

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF NEW JERSEY'S STATE UNIVERSITY

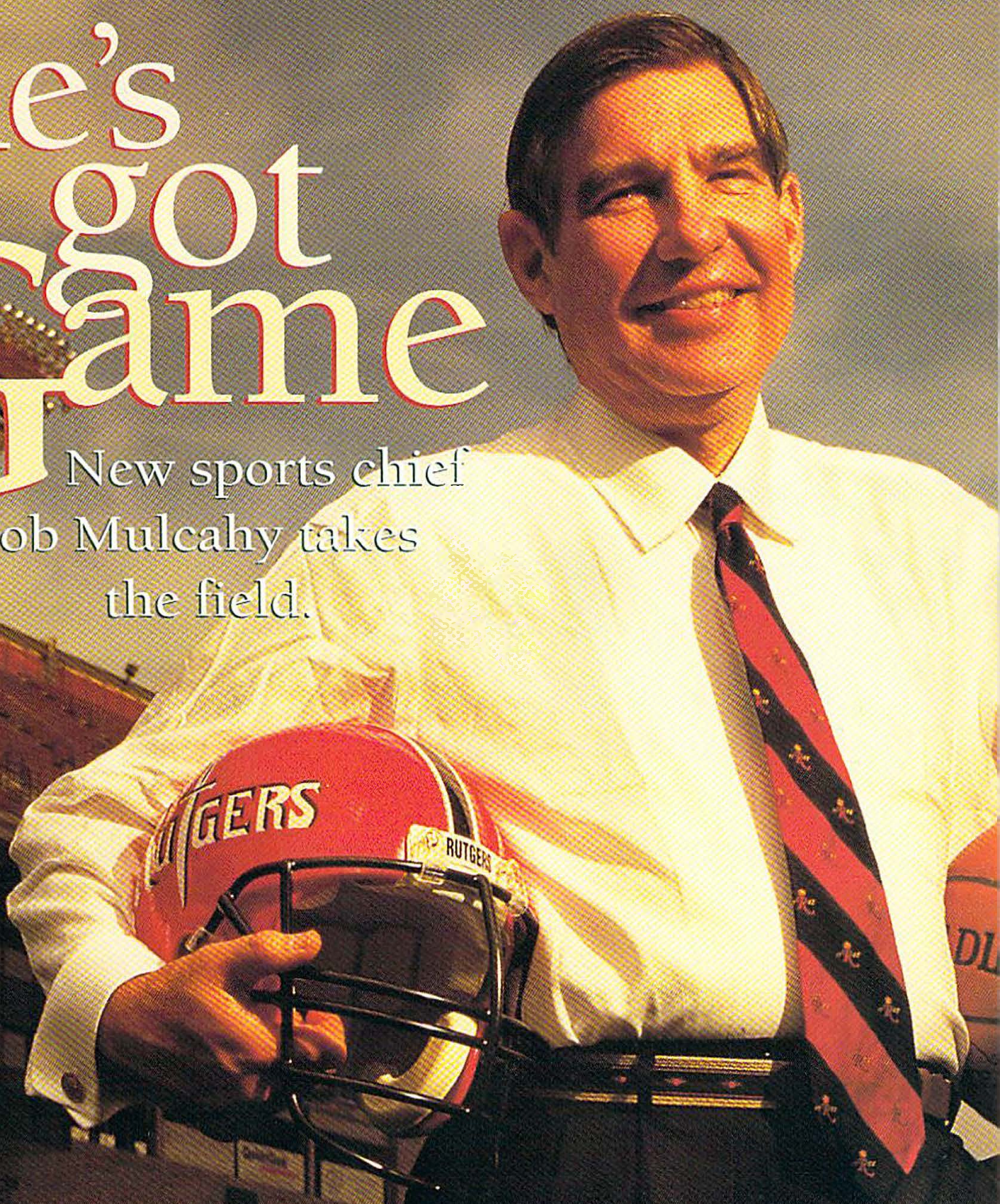
SUMMER 1998

# RUTGERS

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## he's got Game

New sports chief  
Bob Mulcahy takes  
the field.



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*He's touted as one of the top talents in the sports and entertain-*

# BIG MAN


*ment biz—a showman who'd be welcome at almost any front office*

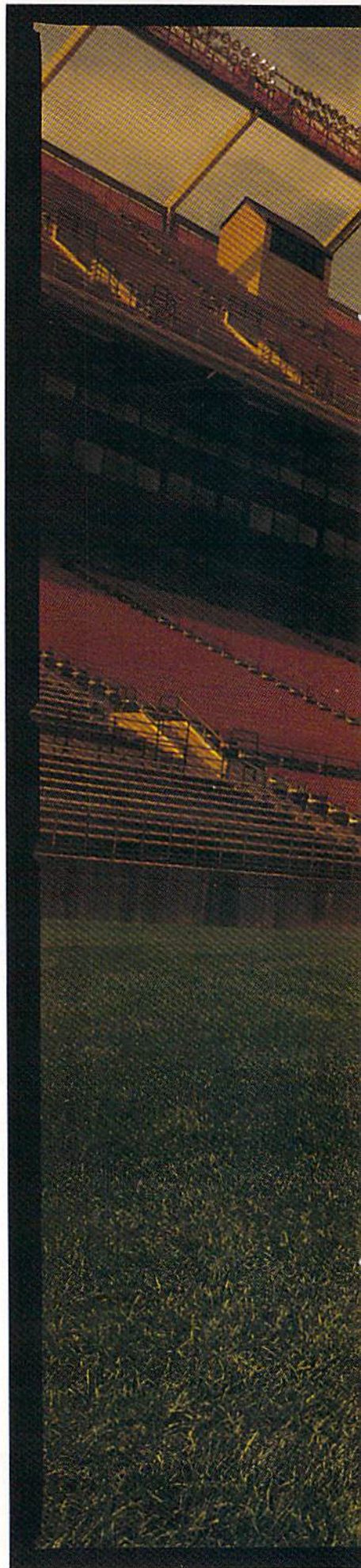
# ON CAMPUS

*in the country. So why is Bob Mulcahy tackling Rutgers athletics?*

 by Bill Glovin 

**A**t the monthly Treasurer's Luncheon for Rutgers administrators, there's more of a turnout than usual, and the buzz in Neilson Dining Hall on the Douglass campus is audible above the chime of several hundred spoons stirring coffee. It's April 7, the day before Robert E. Mulcahy III officially begins his tenure as Rutgers' new director of intercollegiate athletics, and he's about to address a cafeteria full of new—and curious—colleagues.

 One of the most influential sports administrators in America, Mulcahy hardly needs the long introduction that precedes his walk to the podium. After all, he'd been president and CEO of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA), the agency that runs the Meadowlands Sports Complex, for 19 years. Before his appointment a few months before, media speculation about prospective candidates for the job had reached frenzied proportions. Now, the roomful of luncheon guests, seated at round tables, push their dessert plates aside and adjust their chairs for a better view. They're



Joe Whiteside  
throws Mulcahy  
a hardball:  
What does he  
think of  
Rutgers 1000,  
the group lobbying  
to have Rutgers  
withdraw from  
the  
Big East?

ready to see if the much-ballyhooed AD will hold back or come out swinging.

Mulcahy, clearly at ease in front of an audience, breaks the ice by poking fun at the University's parking fees and then graciously thanks retiring athletics director Fred Gruninger for helping him make a smooth transition to his new job. After a short address and some light banter, Mulcahy invites questions from the audience. The luncheon's host, senior vice president and treasurer Joe Whiteside, throws him a hardball: What does he think of Rutgers 1000, the alumni and faculty organization lobbying to have the University withdraw from the Big East Conference and leave NCAA Division I-A competition behind?

Mulcahy doesn't miss a beat: "Debate is the hallmark of university life, and I don't mind discussing my view with others," he says. "I believe the path we are on is the right one for the University. Such all-or-nothing debates often strike me as simplistic. I know from my experience that more than one thing can be true simultaneously; namely, that the State University of New Jersey can be academically outstanding, offer a diverse campus life, and be successful in athletics."

Based on his experience with college teams in the pressure-cooked Meadowlands and his advisory role at his alma mater, Villanova, and other educational institutions, Mulcahy knows that there are at least two sides to every issue on a college campus. He points out that before he accepted the Rutgers job, he was well aware that there was a faction both in and out of the University community that advocated down-scaling the revenue-generating sports. After all, Mulcahy has long been a proponent of the effort to improve Rutgers athletics, especially football.

While at NJSEA, he publicly lobbied and helped the University obtain a share of sports authority bonds that partly financed the \$24 million Rutgers Stadium facelift. He helped negotiate the agreement that allowed the Scarlet Knights football team to play several home games a year at Giants Stadium, and he endorsed Rutgers as host school for the men's basketball Final Four in 1996. His views were solicited when Rutgers sought a football coach to replace Frank Burns.

But as willing as Mulcahy is to hear all sides, the role that football should play on the New Brunswick campus seems abundantly clear to him: "The debate is well intentioned, but it should have occurred before the decision was made to join the Big East and build a multimillion-dollar football stadium. I really believe that a state institution like Rutgers should have an athletics program that can promote pride in New Jersey and enhance the institution's image, as well as provide economic benefits for the school and the state, enhance admissions, and accomplish any number of things."

People who have known him for years aren't surprised that Mulcahy hit the ground running

BOB AND TERRY ALWAYS  
EXPECT A CROWD ON FATHER'S  
DAY; THIS YEAR, THE EXTEND-  
ED CLAN, INCLUDING THEIR  
SEVEN CHILDREN, IN-LAWS,  
AND GRANDCHILDREN,  
GATHERED AT THE MENDHAM  
HOME THAT THE COUPLE HAVE  
SHARED FOR 36 YEARS.

from the day his appointment was announced. One of his first moves was to relocate his office from the College Avenue gym in New Brunswick to Piscataway's Louis Brown Athletic Center, commonly known as the RAC, where he can interact with coaches and student-athletes more conveniently. Within weeks of his appointment, he accepted an invitation from Carl Kirschner, dean of Rutgers College, to meet with the assistant deans of all the schools and colleges.

"At many universities, athletes are on the periphery, segregated in special dorms and in other ways from the rest of the students," says Kirschner, who is also chair of the athletics academic oversight committee. "My sense of Mulcahy's philosophy is that he not only wants student-athletes to be indistinguishable from the rest of the student population, but he has a real commitment to expanding academic opportunities, academic support, and graduation rates for football and basketball players."

Mulcahy has spent long workdays and time on the weekends meeting with focus groups and attending alumni and campus events to bring himself up to speed on the many issues that surround Rutgers' \$19.8 million athletics budget: marketing, NCAA regulations, academic support, Title IX, and the needs of the 30 sports on the New Brunswick campus. "Bob has always been very com-





"It's like he has an angel on his shoulder," says Mulcahy's wife, Terry. "He always seemed to show up for the key 15 minutes of a two-hour piano recital. He somehow makes everything work out just right."



mitted to whatever he's doing," says longtime friend Harold Hodes, a principal at Public Strategies Impact, a lobbying and public relations firm in Trenton. "There's no question that Rutgers will be getting its money's worth; there are few guys who work harder or are more committed."

Mulcahy's family, which includes Terry, his wife of 36 years, seven children aged 17 to 37, and nine grandchildren, aren't surprised that he's devoting the same kind of devotion and single-mindedness to Rutgers that he has to his many business and philanthropic endeavors. "The times that my husband came through



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the door at 5:00, enjoyed a casual dinner, and spent the evening watching television, were few," says Terry. "I got used to it. The main thing was that we made time for ourselves."

Three of his children, Matthew, 34, Megan, 22, and Deidre, 17, agree that Rutgers is the perfect place for him. "He has always felt a special connection to young people and has always encouraged us to bring our friends home from college," says Matthew. "Often, he would stay up with them through the night spinning stories and asking for their opinions on things."

They also agree that despite their father's busy schedule, he was hardly an absentee parent. Megan, a recent graduate of Villanova, says, "He's always made an honest effort to come to our school functions and games. He also encouraged us to call him at any time. I remember bringing my toys to Giants Stadium as a little girl so I could be around him. We've all been privileged to attend events at the Meadowlands, but he taught us not to take it for granted."

Mulcahy gives Terry tremendous credit for arbitrating disputes, organizing rides, and helping with the homework in his absence. And Terry marvels at an uncanny knack her husband has: "It's like he has a little angel on his shoulder. He always seemed to show up just before something important was about to happen at a Little League game or for the key 15 minutes of a two-hour piano recital. He somehow makes everything work out just right."

One of the perks of Mulcahy's post at NJSEA was a chauffeured limo. But seven Turnpike exits down from the Meadowlands, he's behind the wheel of his own sports utility vehicle heading from the RAC to Rutgers' golf course. And he's lost. From the back seat, Joe Quinlan, his new senior associate athletics director, points out the right direction.

The pair are on their way to greet administrators of the state's collegiate athletics programs who have come to Rutgers to play in a tournament. En route, Mulcahy spies empty patches of grass and asks Quinlan about the feasibility of parking vehicles there during football games. He wonders out loud whether there's time to adjust a chart before an afternoon budget meeting with Rutgers president Francis L. Lawrence, but is quickly distracted when they pass the women's softball field. "What are the costs associated with building a fence around that field?" he asks. If Rutgers is to host tournament play, he explains to Quinlan, they'll need to put up a fence.

At the golf course clubhouse, Mulcahy, in his dark blue suit, well-shined shoes, and cuff-linked shirt, looks far more spit-and-polish than his casually dressed colleagues. He shakes hands and moves from table to table, accepting congratulations. When

he sees a familiar face, his eyes light up; he's genuinely glad to converse. But after a few minutes, there's no one left to schmooze; most have moved to the links. Brian Crockett, director of Scarlet R, the athletics fundraising group, is one of the few stragglers. To a busy man like Mulcahy, a lull often affords opportunity. Turning to Quinlan, he smiles wryly and asks, "What are we doing for lunch?"

Moments later, the three men are dining on clubhouse hot dogs and exchanging thoughts on all kinds of issues: seating arrangements for donors at football games, potential corporate sponsors, hotels and hospitality suites for road trips, season-ticket plans, new marketing strategies. When Crockett tells Mulcahy that the men's basketball team stayed at a Marriott in Manhattan during the Big East Tournament, Mulcahy suggests moving to the more upscale Plaza Hotel on Central Park South in 1999. "I want us to do everything first class," he says. "If we don't have the money, I'll go get it."

First class is an important concept to Mulcahy. Almost from scratch, he turned the Meadowlands Sports Complex into a first-class facility that boosted the state's image immeasurably. "Every other night, New Jersey was the butt of Johnny Carson's monologues, and I fought that image battle," he once told the *Asbury Park Press*. Now he's determined to do the same for Rutgers athletics. Football, which has produced just two winning seasons since 1985 and suffered an 0-11 catastrophe last year, is his number one priority. Says Mulcahy, "First class means treating people right and providing our coaching staff with necessities like good facilities and a state-of-the-art video-editing system. In the Big East, we won't win unless we give our coaches the tools they need."

Mulcahy doesn't expect the team's fortunes to turn overnight, but by the time his three-year, \$185,000 contract expires, he expects results. A few wins on the gridiron, he believes, will go a long way toward defusing critics and will make recruiting and marketing a little easier. He also realizes that, when it comes to turning football around, elevating men's basketball to NCAA tournament level, and helping the Olympic sports to flourish, much of the work will be in the hands of others. He needs head and assistant coaches who can motivate their athletes on and off the field and a strong and dedicated marketing staff, sports information office, and administrative support. He also needs Rutgers' 270,000-plus alumni, students on all levels, and New Jersey sports fans to get behind the program. "In many ways, my job is like running a political campaign," he says, negotiating a turn as he heads back to the RAC.

One of his strengths, Mulcahy believes, is his ability to recognize and nurture talent. In the end, the people he surrounds himself with will make the difference on the field, in the classroom, and on the balance sheet. "No one can do it alone," he says. "I've always believed in building an organization

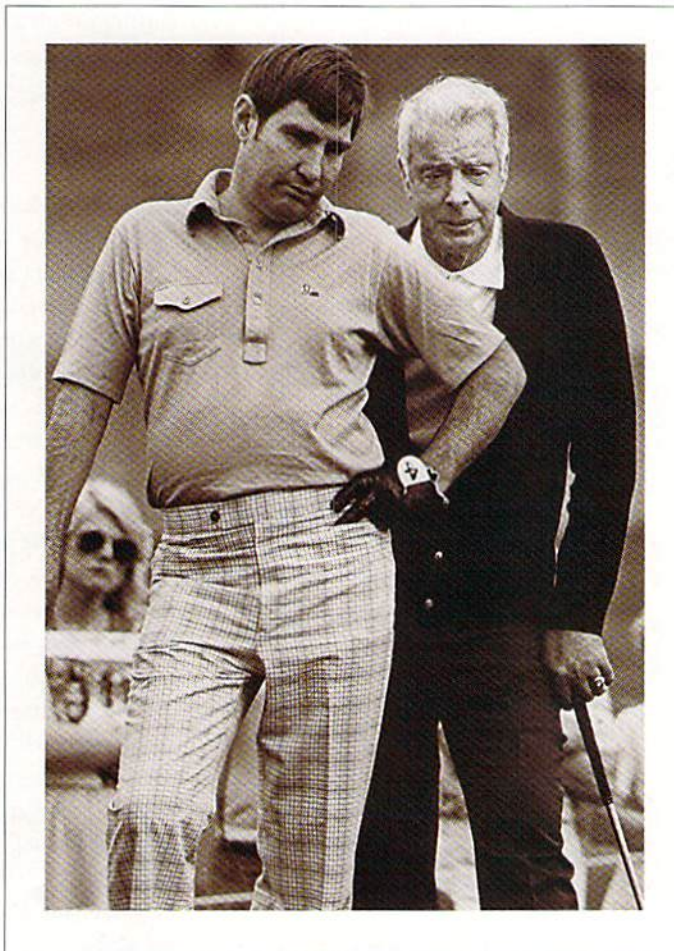
from within; it's very good for morale. But it's just as important to know your shortcomings and when and where you need help. As far as the Rutgers coaches are concerned, my style will be to evaluate their performance on a year-to-year basis."

A key in the equation is the 39-year-old Quinlan, who spent four years with Mulcahy at NJSEA, worked as an assistant athletics director at Seton Hall and St. Bonaventure, and was the NCAA's executive director for the men's basketball Final 4 in the Meadowlands. Quinlan, who sometimes picks up Mulcahy's phone when he's out of town, has seen other executives soar under his boss's tutelage: Michael Rowe, president of the New Jersey Nets; Loris Smith, senior vice president of Ogden Entertainment; and Robert J. Castronovo (NCAS70), NJSEA's general manager and executive vice president of the arena and stadium, to name a few.

Castronovo, who started in 1976 as a part-time supervisor of ushers and ticket takers at the Meadowlands, will be forever grateful to Mulcahy for giving him the opportunity to prove himself and move up the ladder. "When Bob calls, people pick up the phone," says Castronovo. "Considering his track record with the NCAA, his networking, contacts, and reputation, Rutgers is extremely lucky to have him."

Football coach Terry Shea and basketball coach Kevin Bannon have already felt their new boss's impact. Within weeks of taking the job, Mulcahy accompanied Shea to high school clinics in northern and southern Jersey and committed funds to the summer school program for student-athletes. The state's high school football championships have been held for

several years at Giants Stadium and Shea believes that Mulcahy's relationships with the high school coaches will help recruiting. "Prospects take their cues from coaches and family members, and that's where Bob's personality and reputation have an impact," says Shea. Mulcahy says he will do all he can to move the high school championships to Rutgers Stadium, which will bring some of the best athletes in the state to campus.



**D**ON'T EXPECT IT, BUT BOB MULCAHY COULD WRITE A KISS-AND-TELL BOOK ABOUT HIS EXTENSIVE DEALINGS WITH THE RICH AND FAMOUS DURING HIS DAYS AS PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE MEADOWLANDS SPORTS COMPLEX. IN THE 1970S, HE MADE SURE HE WAS IN HIGH STYLE FOR A GOLF OUTING WITH YANKEE CLIPPER JOE DiMAGGIO.

Lanier stops to peek over the top of a cubicle wall. Seeing the new AD seated at his desk, Lanier pops his head in and asks, "Got a minute?" Half an hour later, he leaves knowing that he has just received the counsel of a man who has confabulated with four New Jersey governors, dozens of corporate leaders, and millionaire owners of professional sports franchises, including the Yankees' George Steinbrenner.

"I never met Bob before he came to Rutgers," Lanier says, "but he's been open and accessible, and

Bannon, who knew Mulcahy long before either landed at Rutgers, says the athletics director's presence adds a large measure of credibility to the University and the basketball program. "I meet a lot of fans, and generally they like to talk about coaches and teams, not athletics administrators," he says. "But everywhere I go, people are asking me about Bob. Not only is he a big-time administrator who understands athletics, he's a terrific people person. His résumé merely scratches the surface of what he brings to the table."

**O**n his way through the maze of modular offices tucked inconspicuously above the court at the RAC, assistant men's basketball coach Bob

"I meet a lot of fans, and generally they like to talk about coaches and teams, not athletics administrators," says Coach Bannon. "But everywhere I go, people are asking me about Bob."





Mulcahy realizes that Rutgers has its own set of challenges. "This won't be easy," he says. "Anything that's really worthwhile never is, and I don't think I'd be here if I thought it was."

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have someone of his stature to solicit advice from."

Mulcahy, 62, has a lifetime of considerable experience to offer. He was born in Short Hills; his father developed residential construction, and his mother was a nurse. Bob Mulcahy II was also active in the community, serving two terms on the Millburn Board of Education. As a boy, Bob, the oldest of three brothers, was such an avid sports fan that he ran wires through trees so he could receive broadcasts of faraway college games and his favorite baseball team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. The pageantry of the Army-Navy football games that he watched on a small black-and-white television made such an impression on the youngster that, when he grew up, he brought the game to Giants Stadium three times.

A good student at Millburn High School and the center on the football team, he was an athlete who was known more for hustle and tenacity than skill. He recalls trying to keep up with the star running back of Clifford Scott High School in East Orange, a swift-footed guy named Fred Hill. (Mulcahy has finally caught up with Hill: He's Rutgers' longtime baseball coach.)

Mulcahy was introduced to his future wife, Terry McGrath, by her twin brother the summer before his sophomore year at Villanova in Philadelphia. Since Terry was a student at the College of New Rochelle in Westchester County, New York, the pair would meet for dates in New York City. "Bob would first go to Madison Square Garden to see a game, and I'd go to the opera. We'd meet afterward under the clock at the Biltmore Hotel," Terry recalls.

At Villanova, Mulcahy was president of his class, editor of the student newspaper, and served in the ROTC. After graduating with a history degree in 1958, he spent two years in the Navy before entering the family business. But he knew that construction wasn't his calling. "I had always been somewhat idealistic and motivated by public service," says Mulcahy. "I always felt I wanted to make a difference. If I didn't believe I could make a difference at Rutgers, I wouldn't be here."

In 1963, running as a Democrat in Republican-controlled Mendham, the 27-year-old Mulcahy upset the incumbent in a race for a town council seat. In the next decade he would become town council president, planning board member, and mayor. He also helped found the First Morris Bank in Morristown. When Morris County assemblywoman Ann Klein invited him to join her staff in Trenton in 1974 as deputy commissioner in the Department of Institutions and Agencies, he jumped at the opportunity.

He soon gained a reputation for commitment and hard work and, in 1976, when the state legisla-

*(continued on page 44)*

# GAME PLAN

*Rutgers hopes to score big with its athletics program. President Francis L. Lawrence reviews the team strategy.*

**Q**: What factors were considered in joining the Big East Conference, and who made the decision?

**A**: The Big East Conference has long been recognized as one of the premier sports conferences in the country, but it didn't include football until 1991. At that time, Rutgers, along with seven other universities, teamed to create the Big East football conference. There are significant advantages to membership in a strong conference: increased exposure and revenue through television, sharing of conference revenues, the potential for playing in bowl games, and the creation of rivalries between high-profile football programs.

Nineteen other Rutgers sports were invited to join the conference in March 1994. While the Atlantic 10 is a fine conference, we felt it would be more convenient to have all our sports under one umbrella. We also hoped to raise the profile of men's and women's basketball by increasing our television exposure and creating natural geographic rivalries with Seton Hall, St. John's, and peer universities.

In both phases, the decision to apply for membership was based on input from Fred Gruninger, former director of intercollegiate athletics; Joe Whiteside, senior vice president and treasurer; and members of the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees. I signed off on the final decision.

**Q**: Has the move been a success?

**A**: The formation of the Big East football conference was a factor in the state's decision to help us expand and renovate our stadium. Conference-revenue sharing, which is \$1.7 million for football and \$650,000 for men's and women's basketball, plus gate receipts and increased support generated by the stadium renovation and interest in the conference, have helped fund our \$19.8 million athletics budget.

We believe the move has benefitted fans, who now see us compete against some of the highest-ranked teams in the country in all sports. Football

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## woman's ways

Continued from page 33

states emphatically that it involves "the whole shape, cadence, and sound of the poem" and that, for her, a poem "isn't 'there' until musically it feels right."

Writing in open forms, Ostriker finds the "poetry of liberation. Formally," she explains, "it means that you are writing improvisationally—you write a line, you write a passage, and the poem doesn't know yet what's coming next. The reader, too, should feel that the future is open. In one's life there is the possibility of improvisation, of inventing a future that comes out of the past in ways that are not entirely predictable. I wish to write a poetry that models that openness."

She absolutely believes that, opposed to Auden's dictum, poetry does make things happen. Her poetry has the rare power in this society to persuade, challenge, and give courage to her readers. The most powerful set of poems in her most recent volume, *The Crack In Everything*, is "The Mastectomy Poems," which document her encounter with breast cancer. "I get a lot of correspondence regarding these poems," she says with the modest pride that poets have when they receive direct response to their work. "People write that these poems were important to them, their mothers, their sisters, and their friends. Again, here is a subject that was once taboo, that you had to experience in shameful silence. When you make art out of the unspeakable, then you liberate human beings."

Alicia Ostriker is the rare individual who has done what she wanted in life and done it well. Three accomplished children, an enduring marriage, scholarship that challenges minds, and teaching that changes lives. And poetry? Alicia Ostriker wants her poems to do nothing less than find a home on Parnassus, the mountain of the Muses. "I want my poems to be able to be at a picnic with the poems of Keats, Donne, and Auden," she says with a bit of a smile. "Ever since I began writing poetry, I've had a fantasy that if you write well enough, in the afterlife, the great poets will let you join their party." □

*Joel Lewis, a writer, poet, and adjunct professor at Rutgers, lives in Hoboken.*

## big man

Continued from page 22

ture decided to divide the massive agency into smaller, more manageable departments, former governor Brendan Byrne named Mulcahy the first commissioner of the Department of Corrections. The position quickly put him in the spotlight when he was called on to settle two riots at Trenton State Prison and a hostage situation in the sex offender's unit at Rahway State Prison. In the latter case, Mulcahy recalls that "before I went in there to negotiate with the hostage taker, a New Jersey State Trooper captain took me aside and told me that if they got a clear shot at the guy, they might take it."

Two years later Byrne, who had just won a second term, named Mulcahy his chief of staff. Mulcahy had a hand in shaping groundbreaking legislation that continues to have an impact on New Jersey: the Atlantic City gambling referendum, the Pinelands Preservation Act, and the administrative law judge system.

One afternoon Mulcahy, ready to have a quick sandwich with the governor, walked in on a meeting between Byrne and Bill Hyland, chair of the three-year-old NJSEA. Hyland was complaining that the third CEO in three years was leaving to take a job in the private sector. That night, Byrne took Mulcahy to an out-of-the-way restaurant in Bucks County and offered him the post. "I always considered and treated the Meadowlands as a professional job, not a political one," he says. "That's why I lasted under two Republicans and two Democrats."

Many of New Jersey's proudest moments in the past 20 years have occurred under Mulcahy's watch: the opening of the Continental Airlines Arena in 1981, Giants championship football games in 1986 and 1990, the Hambletonian trotting race, college basketball's Final Four in 1996, six World Cup soccer games in 1994, the New Jersey Devils Stanley Cup championship in 1995. There were also thousands of nights at the track, a mass said by Pope John Paul II in 1995, automobile racing, roller derby, professional wrestling, and, from the Three Tenors to Guns 'n' Roses, hundreds of memorable concerts. The



memorabilia and mementoes displayed in his office and stored in boxes at home could fill a museum.

Behind the scenes, Mulcahy negotiated labor and lease deals; answered critics who lobbied to have Giants Stadium's turf replaced by natural grass; built new Giants Stadium luxury boxes; strategized to offset declining racetrack revenues; refinanced \$400 million in sports authority debt structure; and expanded NJSEA's role to include such facilities as Monmouth Park Race Track, the Atlantic City Convention Center, and the New Jersey State Aquarium in Camden.

Mulcahy has also been in the middle of more crises than he cares to remember: bomb threats, concert vandalism, gate crashers, a cancer scare involving four Giants players. Then there were incidents like the televised snowball-throwing revolt at a Giants game, the mysterious death of a young man during a Grateful Dead concert, and the clamor to excavate Giants Stadium in search of the rumored remains of Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa. "Many of Bob's days were endless; it's hard to imagine that there could be more pressure at Rutgers," says Hodes.

But Mulcahy realizes that the Rutgers job comes with its own set of challenges. "This won't be easy," he says. "Anything that's really worthwhile never is, and I don't think I'd be here if I thought it was." Every high-profile job comes with its own set of critics; the Rutgers AD gig comes with some particularly vociferous ones. But with a man of Mulcahy's reputation, even Rutgers 1000 prefers to take a wait-and-see approach before deciding whether the fox is guarding the chickens.

Richard Seclow (RC'51), a semi-retired advertising executive and alumni leader of Rutgers 1000, advocates many of Mulcahy's ideals: athletes who are committed students and teams that will make the University and New Jersey proud. "I love sports. In fact, I read the sports page first every morning," he says. "But college sports has gotten out of hand in this country, and Rutgers has been swept up in it. Why not take coaches' salaries and hire more professors or endow more scholarships for minority students? Big-time athletics

leads to cutting corners and lowering academic standards. I think Bob is eventually going to find this out and make changes, or he'll find that the job isn't for him."

Despite the naysayers, his welcome to Rutgers has been overwhelming, "not just from people at games, but wherever I go—church, shopping," he says. "People want us to be successful." He explains that the Rutgers job—contrary to all the speculation over motives—was his choice. "I could have stayed at the Meadows; I think the governor has made that clear. But it was time for a change, and this, the right thing, came along. I also know that the honeymoon will end as soon as we lose a few football games."

While one of his major goals at Rutgers is to win the Commissioner's Trophy that is awarded to the Big East Conference school with the best overall record, Mulcahy knows his impact will be measured largely by the revenue brought in by football and basketball. This seemed obvious during the question and answer session at the Treasurer's Luncheon. One question came from a former Penn State lineman: "When we played Rutgers, there was not a shred of doubt in our minds that we would handle them easily," he boasted. "Can you really expect us to believe that Rutgers will be able to successfully recruit against the likes of Joe Paterno?"

Mulcahy couldn't have asked for a better opening: "I was in the crowd at College Park the only time Rutgers beat Penn State," he begins. "In fact, one of the first people I called when I took the Rutgers job was my old friend, Joe Paterno. He wasn't in, but I talked to his secretary. I asked her to tell him that I was erecting a high fence around the state of New Jersey. Four days later I get a note from him that reads, 'Dear Bob: Congratulations. I'm delighted. I appreciate the phone call, but about the fence: Remember, the Berlin Wall came down in pieces.'"

As the administrators shuffle back to their cars, they know that the friendly rivalry between Rutgers' new athletics director and the legendary football coach is about to turn serious.

*Bill Glovin is the senior editor of Rutgers Magazine.*

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