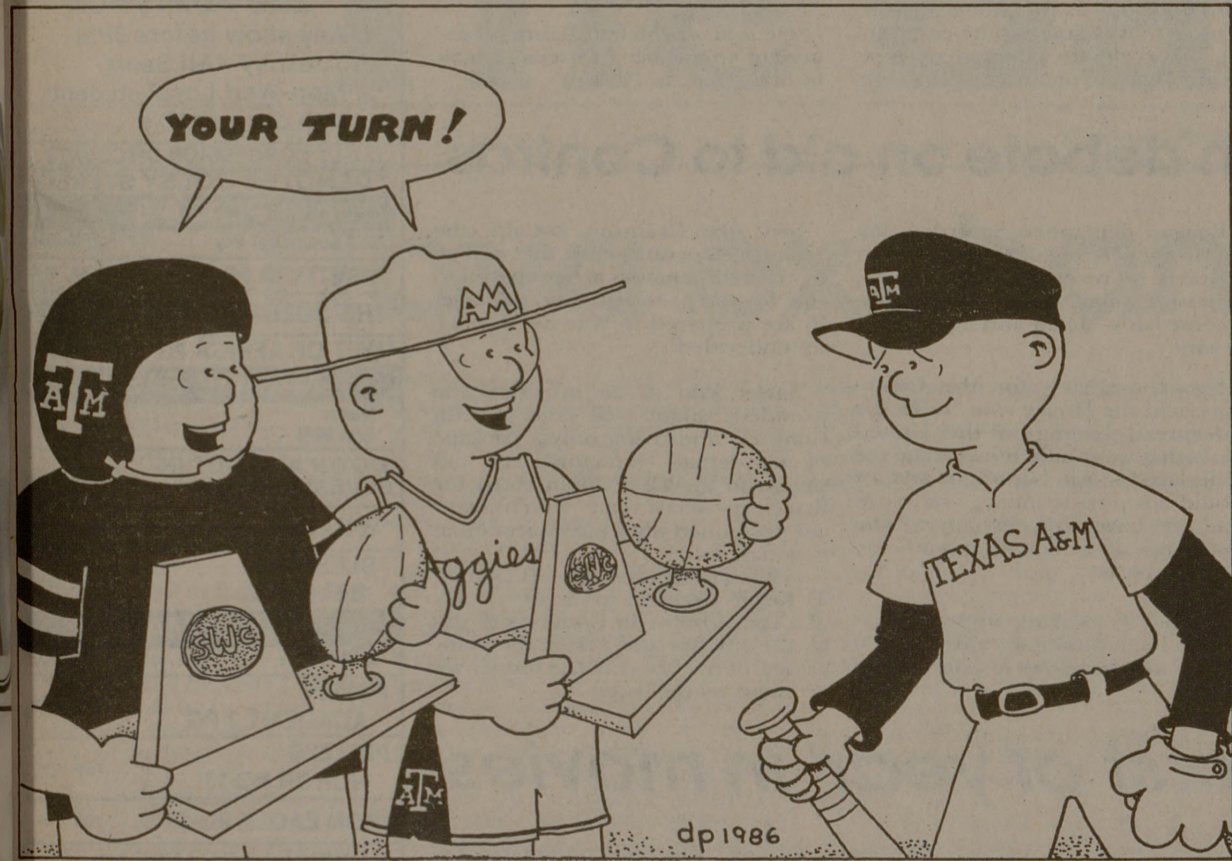


TANK McNAMARA®



Ohio State wants title for coach

Associated Press
NEW YORK — The Ohio State basketball team is making it very difficult for Coach Eldon Miller to leave.

Miller was fired Feb. 3, effective at the end of the season.

The Buckeyes ended their regular season March 8, but Miller is still coaching.

NIT Basketball Tourney
Tonight, Ohio State, 17-14, will meet 19-13 Louisiana Tech in the second semifinal game of the National Invitation Tournament at Madison Square Garden. In the opening game, Wyoming, 22-13, faces Florida, 19-12. The winners play Wednesday night for the championship.

The semifinal favorites are Ohio State, by four points, and Florida, by three.

"The day I got fired, they started playing hard," Miller said about his young 15-man squad, which includes six freshmen and four sophomores.

Miller, who has signed a five-year contract to coach at the University of Northern Iowa, considers himself very fortunate.

"I'm one of the few coaches in America to have two jobs at the same time — at least for the next 4½ days," he said Saturday at a press luncheon. "I'm enjoying this moment. What can I be upset about? ... A lot of people are pulling for us."

Miller was cheered loudly last Friday night, when he coached his final game at Ohio State's St. John Arena, before a capacity crowd of 13,591, as the Buckeyes beat Brigham Young 79-68 in a quarterfinal NIT game.

"It was the best crowd we had in 10 years," he said. "When I heard them (cheering), I said, 'There's no way we can lose tonight.'"

Miller, who has coached for 10 years at Ohio State, said he was surprised by his firing, "because we were not under .500."

"But," he said, "there were some things I didn't like about the job."

The Buckeyes are on a modest three-game winning streak, having beaten Ohio University 65-62, Texas 71-65 and Brigham Young.

Their opponent, Louisiana Tech, also has won three straight in NIT competition, defeating Northern Arizona 67-61, McNeese State 77-61 and Providence 64-63.

"We're playing with a lot of confidence, intensity and enthusiasm," said Tommy Joe Eagles, in his first season as coach at Louisiana Tech. "But we've been on an emotional rollercoaster all season..."

Florida and Wyoming also are riding three-game winning streaks in NIT competition. In reaching the semifinals, the Gators beat Southern Mississippi 81-71, Texas Christian 77-75 and Southwest Missouri State 54-53, and Wyoming defeated Texas A&M 79-70, Loyola Marymount 99-90 and Clemson 62-57.

"Our team is good, but we're awfully little, so we'll have to do a lot of things on defense to be in it," Florida Coach Norm Sloan said.

"It (the NIT) has a lot of glamour for us," Wyoming Coach Jim Brandenburg said. "We're going to be up for the NIT; we want the NIT to be up for us."

UT finally in Final Four

Western Kentucky next step for Lady Horns

Associated Press

AUSTIN — After three years of frustrating tournament losses on the road, the Texas Lady Longhorns have earned their first trip to the NCAA women's Final Four.

"Home, sweet home," Coach Jody Conradt said after her top-ranked, 32-0 squad edged Mississippi 66-63 in the Midwest Regional finals at UT's Special Events Center.

But Ole Miss threatened to turn the Saturday night game into the fourth annual regional tournament disappointment for Texas. It was, as Conradt said, not a pretty game.

"I told them I didn't care if we won this ugly," said, calling ugly wins the "mark of a very good team."

The Lady Rebels, 24-8, built a three-point halftime lead on the strength of center Jennifer Gillom's powerful inside game and a tight zone that shut down Texas' fast-paced offense.

But Texas used its superior depth and 61 percent second-half shooting to pull out the win. Guard Beverly Williams, whose 12 first-half points kept Texas in the game, finished with 20 points and eight rebounds.



Texas' Jody Conradt

The 6-3 Gillom put in 25 points and collected 10 rebounds. Alisa Scott added 16 for Ole Miss.

The win sends Texas to Lexington, Ky., for a national semifinal game with Western Kentucky, the last team to beat the Longhorns. The Lady Hilltoppers used a last-second shot to upset Texas 92-90 in the Midwest Regionals last year.

That loss denied Texas a trip to

last year's Final Four, which was played in Austin.

In 1983 and 1984 Texas lost regional tournament games to Louisiana Tech at the winner's arena.

Conradt said her team was on the brink of elimination several times Saturday night.

"We almost fell apart. It's been awhile since we played a team that stayed with us and didn't crack under the pressure," she said.

Ole Miss Coach Van Chancellor said he was proud that his team did not fold under the pressure of Texas and the noisy crowd of 10,064, a record for an NCAA women's regional game.

"We had about 10,000 times to quit during the game and we didn't," he said.

In the other Final Four game, it will be Southern Cal (30-4) against Tennessee (24-9).

The Women from Troy cruised by Louisiana Tech 80-64 Saturday night in the West Regional in Long Beach, Calif.

Meanwhile, the Lady Volunteers disposed of the other Louisiana squad. Tennessee sent LSU back to Baton Rouge, La., dropping the Tigers 67-65 in the Midwest Regional in Iowa City, Iowa.

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