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The New York Times

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COLLEGE SPORTS; Krzyzewski Defends Silence, and Duke

By VIV BERNSTEIN
Published: June 21, 2006

Mike Krzyzewski, the men's basketball coach at Duke and a national leader in the sport, stayed in the background as his campus reeled amid the rape investigation involving the university's lacrosse team.

On Tuesday, Krzyzewski defended his public silence and broke from it at the same time.

"I think it's important for me to remember my place," he said during his annual summer meeting with reporters at Cameron Indoor Stadium. "I am the basketball coach. I'm not the president."

But Krzyzewski is a man of influence at the university. And as the investigation unfolded in recent months, he said, he made his feelings known internally. He revealed some of that Tuesday, calling this the most difficult period he has experienced since arriving as coach in 1980.

Three lacrosse players face charges that they raped a woman who was hired to dance at a party held by the team's captains on March 13. The dancer is a black woman, and the three players are white. The team's season was canceled, the head coach resigned and the case has fueled a debate along lines of race and class at the university and in Durham.

Krzyzewski took offense at what he called reports of a racial divide in the news media.

"The racial aspect of this, I think, is in some ways, has been the most sensitive thing, and people have tried to make it, they've tried to somehow create something that isn't there in our community," he said. "We have amazing race relationships."

Krzyzewski took issue with the Bowen-Chambers report, one of several investigations of Duke's handling of the rape case conducted by the university. The report offered recommendations, including a possible reconsideration of Duke's continued national recruitment of top athletes.

Krzyzewski criticized the co-author William G. Bowen, the outgoing president of the Andrew G. Mellon Foundation and the former president of Princeton, who in the past has advocated a reduced role of athletics on college campuses.

"I think that's a report that's skewed," Krzyzewski said. "To say that intercollegiate athletics is not an integral part of any university is so ridiculously wrong, it's so narrow-minded. And I'm glad that our administration and our board of trustees recognizes this."

An assistant to Bowen at the Mellon Foundation said he would not be available to comment Tuesday.

Also Tuesday, Krzyzewski expressed support for J. J. Redick, the star basketball player who was recently charged with drunken driving.

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