



TIGERS SAY NO TO DRUGS

By PAUL HOEMANN

SENIOR RENEE KELLY knows all about aggressive moves. From 1983-87, the 6-foot-1 center used them on opponents while forging the all-time scoring and rebounding marks in the Missouri women's basketball record book.

The Augusta, Ga., native urges mid-Missouri television viewers to be assertive off the court as well.

"The most aggressive move you can make, on or off the court, is having control of your life. Say no to drugs!"

Kelly is one of eight Mizzou athletes participating in the local "Say No To Drugs" campaign sponsored by the athletic department and KOMU-TV. Each athlete—selected by his or her coach—appears in public service announcements on the television station. Other participants are Tom Whelihan and Eric McMillan (football); Tom Ciombor, Matt Greer and Mike Rogers (baseball); Janis Erhardt (swimming); and Tatiana Smolin (track and field). Representatives from the men's basketball team will make a spot after their season ends.

Like Kelly, Whelihan has made an impression in the school and conference record books. Last fall, Mizzou's bouncy, bare-foot, junior placekicker booted a 62-yard

Football kicker Tom Whelihan, left, and basketball star Renee Kelly are two Mizzou athletes who speak out against drugs on public service announcements being shown locally on KOMU-TV.

field goal against Colorado, the longest in Big Eight history.

In his announcement, Whelihan displays his talents by kicking a football through the uprights on Faurot Field. The message he's trying to impress on area viewers: "Get a kick out of life. Say no to drugs."

The announcements, written by each athlete, are targeted especially to junior and senior high-school students.

"I believe the announcements relate well to those students," says Kelly, whose 25.7 scoring average ranked fourth nationally in 1986-87. "I've had a few people tell me, 'My kids have seen you on TV and really like what you have to say.' That makes me feel good, because that's what we're trying to communicate to people."

Whelihan, an elementary education major from Carrollton, Texas, holds a deep affection for kids. That's why he was thrilled to be a part of the campaign.

"It's so easy for kids to get drugs now, even in elementary schools. I don't want to see them get hurt."

Brazilian soccer star Pele was Whelihan's boyhood idol. Whelihan relishes being a role model for today's youth.

"I'm an athlete, so it's my public duty to help these kids. Mizzou has given me a lot. An athlete, I have a lot of responsibilities. This is one of them."

Kelly, too, understands that being a major-college athlete brings high visibility, but also gives her a unique platform.

"A lot of kids think that kind of role model. Deep down, it helps them to remove the peer pressure. They'll think, 'She doesn't do drugs. So why should I?' Maybe it will click with them later on."

Both athletes possess an independent streak, so they had little problem writing their scripts.

"I thought the people in the athletic department were teasing about the writing at first," Whelihan says. "But I'm not going to stand up and say something if I don't believe it. I think that's why it came off so naturally. I really meant it."

Kelly admits that, initially, she was a bit anxious about the writing. But after some thought, her feelings changed. "I decided that it will be from my heart, and it will mean more that way," she says.

Whether it's hoops or homework, Kelly, an honor student who graduates in May with a marketing education degree, strives to do everything with meaning.

"Basketball has helped me realize the talents I have, but with a deeper purpose. The abilities I have are a gift from God, so what I want to say to these kids is that whether it's basketball or anything, trying to be the best you can be is what counts."

As a youth, Whelihan was consumed by school and sports. At night, he just wanted to go home and relax. He didn't have the time nor the desire to get involved with drugs, he says.

"Why work hard all week, and then go out and smoke a joint on the weekend? It doesn't make sense." □



The Hearnese scoreboard tells the story after a record crowd of 13,296 watched the Tigers defeat Iowa State Feb. 28.

THE BIG EIGHT'S basketball summit was an unlikely standing for the 1987 Missouri Tigers, experts said. Too much youth, too many question marks.

Most forecast a middle-of-the-pack finish for Coach Norm Stewart's seniorless squad. One reporter predicted a last-place fate for the Tigers.

But the cats from Ol' Mizzou had other ideas. A six-game winning streak—sparked by a thrilling 63-60 victory over Kansas Feb. 11—fueled the Tigers to their fifth regular-season conference title in the past eight years and their sixth since 1976, all under Stewart's tutelage. His crew then proved it's 11-3 conference mark was no fluke by winning the post-season conference tournament.

The conference tournament title automatically landed the team in the NCAA Tournament. But the Tigers were upset by Xavier of Cincinnati, 70-69, in the first round of the Midwest Regional, in a game that, like so many others during the season, went down to the wire.

The Tigers had many heroes in 1987, indicative of the team's outstanding depth. But usually, they rode to victory on the shoulders of Derrick Chievous. The AP third-team all-America forward averaged 25 points a game. Only a junior, he bested Steve Stipanovich's 1,836 career total to become Mizzou's all-time scoring leader.

Acknowledging that 1986-87 was one of Stewart's best coaching jobs in 20 years at Mizzou, sportswriters tabbed him Big Eight Coach of the Year. Stewart knew something the experts didn't when he forecast in the November-December 1986 *Missouri Alumnus*: "I think we can look at ourselves as contenders. We could be an outstanding team before the season is over."

—Paul Hoemann