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RON KANTOWSKI:

# Tina Kunzer-Murphy won't be next UNLV athletic director

**Kunzer-Murphy might make a great athletic director for UNLV, but now is not the time**



STEVE MARCUS / LAS VEGAS SUN FILE

Tina Kunzer-Murphy has decided not to pursue the athletic director job at UNLV.

By **Ron Kantowski** ([contact](#))

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*“Learn to let your intuition — gut instinct — tell you when the food, the relationship, the job isn’t good for you and conversely, when what you’re doing is just right.” — Oprah Winfrey*

Tina Kunzer-Murphy is out of the running to become UNLV’s next athletic director before the real running even begins. Her gut instinct was the food and the relationship weren’t good for her. Or that other people believed that. And that what she is doing — directing the Las Vegas Bowl with aplomb and expertise and a posterior in every seat — is just right.

But she still thinks the UNLV athletic director’s job is the one for her.

It’s the one she has always dreamed about, the one for which she will continue to yearn and pine, the one

## Sun Archives

- [Groundwork set in search for UNLV athletic director \(11-4-2009\)](#)
- [Three locals who might be in the running for UNLV AD job \(9-8-2009\)](#)
- [Las Vegas Bowl: Our bowl game’s superheroine \(4-16-2009\)](#)

she will visualize along with sugarplum fairies and the 14,000 fans Air Force coach Troy Calhoun says he could produce if the Falcons are invited to this year's Las Vegas Bowl.

It's just another job she could perform with aplomb and expertise, she says, if given the chance.

But she isn't sticking around to see if she will be given the chance. Call it intuition, call it a gut feeling, call it a heartfelt notion. Call it, given the sorry state of the UNLV football program and a repressed economy that will make fundraising difficult for the new guy — and it will be a new guy — a smart move in my estimation.

She has seen the writing on the wall and it spells REDRUM.

Actually, it doesn't spell "murder" backward. That's what Danny wrote on mom Wendy's door in "The Shining" at the very moment Jack Nicholson came smashing through it with a fire ax. But Kunzer-Murphy saw something that told her to withdraw her name from consideration, even if it wasn't a mirror image scrawled in horrid red lipstick or another five-touchdown defeat to Chris Ault, which is sort of like a fire ax.

"The writing came up in different ways," she said.

It came up when she learned UNLV President Neal Smatresk wanted to speed the process along. At first, he indicated UNLV would take its time hiring a new athletic director. Not a bad idea. But that was before UNLV got blown out in football by Nevada-Reno, BYU and Utah and couldn't defend the option against Air Force. Darn that Mike Sanford. [Now UNLV needs a football coach](#), and Smatresk wants that to be purview of the new athletic director. Now he can't wait until spring to name a new athletic director because by spring, all the good football coaches — and even the one with which UNLV winds up — will be spoken for.

It came up when she read how badly Jerry Koloskie, the interim athletic director, wants the job, too. She and Koloskie are closer than Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey in "Beaches." They've been friends for like 25 years, and Kunzer-Murphy said she didn't feel comfortable pursuing the job her pal wants so dearly when she already has a pretty good one.

It came up when she started talking to people in high places about the job. Nobody said she wasn't qualified. Nobody said she wouldn't do a good job. Nobody seemed put off by a strong, aggressive woman seeking a position usually reserved for strong, aggressive men who like to play golf. But that's the vibe she kept getting. Darn that intuition.

It came up when college football teams started becoming bowl eligible and her staff, which is not put off by a strong, aggressive woman, turned to her for leadership and guidance, and Kunzer-Murphy realized how much she enjoys wearing the blazer with the little bowl game patch on the pocket, or whatever stereotype one normally associates with one in her position.

She saw all that writing on the wall. So she crossed the T's and dotted the I's. Like New Mexico versus Steven Jackson and Oregon State in Las Vegas Bowl XII, she saw she couldn't win. Maybe next time, if there is one. Maybe even this time, should her intuition tell her so. She doesn't expect it to tell her so. Unlike football coaches who make crazy predictions at their introductory press conferences, Kunzer-Murphy's intuition is based in reality.

Would Tina Kunzer-Murphy have been a good choice for UNLV's next athletic director? One never knows for sure about these things, which explains how people like Jim Weaver, Charlie Cavagnaro and Mike Hamrick were able to buffalo their respective search committees. But she seems to have the chops for it. And there are darn few women who can say that.

So count me among those saddened that she is out the running before it even began.

I hate it when people I know and respect have to watch a dream die, even when Oprah and their gut and their heart tell them it's the right the thing to do.