting on clinics, with other good teachers. The one fellow that really came out with a modern teaching method, and it's not a method at all, was a young pro, Gary--I'll think of his name here in a minute. But the philosophy behind it was that there is no such thing as a perfect golf swing, and therefore there can be no perfect teaching method.

So he set up more or less a model for the golf swing, based on the five ball flight laws, which are the face of the club, the path of the club, the angle of approach, and so on. What it was based on was, these things have to happen in order for good contact to occur, and a lot of people dissuaded that. They wanted to stay with their method, and this is the way you do it, and so on. And yet I began to study that and I said, "Yes, this really makes sense." His last name was Gary Wren, and he became very famous. He wrote the teaching book for the PGA and everything, so they adapted that form of teaching.

Charnley: Was he a pro player?

Fossum: He's a great player, but basically a teacher. He had the greatest influence on my thinking. Using that approach, starting way back then--see, I've been doing that for about thirty years now. I can take anybody. It doesn't make any difference who it is.

Charnley: To what degree did the pro game influence yours, or influence your approach to teaching?

Fossum: You always learn. There's not that much difference between a great amateur and a great pro. The pro has probably got a better nervous system.

Charnley: Can deal the stress.

Fossum: Yes. But shot-making, you can take the great amateurs today and they can play right along. Proven by, just a week ago, a young player out at Texas won a professional tournament, and he just came on tour. They're jumping right out of college now and right into the heat of the battle. So, yes, the pros influence because they influence the players more than they influence the coaches. We know how good a kid has got to be to make it that far, but it takes the kid to realize it. See, the commitment that they really give to the game. Professionals, they leave no stone unturned, but they don't have to go to school for five, six hours a day and then go practice and study and so on. All they do is play golf.

Charnley: Did you involve your players at all, like going to the Buick Open, or anything like that?

Fossum: Oh, we used to go to professional tournaments together once in a while, sure. Not too many planned. The kids a lot of times go on their own, in the summer.

Charnley: We talked a little bit about your book, *Golf Made Easier, Not Easy*. How did you first come to the idea of writing a book?

Fossum: About 1985 or six, I started to write a golf instructional article each Sunday for the *State Journal*. In '87, I had a series of about twenty-one stories in there, throughout the summer. Every Sunday, a story by me. A lot of people said, "This is really good stuff. You ought to put it in book form." I thought about it and thought about it and I kind of started putting numbers together and figured out what it might cost to get it done.

So what I did, this is nothing but a collection of those twenty-one stories that I did in the *State Journal*, but I polished them up and did them more for book reading instead of a newspaper. I didn't put any pictures in it because sometimes that's really confusing. It's just made for pleasant reading, and the more you read it, the more sense it seems to make. We sold 25,000 copies.

Charnley: Twenty-five thousand?

Fossum: Yes.

Charnley: How did you get that title?

Fossum: That's my title. I thought of that. I put golf and fly fishing as my hobby, and I put the two words together and it came out Golfish, Incorporated. Marianne Keefer [phonetic], the graphic artist--I think she's retired now from Michigan State. She did the cover, and then the little graphics that we have here, with the tee. We didn't really do that much graphics, but I think the color is really attractive.

Now, the name of the book. The company, that was mine, but the name of the book came from Judd Heathcote. We had a contest through the newspaper, because in '88, I did a column again every Sunday. So we asked our readers to come up with a name. Well, one day in my mailbox in Jenison, here's a note from Judd, and he said, "Here's my entry into the contest. *Golf Made Easier, Not Easy*." And he won the contest. I didn't pick it. I let some of the *State Journal* people look at them all, and I think his name had some influence, but they said, "What do you think?" I said, "That's it." And then, I walked in his office and I said, "Judd, you're the guy that gave me the title for the book. Write the foreword." So he wrote the foreword.

Charnley: How would you describe Judd Heathcote's golf game?

Fossum: His golf game? Well, it's erratic, but he knows his own game and he can play to his handicap and he's a good competitor. He's a very self-indulged man, as you probably know. You don't get in his way on the golf course any more than you do any other part of his life.

Charnley: How did the relationship between the various coaches--you mentioned earlier, like in the 1960s, Duffy Dougherty and some of the other coaches, the social aspects of it. Did that continue in the 1970s?

Fossum: Yes, it did. I think it continued to the seventies, and then it started to kind of fall off as the department spread out more into different buildings, like into Breslin and so on, and it kind of pushed the coaches further apart. Of course, there were many more coaches now, because the ladies started to play in '73. That's when Mary started coaching. So it's kind of petered down. They still do it, I guess, but not to the extent we did.

Charnley: Did Title IX affect the men's golf program, either directly or indirectly?

Fossum: Not immediately, no, because they didn't offer scholarships. But as soon as they started to do that, and I know Mary probably told you, she had wished that they would never have had scholarships for women, but it had to be. It had to be. Title IX stated it. Equality. So it changed somewhat, yes.

Charnley: Did you have any contact with Gwen Norrell when she was the representative?

Fossum: Oh, yes. Great gal. Just marvelous. She was so straightforward, and she talked like a

guy, too. She was talking--oh, I can't put it on tape now. We'll go ahead.

Charnley: I've talked with her.

Fossum: Okay, you know what I mean.

Charnley: She said she got more flak from the women than the men.

Fossum: We loved her.

Charnley: The various athletic directors that you've seen. You've seen a lot of them. Could you talk a little bit about some of them and how they managed things?

Fossum: Well, Biggie was obviously coming out of the coaching ranks. He was demanding. He was a big ego. He had an awful big ego. And yet he was very kind in a lot of respects, with Boys Scouts and so on. All he wanted to do was win. When you had a good team and you won, he paid you. In other words, he rewarded you for a job well done. And again, it was all men then and so it was a little bit different.

However, he was still the athletic director when--in fact, he's the one that called me in, early, it was in '72, maybe, and he said, "Have you heard about Title IX?" and I said no and he explained it to me. He said, "We have to start some women's programs, and I want golf to be one of them. Do you think Mary would be interested in coaching a ladies golf team?"

I said, "I don't know. Why don't you call her up and ask her?"

"Why don't you find out, and soften her up a little bit for me?"

So I talked to Mary. I said, "If there would be a golf team here at the university--."

So we talked about it for a little bit and she said, "Well, if I did something like that,

would you help me?"

I said, "Certainly. We'll do it together."

I called Biggie up and I said, "Okay, she's softened up now. Give her a call."

So she went in and met with him and decided to do it. Our two boys were still kind of small, but we were able to work it out. So that's how that thing got going. And I think the other sport, they started basketball and track and maybe volleyball. I don't know. And tennis. So they started off with six sports, anyhow. But gradually it's increased and come along.

Charnley: What about some of the other athletic directors? Joe Kearney [phonetic]?

Fossum: Yes, Joe. Joe was a coach's athletic director. His office door was open all the time. You could walk in there any time. Had to knock, you know. But a very thoughtful person. Of all the guys we had, I liked him the best. Bert Smith had it for a little while, after Biggie got sick, and he didn't fare too well with it. He was a little bit too--he was out of his element, really. He was a hell of a coach and wonderful with young people. He was tough on them, but just the essence of a good coach. But he was out of his element in an office. He didn't quite know how to make decisions. And then, let's see, who have we had?

Charnley: Doug Weaver.

Fossum: Doug. He did good, financially. He focused pretty well on the major sports, the money-making sports, and I think he did a good job with that. I think he left money in the bank when he left. In other words, he left a little legacy of dollars when he left the program. Let's see. Norvell, Merritt [phonetic].

Charnley: [unclear].

Fossum: Both of them, they didn't get it done. Hard for me to describe either one of them, but they weren't--George Purliss [phonetic] would have been if they'd kept him on. But our president at that time decided he didn't want that to happen, and so George says, "Okay, I'll continue coaching the football team," which he did. But he would have been a wonderful athletic director. He was smarter than most people. He's no dummy. You look at him and talk with him and you say, "This is a big old gruff football player," but, boy, he had a lot of good ideas.

Charnley: How about some of the presidents? John [A.] Hannah, you had some contact with.

Fossum: Nobody beats John. Oh, yes. I considered him a good friend.

Charnley: Did he support men's golf?

Fossum: Sure. Well, when I say that, I never too much from him about it, except I'd get a little note, "Good job," or whatever. He never said anything negative about it. "What the hell's going on?" You know, nothing like that. John's the kind of a guy--he built this university, and he's the kind of guy that would call a contractor and have them dig a hole and then he'd put in for the money with the state department or whatever. But a brilliant man. It was just fun to listen to him talk.

Charnley: Were there any board members that were supportive of golf, in particular, over the years? Either non-revenue sports or whatever they're called now?

Fossum: I don't remember that too much. When I first took over, golf wasn't that important, and gradually it's built up a lot. I think Mary and I made it grow like that.

Charnley: Were you the only husband and wife golf coaches in the university?

Fossum: The only husband and wife golf team, period.

Charnley: Must have been unique.

Fossum: It was. When it's the only one, that's unique, yes. But Mary did a hell of a job. She just went out and got some good players. Our whole attitude is family. I worked that way. When I recruited a kid, I said, "You made a decision. Now, you're going to come here and you know what the laws are, what the rules are, but you're now part of my family. Accordingly, that's what will be expected of you. You're going to be not just a good golf player, a good student, but you're going to be a gentleman." We had a lot of parties at our house and did a lot of stuff together. Mary did the same thing.

Charnley: Was there any training or competition between the men's and women's teams?

Fossum: No. We went our separate ways that way. Training-wise, Mary picked up my program in the wintertime and went along with that. So for the first time, they had a team of ladies that were training with weights and stretching and running and all that.

Charnley: In the course of looking back on your career, did you anticipate you'd stay at Michigan State for most of your--

Fossum: Well, like any young assistant coach, what you're looking for is a head job someplace. Inadvertently, I ran into a head job, but it was a total different world. So, yes, I thought if I could

put in a six- to ten-year apprenticeship here and have success, I could move on. I was offered job at relatively good schools when I made this decision to take the golf.

Charnley: What was it that kept you here at Michigan State?

Fossum: First of all, we loved the community and raising our kids in this atmosphere. It was fantastic. When Biggie told me what the job was and gave me free rein to go ahead and go at it, it was just an opportunity. And Mary being a great player herself, and we both loved the game. We played it every chance we had. The kids loved it. "Hell, this'll be good." To get out of that rat race. There were a lot of things about basketball coaching that I dearly loved. Actually, recruiting was one of them. I didn't mind doing that. That was fun. A lot of guys don't like recruiting. But it was just the constant pressure. You could just feel it coming on.

Then Fordy got fired, and a lot of the reasons that he got fired were not particularly because he was doing a poor job of coaching, but some of the other things he was doing in his life had a great effect on him, the way he coached. And so, all in all, between a losing record and not taking care of business, why, that's why he got fired. And I could see that. You'd see other guys get fired. When you don't get it done today, you just don't keep your job.

Charnley: So some of your children went here. You mentioned your son.

Fossum: Our daughter, Terri, is one of the assistant directors of the [unclear], and has been for twenty-one years. She got her degree here and she was Phi Beta Kappa. And then Bobby went here and got his degree in communications. Billy started, but then he decided he didn't want to go to school. And the same with our daughter, Katherine [phonetic]. She started and went for a year. We didn't push them if they didn't want to go to school.

Charnley: Is there anything else for posterity that you can think of that you'd like to conclude with?

Fossum: Well, when I first came here, I didn't really understand the difference between a land-grant university and a regular university, and I liked the philosophy of it, the whole deal. When I got to know the University of Michigan a lot better, I said, "Yes, I love this. We're the underdogs, we're the grubbers. We ought to kick their butt."

The whole picture of living here--we live in [unclear], which, you could live in East Lansing, it wouldn't make any difference. Great school systems to raise your family. You've got the capital, and this great university here. Everything available. For gosh sakes, when I think of all the perks through the years that we've had--the chance to come and use swimming pools with the kids and go play tennis if we want, and the great gardens that we have. I could go on and on about it. I don't think there's a finer campus in the whole world than we have right here.

So the total package--you know, Mary and I talked about it a lot, whether we'd ever want to move away, and so the golf became the holding deal and that's how we made our living. We both became very good at it, and that helped, too, because you get a little notoriety and you become part of the community that way, because people recognize you. And to just pick up again with the whole family. And of course, now they're all doing their own thing, but we talked a lot about maybe buying something in the South. And then finally we said, "Why? All our kids are around here, except one," and we've lived in the same home since 1962. So we're part of the whole deal, and we've had a very happy life. Fortunately, we've had pretty good health. I still work. So far this year, counting teaching in the Dome, I've given well over 500 lessons.

Charnley: Five hundred? Staying active.

Fossum: Yes. I've got a full afternoon.

Charnley: I want to thank you, on behalf of the project, for your perspective, and appreciate your insight. Thank you.

Fossum: Thank you very much, Jeff.

[End of interview]

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