

SHERRI MURRELL

b. October 17, 1967

BASKETBALL COACH

“Just because I’m a gay coach doesn’t mean I’m going to have gay players ... or turn my players gay.”

Sherri Murrell is a pioneering out NCAA women’s Division I basketball coach.

Sherri Murrell is the head coach of the Washington State University Cougars. She became the only openly lesbian coach in Division I women’s college basketball.

Born in Oregon, Murrell started playing basketball early. By the fifth grade, she was a star player. She attended Catholic school, where she was a starter for a team that won the 1985 Oregon state championship.

She attended Pepperdine University, graduating with a degree in public relations.

In college Murrell played point guard, earning All-West Coast Conference honors in 1990. She became a graduate assistant coach before moving to California University. Murrell also played two years of basketball at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette.

Murrell coached at several universities in the Pacific Northwest, compiling an impressive record of winning games and recruiting talented athletes. At George Fox University, she was twice named the Cascade Conference Coach of the Year and led the team into the NAIA Top 25 for the first time in the school’s history. At Portland State, she reached the 50-win plateau by her 75th game, making her the fastest coach—men or women’s—in the school’s basketball history to do so.

In 2002 Murrell joined Washington State University. The next year she became a member of the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association and the Kodak All-American Team Selection Committee.

As the WSU coach, Murrell saw home game attendance rise more than 86 percent. She is credited with recruiting Kate Benz, who became the first player in WSU history to lead the Pacific 10 Conference in rebounding.

Controversy arose for Murrell when a family photo of her and her partner, Rena Shuman, and their twins was included in the Cougar’s 2009 media guide. Although Murrell was already out to people she knew, it was the first time a coach of her stature had publicly come out in the United States.

“There are a lot of coaches out there that want to do this,” Murrell said in an interview. “But they’re just so afraid.”

Murrell spoke at the Nike campus about her experiences and appeared in the 2009 documentary “Training Rules” about Penn State coach Rene Portland’s “no lesbians” team policy. Murrell advocates for more coaches and players to come out at every level of sports. “The more that you have gay coaches being O.K. with who they are,” she said, “then you’re not going to have the negative recruiting.”



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2016 – A Project of Equality Forum

© ASSOCIATED PRESS