

He's still going strong

Huskies' Harshman a tireless head coach at age of 65

by Frank L. Christlieb

Sports Editor
ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Marv Harshman has coached enough basketball games to know there's never time to dwell on losses or to bask in the glory of victory.

Harshman, the 65-year-old basketball man on the University of Washington campus, has tasted the bitter, the sweet and the sour of college basketball for 37 years. But through his years at Pacific Lutheran, Washington State and Washington, Harshman has enjoyed enough baskets of success to rank second in number of victories among college coaches.

Through 999 games, 582 victories and 417 defeats, the legendary Harshman doesn't see any reason to take himself out of the game just yet.

"I haven't set a time limit on when I'm going to retire," Harshman said in an interview during the Great Alaska Shootout, in which his Huskies placed third after beating the Clemson Tigers Sunday in Anchorage, Alaska. "My contract lasts through next season."

"I had been thinking about staying on until '84, because the NCAA finals will be at Washington that year. But now I've been thinking that I might want to stay longer. My boss has told me that Marv Harshman's his man until he decides to quit, so I might just stay at Washington."

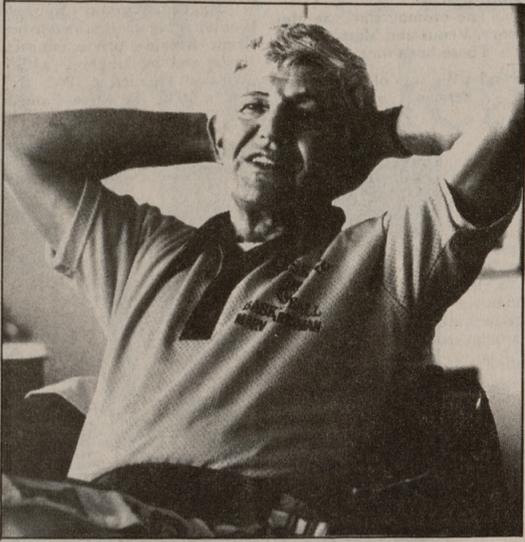
"They can keep you or fire you," he said, "but you can't do anything about either one — they make the decision."

In Wednesday's contest against the Idaho Vandals, Harshman will coach game No. 1000 of his career. That'll put him in a five-man lineup that includes Ray Meyer, No. 1 on college basketball victory list, Dolph Rupp, Phog Allen, Ed Little and Henry "Hank" Iba.

Harshman, who graduated from Pacific Lutheran in 1942, became the PLU head basketball coach in 1946 after a four-year stint in the Army. By compiling a 241-121 record at the school, Harshman began a career that has seen him take his teams to every form of post-season play, including the NAIA playoffs, NCAA playoffs and the National Invitation Tournament.

The Huskies, who finished with a 19-10 record last season, lost to the Texas Aggies 69-65 in the second round of the 1982 NIT.

Since he's been around the game of basketball longer than the average coach, Harshman has had more than enough time



staff photo by David Fisher

Washington head basketball coach Marv Harshman, whose 582 victories rank second among active college coaches, says he hopes to remain with the Huskies for several more years. The 65-year-old Harshman has been in college basketball for 38 years, including 11 seasons with the Huskies. His record is now 582-417.

to formulate some opinions about the way it's progressed.

"Each year is a different challenge," Harshman said. "You remember so few of the highlights and you really don't have time to sit down and think about the great games or the poor ones."

"Some of your players may start reminiscing ... but coaches don't have so much time to sit and enjoy a victory or to be sad in defeat. Coaching basketball keeps you at a high for a longer period of time, whereas the magnification of a loss in football is much greater because there's a whole week to sit and think about it."

"In basketball," he said, "there's little time for preparation, so you don't have time to pat a guy on the back or massage his head about a loss."

Harshman said many college athletes are affected by their own performances — especially if they're not up to par. In addition, he said, players sometimes have a misconception about their roles.

"Most players think the coach decides who plays, but literally, players make the decision in how they play during the week," Harshman said. "I try to point

out to my players that they decide their position on the team."

Harshman, who has a 186-115 record during his 12th year at Washington, said 38 years in the profession hasn't doused his love for the sport of basketball.

"I'm as enthused now as I was 38 years ago," he said with a smile. "In order to stay in coaching, you have to make a lot of adjustments."

"Nowadays, I think it's a common for players to question not the ability of the coach, but the coach's ... restraints on his players."

Harshman said one of his main concerns in coaching is to teach his players to fit together

as a unit. "To try to program each guy into your team philosophy and to program him into his role in that philosophy are the two most important facets of the game," he said. "There aren't many plays anymore, but there are patterns that develop and two or three options that are available to a player in the team's operation. The players have to come up with the right operation ... and may have to be self-sacrificial enough to give up options that may be more appealing to them."

"Basketball is by far the best player" game, because the players make the decision based on what the coaches have taught them," Harshman said. "The coaches are out there ... not yelling at the players to chastise them, but to help them make the right choices."

Harshman has found one rule of thumb to be constant in basketball. "Offensively, basketball is played under one rule — the defense dictates what you do," he said. "When (the defense) makes a reaction, (the offense) should key on the opportunity and take advantage of it. It's kind of like the domino effect — with one reaction by the defense, something's bound to happen."

During Texas A&M's 82-79 double overtime loss to Clemson Friday night at the Shootout, the Aggies were penalized for a technical foul when they called an extra timeout with 3 seconds left. Harshman said the mistake, which cost the Aggies a chance at a game-winning shot, could have been avoided.

"I was surprised, because ... the officials usually tell each bench how many timeouts they have left," Harshman said. "So I think the administration of the game wasn't what it should have been. The officials don't have to tell the benches that, but they do in our league."

Harshman, emphasizing the importance of recruiting, said many college coaches tend to

practice "negative recruiting," which may include putting false ideas into players' heads about their college or professional basketball future.

"There's a great deal of negative recruiting," Harshman said. "It's almost a 'Madison Avenue' type of thing where the older, more established coaches cut each other down and tell recruits things that aren't true about other schools."

"Someone plants a seed because a player may have a preconceived idea about a certain school. Negative recruiting has become much more common in the last 10 years. By innuendo, coaches are always trying to raise some question about competing schools. And that really has no place in college basketball."

"We're all used car salesmen in a sense," he said, "but we have to retain some sense of objectivity. I always try to say (to a recruit), 'I need you as a post or a forward, but you may get an opportunity to play at another position.' The player may say 'But Coach Jones said I needed to be a post to be able to play in the pros.'"

"It's just a gimmick. You really shouldn't try to con a player, because you end up hurting him."

During his career, Harshman said, there have been many good and bad experiences. While he was at Washington State, the Cougars encountered some bad luck when college basketball was still under the NCAA rule that allowed only conference champions to participate in post-season play.

During each of the years Lew

Alcindor played at UCLA, the Cougars finished second in the league, but were unable to compete past the regular season. One of those years, the USC Trojans finished 27-2, losing twice to the Bruins, but they were kept out of post-season play as well.

"Back then, it was 'UCLA and

the Seven Dwarfs' in the Pac-10," Harshman said. "In my first year at Washington, we were 20-6 and finished second in the Pac-10, but we couldn't compete in the playoffs. I think we were good enough to get to the Final Four that year, but we couldn't get there because of that rule — we couldn't even go to the NIT."

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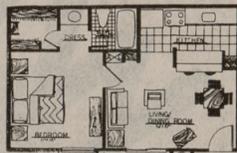
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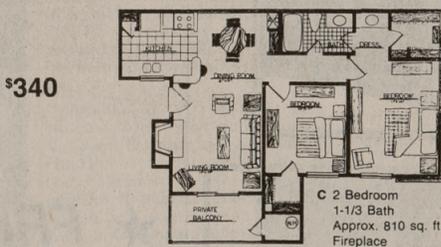
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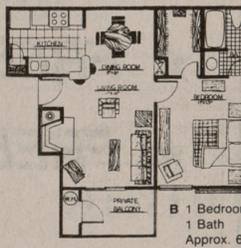
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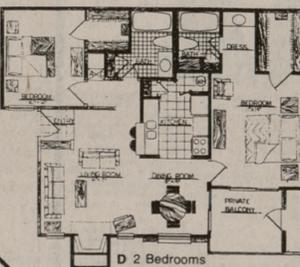
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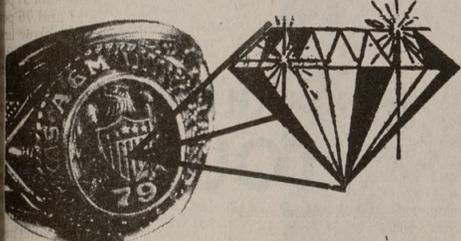
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