

Directors' Statement

While making a film about homophobia in sports, I learned of a legal battle brewing between Penn State student athlete Jennifer Harris and women's basketball coach Rene Portland. Coach Portland had summarily dismissed Harris at the end of her sophomore year (2005), although she would have been the leading scorer for the team at the onset of the following season.

Harris said Portland dismissed her because she perceived her to be gay. Portland said the dismissal had nothing to do with sexual orientation and called Harris "lazy" and "volatile" in published reports. After anguishing over whether she could take on Penn State University and its famous coach, Harris and her family approached The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), which determined that this case was emblematic of a pervasive and stifling homophobic climate in women's sports. The NCLR filed charges against Portland, athletic director Tim Curley, and Penn State University.

The suit alleged discrimination based on perceived sexual orientation, racism and gender stereotyping. I realized that this case would provide the perfect lens through which to document homophobia in sports. Thus, *Training Rules* was born.

In 2006, I enlisted Fawn Yacker, the cinematographer of multiple Academy Award-winning documentaries, to co-produce and co-direct the film. "I was initially brought into the project as cinematographer. When I learned how pervasive homophobia in sports was, I accepted Dee's invitation to become more deeply involved in the project. *Training Rules* tells the stories of athletes whose lives were irreparably damaged when a university turned a blind eye to the destruction caused by discrimination based on sexual orientation. It shows how one woman's courage to speak up changed the course of sports history."