

Academic Excellence in Coaching Award Nomination Letter

5/2/2023

Dear Review Board,

It has come to my attention that the Academic Excellence in Coaching Award has once again come up for nomination. It is my responsibility as a captain of the Sul Ross women's basketball team and as a witness to E.J. Lee Smith's exceptional contribution to our Sul Ross Athletics, that I must nominate her for this award.

As someone who has been a part of the lives of the past two recipients of this award, I must say that it is my opinion that E.J. Smith is by far the most deserving of this award. Although a new contributor to the Lobo family, Coach Smith is a blazing star of light for this University and the Alpine Community. She stepped onto campus with a bundle of love for her players, peers, and students at Sul Ross. This love is reflected by the increase in overwhelming support by the Alpine community and students. It is challenging to advertise the rigor and exceptionalism of women's athletics, but people are willing to support our team because she is a beacon that allows everyone to swarm around her and her intention for her team.

If breaking the school record for the greatest number of wins in a single season in her first year on the job, without one hand-selected recruit on the team wasn't a big enough accomplishment for her to win this award. I hope my personal testimony of her accomplishments does the trick because no list of accomplishments could ever describe the impact, she has had on me and the team.

Firstly, because of Coach Smith's accomplishments as a stellar athlete, she has given the University and Sul Ross women's athletics free advertising by being part of a Netflix documentary. Throughout the season she had numerous international calls offering her opportunities to tell her story and the success of her new team. I don't see any other coaches getting that. However, the fame doesn't matter to E.J. She did this documentary to tell her story, advertise women's athletics, and show the world who the Sul Ross Lobos are. These opportunities were also limited to one a season because she took the mental health of her players as a higher priority than her own fame.

Secondly, Coach Smith bridges the torn relationship between Sul Ross and the Alpine Community. Not only did she create a comradery between our basketball team and the community, but she is establishing trust and relationships that could potentially bring in funding for our athletics.

Thirdly, she has improved our basketball team both on and off the court. With additional study hall hours, even for those who have good grades, she has shown our team that she cares about more than just success on the court. From improving our language and maturity skills to embracing ourselves as respectable young ladies, Coach Smith has inspired improvement from every person who was willing to play under her.

This short letter can't express how wonderful and deserving Coach Smith truly is. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to play under her, and I am looking forward to even more possibilities that Coach Smith can offer me and my team coming into next season. I thank you for taking the time to read my recommendation letter, and I hope you see within this letter and within the hearts of those on campus how deserving Coach Smith is for this award.

Sincerely,

Marley Rokas

April 26, 2023
Melody Martinez
Women's Basketball Athlete
Sul Ross State University

I am writing this letter regarding Coach EJ Smith, who is a nominee for the Academic Excellence in Coaching Award. Coach Smith is in her first year as the Sul Ross Women's basketball coach. She has helped the women's basketball team and other athletes strive for personal and academic success.

Coach Smith helped me to become a better person than I was when I first got to Sul Ross. She ensures that when we see somebody, to always greet them politely and simply by saying 'hello.' As a first-year student at Sul Ross, I did not know anybody. By taking Coach Smith's advice and saying hello, I have grown to know many students and facilities. I have also made greeting others a habit when out in public. I always say hello to people. She also likes to use the word family. The team is all family, and she ensures that we are always there for each other. On any occasion that one might be in, she is there supporting along with all the other teammates. She ensures to be involved and get the team involved in any event happening at Sul Ross. After I went through a traumatic injury, she was the first one there to hold my hand. She always made time to call and check on me and see me when I am doing physical therapy. Seeing all the different things she does for anybody rubs off on others. I look up to her as a coach and person. As I want to become a coach after graduating, seeing the special things she does gives me ideas on what most people want in a coach.

As a student-athlete, maintaining schoolwork is not an easy task. Coach Smith has had an influence on my academic performance. At the beginning of the year, she required ten hours of study hall a week. If we were not in class or the gym, then we would be in the study hall doing homework or studying. With this, I was able to maintain a high GPA. In Coach Smith's eyes, the student comes before the athlete part. She wants every athlete to gain a degree because nobody can take that from you. She walks around campus to ensure the women's basketball team is in class early. She talks to every professor and gains feedback on how each student is doing in class. She watches everybody's grades and pushes everybody to keep straight A's. Since she does that, I have gained the privilege of many scholarships and awards because of my academic success. I could not have been that successful if Coach Smith did not push the academic side more than the athletic side.

I believe that Coach Smith is a tremendous pick for this award. She holds many characteristics that others do not have. A coach who does not only care about her sport but cares about everybody at Sul Ross. Coach Smith brings out the best in people. She has brought out the best in me and has made me very successful, and will continue to help me grow as an athlete, student, and person.

Sincerely,
Melody Martinez