

Dodds choked UT coach deserved better

I went over to talk to Bob Weltlich, former head basketball coach for the U of Texas, between games two and three last Friday at the Southwest Conference Classic in Dallas. I had never met Weltlich before, although I had heard a lot about him and always had wanted to meet him.



Hal L. Hammons
Sports viewpoint

He was sitting there on press row, all by himself, watching Southern Methodist and Texas Christian warm up, waiting for his game with Houston that would follow. He looked nervous — understandable for a coach about to lead his team into post-season, single-elimination action. Even more so for a coach who was rumored to be fighting desperately for his job at the same time.

I wished my father or brother were with me at the time. Dad is a season-ticket holder for UT and Paul is a sophomore at the school. Both are avid UT basketball fans, as well as avid Weltlich fans. They would have liked to have been there to meet him.

Partly for them, partly for myself, I offered him my hand and told him I was from Texas A&M. I told him about Paul and Dad. I wished him good luck for the rest of the tournament. Why not? A&M already had been eliminated. I had to root for someone, and it sure wasn't going to be Arkansas or Texas Tech. I might as well be a couple of underdogs — the Longhorns and the coach.

Both turned out to be lost causes. Houston played well, Texas didn't, and the Cougars advanced. That much wasn't a big surprise. What followed last week was.

If you haven't heard yet, Weltlich was "reassigned" by UT Athletic Director DeLoss Dodds. Translation: fired.

My respect for the University of Texas has hit an all-time low, and that's saying a lot. There are any number of ways to say it, but maybe the best is the simplest of all: Weltlich was done wrong.

The reasons for the move were there: his record was less than wonderful, his brand of ball was somewhat less than thrilling, attendance was pathetic. And seeing it from Dodds' point of view, it makes sense. If the program is losing money, obviously a change is in order.

But I'm not an accountant. And from my point of view, it stinks. Weltlich had the misfortune of following one of the most popular coaches in UT history — Abe Lemons. He taught run-and-gun offense, which caters to the masses who see little excitement in setting up an attack for 30 or 40 seconds before taking a shot. He was full of one-liners, almost to the point of being another Lou Holtz. Even now, at Oklahoma City College, he still makes national news with some of his cracks.

Lemons was fired after his team lost 13 straight games. Injuries were a large part of that. Lack of depth, inflexibility and poor coaching were a bigger part.

Rumor has it that Dodds canned Lemons largely because of his failure to emphasize academics. Most of his players were not exactly of Phi Beta Kappa caliber. We're talking IQs well within the double-digit range.

Most of the talent Lemons had left the school with him or soon

afterward. Weltlich's training in the Bobby Knight School of Basketball Coaching didn't exactly endear him to those who remained.

The media quickly jumped on his case, dubbing him "Kaiser Bob" for tactics such as, God forbid, making his players practice taking charges during workouts. And that didn't exactly help recruiting.

But the program cleaned up. Players started going to class and, not coincidentally, graduating. The discipline he taught showed up in a vast improvement in defense — as if it would be tough to improve on "nonexistent."

This year, considered by most to be the year Weltlich had to deliver the goods to stay on board, wound up with the Longhorns tied for fourth in conference.

You look at that, along with the "talent" the coach had to work with, and try to tell me that's not great coaching. Many observers think one more win would have earned Weltlich SWC Coach-of-the-Year honors.

Most agreed even Weltlich would have to be kept on if the Horns won at least one game at the tournament. They didn't. And the ax fell.

Paul thinks he lost the job midway through the season when the Longhorns were dealt an embarrassing loss at home to Rice. Agreed, if one game could cost a coach his job, that was the game. But hey, only a couple thousand people saw it, anyway.

I saw four or five games this year at the Frank Erwin Center, which has a capacity of about 16,000. Nothing but orange seats for miles and miles at all of them. The UT "fans" don't support losers, if you hadn't heard. And plenty of Lemons' old backers have unequivocally stated in the newspapers that they would not watch another Longhorn basketball game until Weltlich was fired.

They stuck to it, too. Full marks for perseverance to those fine specimens. It must have been tough this year, when it was becoming obvious that Texas was getting good in a big way.

I guess they were convinced that Dodds wouldn't tolerate a coach that couldn't put fans in the seats, regardless of his other accomplishments. They appear to have been correct.

Too bad. In this day and age of controversy in college athletics, Weltlich was a breath of fresh air.

His pupils went to and passed their classes. There was never any hint of impropriety concerning him or his program throughout his tenure. With such acclaimed programs as the ones at Maryland and Memphis State being shaken up by less-than-squeaky-clean coaches, it is refreshing to see a program with no skeletons in the closet.

And an *Austin American-Statesman* columnist reported last week that none other than Dick Vitale himself was already pushing Lefty "You-Wouldn't-Believe-How-Much-Better-You-Play-on-Cocaine" Driesell for the job.

A real clean-nosed choice there. Really gives me hope for the program.

Vitale's more reasonable choice is Gene Keady, the acclaimed but supposedly unhappy coach at Purdue and an old roomie of Dodds. If they could pull that off, I'll be impressed. A *Keath-off-Fred Akers* deal wouldn't look too bad at all for Dodds. But don't count on it. A more likely choice for the job is Eddie Foegler, whose Wichita State squad made DePaul look like the Lakers Friday in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

I can't help thinking, however, that the right man for the job was already there. He just didn't have a good PR department.

Tyson retains title by battering Tubbs

TOKYO (AP) — Mike Tyson softened Tony Tubbs up with body punches, then knocked him down with a left to the head in the second round to retain the world heavyweight championship Monday at the Tokyo Dome.

After the left hook landed, Tubbs reeled into a neutral corner and collapsed as Tyson tried to hit him once again. One of his cornermen immediately jumped into the ring and referee Arthur Mercante stopped the fight.

The end came at 2:54. Tubbs held his own in the first round with a left jab. But in the second round Tyson began landing sledgehammer blows to the body which hurt Tubbs. Tyson also got in some good right uppercuts and a couple of left hooks to the head.

But it was the body shots that spelled the end for the 238½-pound Tubbs. He was badly hurt before the left hook that put him down crashed into the side of his head. There appeared to be blood on a yellow towel that was used to prop up his head while he was still on the canvas.

Tubbs had said before the fight he didn't think he'd win a decision and would have to gamble for a knockout. He never had a chance to gamble as Tyson took

complete command in the second round.

The fight was the second heavyweight title bout in the history of Japan. In the other, George Foreman knocked out Joe "King" Roman in the first round Sept. 1, 1973.

The Japanese now have witnessed 7 minutes, 56 seconds of heavyweight championship boxing.

Tyson now will fight Michael Spinks on June 27 at Atlantic City, N.J., in a defense for which he is expected to make \$17 million to \$20 million.

The fight, which was televised live in the United States Sunday night by Home Box Office, was Tyson's first outside the United States. Defenses in several other countries are planned.

Tyson, who weighed 216½, picked up \$10 million for his seventh championship fight. Tubbs' cut was \$550,000 for his second loss against 25 wins. Tyson's record is 34-0 with 30 knockouts.

The 30-year-old Tubbs, a former World Boxing Association champion, moved well and was accurate with his jab in the first round. He also got in some body blows, but spent most of the time circling away from Tyson's constant pressure.

Bell unhappy, vocal playing DH for Jays

From the Associated Press
George Bell, the Toronto Blue Jays' reluctant designated hitter, says he accepted the role Sunday because he faced a 30-day suspension.

"A solution is coming," he said, refusing to expand but indicating he remains unhappy as a DH.

He had an RBI single in four at-bats Sunday during the Blue Jays' 9-1 exhibition victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

After two games in National League parks, it was the first time Williams could use the DH since Bell refused the role during a game last Thursday against Boston.

Manager Jimmy Williams suspended Bell for a day and fined him \$1,000.

Williams wants to move Bell, last year's American League MVP, out of left field and give the job to center fielder Lloyd Moseby, thus

opening the spot in center for rookies Rob Ducey or Silvestre Campuzano.

"It's a 24-man roster, it's a team roster and a team does not revolve around one person," Williams said.

Astros 2, Twins 1

A two-run single in the ninth inning by Rafael Ramirez gave Houston the victory. It followed singles by Billy Hatcher and Glenn Davis.

Minnesota was limited to four hits by Mike Scott, Rocky Childress, Scott Medvin and Larry Andersen.

Rangers 2, White Sox 1

Charlie Hough allowed four hits and made no balks in six innings and Steve Kemp pinch-hit a two-run homer in the sixth inning for the Texas Rangers.

In his only other exhibition start, Hough was called for nine balks in four innings. He gave up a homer to Roy Smalley.

Azinger holds off Kite for Bay Hill Classic win

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Paul Azinger turned back Tom Kite with a final-round 66 Sunday for a 5-stroke victory in the Bay Hill Classic.

But it wasn't that easy. The largest winning margin of the 2½-month PGA Tour season was deceptive. On three occasions — twice on the back nine — Kite closed to within a stroke of the lead.

It was not until Azinger engineered a 2-shot swing on the 14th hole that he had some breathing room.

Azinger chipped in from 25-30 feet and Kite bogeyed from a bunker, giving Azinger a four-shot lead with four holes to play.

He won this one, the fourth of his career, with a 271 total, 13 shots under par on Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club.

The victory was worth \$135,000 from the total purse of \$750,000 and pushed Azinger's winnings for the season to \$209,025.

It also brought an end to peculiar string of troubles for men who win the PGA Player-of-the-Year title. Azinger had that distinction last year, with three victories and \$822,481 in earnings.

His Bay Hill victory marked the first time since Tom Watson in 1980 that a Player of the Year had been able to win a tour event the following season.

Kite, a single stroke back of Azinger going into the final round, had a closing 70 and was alone in second at 276.

No one else was within nine shots of the runaway Azinger, who led or shared the lead all four rounds.

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