

## Boston-ex inherits Sampson

# Fitch takes Rockets' helm

**United Press International**  
HOUSTON — In acquiring the head coaching job with the Houston Rockets, Bill Fitch also inherits the task of turning around a team that won only 14 games last season.

That job, however, might not prove too difficult for the former Boston Celtics' head coach, who will now coach 7-foot-4 Virginia All-America center Ralph Sampson next year.

Fitch, 51, who resigned from the Celtics last week after four seasons, Wednesday was named the Rockets' seventh head coach. He also coached nine years with the Cleveland Cavaliers before going to Boston.

The coach said Rockets' own-

er Charlie Thomas had nothing to do with his leaving Boston, but everything to do with his not pursuing jobs with the Chicago Bulls and San Diego Clippers.

"I left Boston because we had a great owner (Harry Mangurian) and he was leaving," said Fitch. "There is nothing more important to the stability of a franchise than good ownership. That's what Houston has in Charlie Thomas. This was a good trade for me."

Fitch signed with Thomas before beginning talks with the Clippers or Bulls. He said he did not renege on any appointments.

Fitch discussed the talents of Sampson, a certainty to be

Houston's first-round draft and the No. 1 pick overall in the NBA draft.

"I'm looking forward to coaching someone of Ralph Sampson's ability, but he's got an awful lot to live up to," Fitch said. "If you come into the NBA and live on your laurels, you can spend some awful long nights. He's going to need some help and I think he's the type of player who realizes that."

In Fitch, the Rockets hired a veteran with a proved NBA track record.

"He's really what we've been looking for," Thomas said.

No details of Fitch's contract were disclosed, but it was estimated the Rockets offered him \$200,000 the first year of a four-

year contract plus incentives worth more than \$50,000.

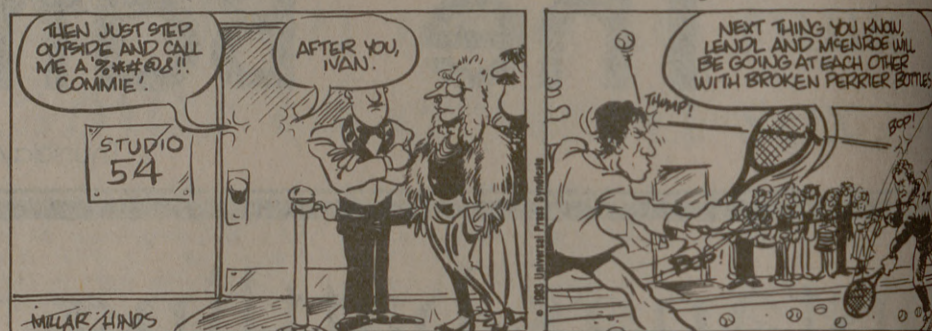
Fitch said he expects to have to "whip" the Rockets into shape.

"It's easy to be optimistic about the future here," he said. "But the players are going to have to work hard and pay the price. What part I have in that I'm not sure—other than bringing the whip and getting after it."

He said after leaving the Celtics he was "hiding" in Cleveland and was found by Rockets' General Manager Ray Patterson because Patterson had "an old phone book." Fitch decided to visit the Rockets before any other interested club because he wanted to meet Thomas.

## TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill



# Jack Dempsey brought respect to pro boxing

by Milton Richman  
UPI Sports Editor

No profession ever was in need of a good image more than boxing, and nobody ever gave it a better one than Jack Dempsey.

He took it out of the realm of a racket and brought it back to being a sport. He couldn't purify boxing completely, all by himself. But he certainly was responsible for creating a much cleaner, more wholesome aura for it during the seven years he was the world heavyweight champion from 1919 until 1926.

Lionized, idolized and publicized like no other sports figure before him, Dempsey grew in fame, reputation and personal stature after retiring in 1927.

He already was champion the year I was born and although I never actually saw him fight, I had met and spoken with him a number of times, seen movies of several of his bouts and talked to men he had fought, like Gene Tunney and Jack Sharkey, so I felt I knew something about him and what he was like.

It turned out I was wrong, I didn't really get to know him at all until one day a few years ago when I had the opportunity to visit him and his devoted wife, Deana, in their Manhattan

apartment. I'm grateful I had that chance before he died Tuesday, because he talked so openly and candidly—about so many things in his life—and because there will never be another opportunity to speak with him again.

One of the things Jack Dempsey told me was that sometimes when he reflected on his life, he felt he hadn't made anything of himself. It was a curious statement and he expanded on it.

"My father was a school teacher," he said. "He always said, 'get an education, get an education.' I didn't go to school. With my father's help, I did get an eighth-grade diploma although I never attended school regularly. How I wish now I did. I would've liked to have made something of myself."

Like what?

"A lawyer, a doctor," Dempsey said.

He wasn't joking.

The two fights that stuck out most in his life, he said, were his two losses to Tunney, particularly his controversial "long-count" defeat in the second one, but the biggest single kick he ever had was beating outsized Jess Willard, six inches taller and 60

pounds heavier than he. He did, Ohio, to become champion on July 4, 1919.

Years back, more so recent ones, people often miserated with Dempsey him how badly they felt him being the victim of a count in his second fight Tunney. He thanked for their expressions but he eventually came to see that long-count loss turn to be one of the best things ever happened to him.

"People remembered cause of it," he said. "A man like Tunney was grace. He was a great. Besides, it was my own should've gone to a corner."

These last few years, tremendously difficult ones for Dempsey. Severe arthritis had to get around with and there were other problems. But he sold a good humor and never gave up. For that, his wife to thank, which he did.

"Dear God has been me," he said. "First, here a wonderful mother and such a good wife. She the work and I get the I had one last question. How did it feel to be Dempsey? He smiled and said:

"You can't believe how wonderful it feels. People to you and people are you. Everybody wants you."

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## SMU grid coach resigns

**United Press International**  
DALLAS — Southern Methodist University assistant football coach Mike Barr announced his resignation Wednesday.

Barr, who coached at SMU for seven years — most recently as defensive end coach, said he was leaving to become a real estate agent in Dallas.

Barr joined the SMU coaching staff in 1976 under former head coach Ron Meyer. He played defensive end for Purdue from 1969-73 and was an assistant coach there from 1973-75.

Barr served as defensive coordinator for the Lafayette Generals, a semi-pro football team, before joining the SMU staff.

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