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Rockets, Mavs prove to be pretenders to L.A.'s crown

The Dallas Mavericks, who warmed up for Sunday's game in Reunion Arena against the Los Angeles Lakers were the hottest club in the NBA.

In fact, never in the history of the franchise had the Mavericks had a fever quite like this one, winning 11 games straight.

The Mavs boasted the second best record in the NBA, and led the league in rebounding, while holding down the league's No. 2 spot in defense.

Reunion was just cooling off from Friday night's game when the Mavericks launched the Rockets to defeat in an emotional win for the Mavs.

Dallas fans, if not all Texas basketball fans, were teetering in anticipation of the showdown with the Lakers.

The Mavs were sizzling, they were at home and everyone has been saying how Dallas has all the tools to beat the Lakers. Many even predict the Mavericks will be the team to knock the Lakers out of the playoffs.

Right. The Lakers on Sunday showed Americans and Texas basketball fans once again why they are the World Champions and why they will repeat again this year.

L.A. stuffed the Dallas 108-97

bringing down Maverick fever several degrees.

Just a few weeks ago Houston fans had that same we're-gonna-beat-the-Lakers feeling only to be disappointed.

The improved Sampsonless Rockets had more firepower, but not enough to stop the NBA's dominating force from the West Coast.

Since December, I have said the Lakers will repeat as NBA champions. Each time I make this claim I am accosted by some Maverick fan or a Rocket rowdy who claims this time the home team was going to knock off Magic and friends.

Others who love their Texas hoopsters, but realize the supremacy of the Lakers, try to appeal to my emotions.

"Hey, don't you like the underdogs?"

"You traitor, root for the home team."

"Aren't you tired of the Lakers?" They cite these and many other reasons why I shouldn't be such an avid fan of Los Angeles.

I usually support the home team and I've never considered myself a fair weather fan.

After some deep thought I mused my Lakermania was the result of personal taste and a series of psychological traumas:

• 1. I barely broke even with my roommate on this season football wagers. Like most college students, I'm a little short of cash and I need to make the basketball season betting as lucrative as possible. The Lakers have won 80 percent of their games — you don't need to be a mathemati-

cian to figure out who you should put your money on.

• 2. I do like the underdogs sometimes. I'm rooting for the Aggies in the SWC post-season basketball tourney. I rooted for Team USA in the Olympics and I pulled for an intramural team in the Class B playoffs. Unfortunately, all the hurried first led or probably will lead to disappointment.

• 3. And speaking of disappointment, I was a diehard Dallas Cowboys fan, pulling for them to the game. I cheered, I bet money and then I cursed and went broke. Certainly, the Mavericks and the Rockets aren't doing as bad as the Cowboys but their chances of beating the Lakers in the playoffs are about as good as the Danny White's chances of winning the MVP.

• 4. I hate the Boston Celtics. The Lakers have proven they can beat the team to beat them. And I haven't totally forgiven the Rockets for choking against them in the championship series.

• 5. The Laker Girls. Need I say more.

Besides, the Lakers don't win, they look good doing it. They're nothing quite like the poetic money in a Laker fastbreak. The look-off by Magic and then the behind-the-back pass followed by Worthy monster stuff is basketball at its best.

Anyone who's want to root for big winner this spring, I invite you to join me in a dose of Lakermania. For those of you who are still hoping the Mavericks or the Rockets will win, all, I'll be the first to tell you, "I hate you so."

Tech ends season of frustration, posts worst SWC record since '57

LUBBOCK (AP) — A season's worth of frustration showed when Texas Tech Coach Gerald Myers was slapped with two technical fouls within seconds of one another.

For several minutes during the season-ending game Sunday against Arkansas, Myers protested vociferously a charging call against senior forward Greg Crowe. Arkansas scored four points off the resulting foul shots en route to putting a dismal ending on a disastrous regular season for the Red Raiders.

With an overall record of 9-18, Tech posted its worst record since 1962-63, when the Raiders went 6-17.

Tech's 4-12 seventh-place conference finish was another worst-ever milestone: its poorest SWC mark since the Red Raiders joined the league in 1957.

And for the first time ever, the Raiders failed to win a single game on an opponent's home court.

After such a forgettable season, Myers said Monday he knows what ails his program: "I figured that out a long time ago. We've just got to work on recruiting."

Under Myers, Tech has had only one other losing season, an 11-20 year in which just eight players finished the season.

Myers became the third-winningest coach in conference history this season, winning his 300th. But it took him five games to get from No. 299 to No. 300, which came Feb. 20 in a 68-58 victory over Texas Christian.

The Raiders made four more outings after that, but failed to add to Myers' win column.

"They're down but they don't get down as far as just quitting and giving up," Myers said of his team, which has only one senior.

The season isn't likely to end on an upbeat note as the Raiders face 21-9 Baylor, which beat Tech by 60

points in two meetings this season, the first round of the SWC tournament Friday.

"We're probably playing the toughest team we could draw in Baylor as far as us matching up with Baylor," Myers said. "Baylor is just a team we haven't been able to play well against."

The Bears handed Tech its worst loss in the history of the school March 2, a 91-49 walloping that eclipsed a 102-65 drubbing by New Mexico in 1974.

The worst the Raiders had been beaten by an SWC opponent was 30 points, by Rice in 1959 and again by Texas A&M in 1960.

As the season wore on, Myers seemed to grow despondent. After a four-point loss to Houston Feb. 11 he said: "Maybe we've both been failures — they've (the players) been failures as students, I've been a failure as a teacher."

"That about what it amounts to."

Beaumont may get CBA basketball team

BEAUMONT (AP) — Three years ago, a Houston businessman who tried to bring a Continental Basketball Association team to Beaumont failed because he couldn't match his ambition to the realities of finance.

Beaumont nearly got that CBA team for the 1985-86 season, a remarkable feat during one of the city's worst experiences — the investment loss to ESM Government Securities.

Much has changed since then. Beaumont has recovered about three-fourths of its investment money. Citizens met recently in a second economic summit in which they heard promises for the future because people today dared to dream.

The CBA again is knocking on the door. Its former commissioner, James Drucker of Philadelphia, owns an inactive franchise and wants to place one in a city for the 1988-89 season.

He doesn't need investors as much as he needs an enthusiastic community involvement in the team. That translates into advance sales of 2,000 season tickets for the team, which would play 27 home games in the Civic Center.

At an average \$7 price for one ticket, or \$189 for season tickets, it multiplies to \$378,000 worth of commitment to bring the CBA to Beaumont.

Drucker has visited other cities and narrowed his list to five so far — Fayetteville, N.C.; Salina, Kan.; Albany, Ga.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Fargo, N.D.

He said he can include Beaumont if its residents are interested.

The CBA plays in 12 cities and the league sends many of its players — more than any three college conferences, according to its literature — to the National Basketball Association, which plays in 23 cities.

"That's 35 cities with professional

basketball. You'd be in a unique class," Drucker said.

"Having a CBA franchise would make you highly visible. The track record of pro sports is that they are magnets for other businesses," Drucker said.

He said Beaumont is a good market and he is impressed by the efforts of John Gorman, the city's convention facilities director.

"I think the time is right for low-cost entertainment that appeals to the masses," Gorman said.

He said the city can bring promotional and administrative support to the effort and provide the team with a "developmental lease" for the arena, which he described as "better-than-usual" rental rate.

Gorman said the effort to bring a CBA team to Beaumont is worthwhile because the Civic Center could get national exposure on the ESPN television network, and convention-goers in Beaumont would have another attraction.

"We need to find people to participate. We'd be ready to go to work on selling season tickets right away. We could make a doggone serious run at it," Gorman said.

When the effort three years ago failed, the city had already taken orders for about 250 season tickets, and Gorman still has the names and addresses of people who received refunds.

Beaumont Mayor Maury Meyers said a key consideration for both sides is profit, as well as giving the franchise the greatest chance for success.

"At this point, I'm anxious to visit with him (Drucker)," Meyers said.

Gorman said he didn't think a CBA team would detract from the Lamar University basketball program and that it might help it because "like businesses create more business."

Sacramento fires Russell after bad start

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Bill Russell was relieved of his coaching duties with the Sacramento Kings Monday and replaced by assistant coach Jerry Reynolds, a move aimed at "changing the direction of this club," the team's ownership announced.

Russell, 54, who has a seven-year contract with the team, was transferred to the Kings' front office, where he will serve as vice president in charge of basketball operations, said Gregg Lukenbill, general managing partner and part owner of the club.

The action was part of a shakeup of the team's top management which also resulted in a reduced title for the man who brought Russell to Sacramento, former team president Joe Axelson.

When Russell was named coach of the Kings last year, it was with the understanding he would be on the bench for 2-4 years and then move to the front office.

But Russell said Monday, Lukenbill initiated the change. Russell said the two discussed the problems with the team and agreed it was time for a change.

The 17-41 Kings have the fourth worst record in the NBA, ahead of only the Golden State Warriors, the New Jersey Nets and the Los Angeles Clippers, and tied with the Phoenix Suns.

"Every time we lost a game, it was a real hard kick in the stomach," Russell said, flanked by Reynolds and Lukenbill at an Arco Arena news conference.

"I don't sleep after we lose and you know, I've had a lot of sleepless nights," he added.

Russell said his new duties will allow him to "spend a lot of time looking at other teams, looking at the college ranks for possible players."

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