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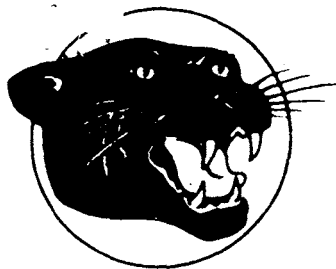
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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL-Certifying Illinois high school athletic coaches is the goal of a newly formed state board that wishes to improve the quality of coaching so prep athletes may experience safe and positive competition.

Bill Buckellew, Eastern Illinois University coordinator of HPER graduate studies, chairs the Illinois Athletic Coaching Certification Board which will administer this voluntary certification program.

"There has been increasing concern over the quality of the interscholastic athletic experience and the number and severity of interscholastic sports injuries," said Buckellew.

"This interest in the concept of certification is due in part to the fact that the courts have placed a greater burden for injury prevention on coaches.

"Certification will improve the chances that coaches will at least meet the minimum qualifications needed to provide the positive experiences for the student-athlete," Buckellew explained.

Certification would be awarded to regular certified teachers who complete at least 12 semester hours of credit in coaching related courses completed at institutions with approved teacher education programs.

A minimum of one course must be completed in each of the following areas:

1. Medical-legal aspects of coaching.
2. Kinesiological and physiological foundations of physical activity and sport.
3. Psycho-social foundations of physical activity and sport.
4. Coaching techniques or principles.

Certification would be voluntary but schools would be encouraged to hire those coaches who had met the requirements, Buckellew stressed.

"A tougher standard and mandatory certification simply are not realistic goals at this time. Many school administrators could not reasonably be expected to support measures which would make it even more difficult for them to staff their school sports programs," he said.

Although certification is new to Illinois it has already been adopted in other states. The Illinois plan has received letters of endorsements from several medical and insurance organizations.

The committee which established the standards was composed of members of the Illinois Association for Professional Preparation in Health, Physical Education and Recreation and the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

"The initial certification period is two years but current qualified coaches with a year of experience will be certified for three years," Buckellew explained.

Anyone interested in receiving an application may do so by contacting Buckellew at EIU, College of HPER, Charleston, IL 61920.