

Sports

Brown denies Spur rumors

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Kansas coach Larry Brown, whose name repeatedly has emerged as collegiate and professional basketball coaching jobs become vacant, agreed in principle to become the next coach of the San Antonio Spurs, a newspaper reported Thursday.

But Brown, who led the Jayhawks to the NCAA title last season, denied he has accepted an offer from the NBA franchise.

The *San Antonio Light* quoted sources as saying that Brown had accepted the job vacated after Spurs owner B.J. "Red" McCombs fired two-year coach Bob Weiss on Tuesday.

The newspaper quoted a source close to Brown as saying he is "100 percent sure" that Brown has agreed to take the job.

The source told the newspaper that Brown and the Spurs have agreed to a multi-year, \$3 million deal.

"This deal is done, unless Brown changes his mind, which he has been known to do," the source said Wednesday night.

Brown told the *Kansas City Star* Thursday that he had not accepted an offer.

"It's news to me," Brown said. "No, I'm not commenting on any of this and No. 2, that's not true."

Earlier Wednesday, several friends of Brown indicated the Jayhawks coach feels "very positive" about San Antonio and the coaching situation with the Spurs.

Brown has had earlier pro head coaching stints with the Carolina Cougars and Denver Nuggets in the ABA and the New Jersey Nets in the NBA.

NY city streets harden Piston

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — When he was growing up on the mean streets of Brooklyn, Vinnie Johnson had a dream.

Johnson, a key reserve on the Detroit Pistons' Eastern Conference championship team, sometimes returns to those streets and asks about guys he knew at Franklin D. Roosevelt High School — guys who did not escape.

Johnson played collegiate basketball for Baylor University.

"I'd say, 'Where's so-and-so?'" Johnson said. "They'd say, 'Oh man, he got shot. He's dead,' or 'He's on drugs,' or 'He's in jail.' You heard all kinds of stories. But some guys made it. My dream was to play one year in the NBA. I got that dream. But I know others didn't."

Rather than one year, Johnson has played nine seasons in the NBA. He has that reputation for occasionally getting a hot shooting hand, the epitome of the player who gives a team instant offense off the bench.

Danny Ainge of the Boston Celtics dubbed Johnson the Microwave because he gets hot in a hurry.

But after shooting 44.3 percent from the field during the regular season and 40.7 percent in the Pistons' first 15 playoff games, including nine scoreless minutes in Game 5 against Boston, Johnson's image was becoming somewhat tarnished.

"If I miss four or five in a row, then I lose a lot of confidence," Johnson said. "I'll stop shooting and try and do other things. I'll try and do something like make a move and a great pass and get the team going. That helps get my confidence back."

In his last two games, however,

Johnson has regained his confidence by living up to his nickname.

He was 10-for-15 with a team-high 24 points in the series-clinching win against Boston and was 7-for-11 for 16 points in Detroit's 105-93 victory in Game 1 of the NBA Championship Series against the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

"Was he something or what?" teammate John Salley asked. "When he hits that first shot or so, just give him the ball and get out of the way. It's like he's unstoppable."

"I was inconsistent in the regular season," Johnson said. "It was a bad year for me. I didn't play as many minutes this year because we have so many weapons. But whenever we had a big game, I was there, I played well. At least that's how I felt."

Johnson said his Brooklyn background helped his development because basketball is so competitive there.

"There are guys there that could play pro, but never went to college," he said. "I could go back there after winning it and they would say congratulations, but then you have to walk out on the court. You still have to prove yourself out there. It gives me a strong mental attitude. I never take anything for granted."

Johnson said one of the playgrounds he went to was called Soul in the Hole.

"The competition was great there," he said. "There were a lot of guys who could play pro, but just got themselves in trouble. I had a stronger desire than them. I always had a dream to play in the NBA, and I was not going to be misled."

Shelby streak reaches 24

LOS ANGELES (AP) — John Shelby extended his hitting streak to 24 games with a go-ahead double in the fifth inning Thursday as the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Houston Astros 4-2.

With Nolan Ryan pitching, Franklin Stubbs walked with one out, stole second with two outs and scored on Mike Marshall's double for a 2-2 tie. Shelby followed with his hit and scored on Mike Scioscia's single for a 4-2 lead.

Orel Hershiser, 8-3, gave up two runs on five hits in eight innings. Jay Howell finished for his sixth save.

Alan Ashby led off the Houston second with his seventh homer. The Astros scored another run in the inning on a double by Craig Reynolds, an error by second baseman Steve Sax and Gerald Young's single.

The Dodgers made it 2-1 in the fourth when Shelby walked and Scioscia and Jeff Hamilton followed with singles.

Warriors could 'Bol' over Sampson's ego

Do the Golden State Warriors realize what they've done? In an attempt to make all the other "Twin Tower" combinations in the National Basketball Association look more like "Double Dwarfs," the Warriors acquired 7-foot-7 Manute Bol from the Washington Bullets.

Bol is also answer to two NBA trivia questions. Not only is he the league's tallest player, but he is also the only one to average more blocked shots per game than points — 2.7 to 2.3.

So naturally his position is center. As in the same position of Ralph Sampson, the only 7-foot-4 human being who shrinks to 4-foot-7 at the sound of a whistle.

The Warriors acquired Sampson in a trade with the Houston Rockets this season so that he could play at center — his natural position. With the Rockets, Sampson had disappeared into oblivion on the court at the power forward position, leaving Akeem Olajuwon to carry the team offensively and defensively.

Sampson, who has been known to pout during games, can't be happy about the arrival of Bol. Bol certainly is not mobile enough to play power forward and his defensive prowess is too valuable to waste away on the bench.

"Manute, in my humble estimation, is the greatest shot blocker I've ever seen, and I've played with Bill Russell and against Wilt Chamberlain, and coached against Mark Eaton," Warriors coach Don Nelson said in an Associated Press story Thursday.

This of course means that Sampson's ego and professionalism will once again be put to the test — a test he has often failed. He was a moody crybaby with the Rockets once Olajuwon emerged as the team's true superstar savior.

And he often showed no heart or emotion when he played. One of Spud Webb's or Tyrone Bogues' ventricles couldn't have fit in Sampson's oversized chest cavity. When he did show emotion on the court, a fight usually broke out with Sampson attacking someone approximately the same size as the waterboy.

If Sampson does surprise everybody and welcomes Bol to the team with open arms, the Warriors could have a potentially lethal inside game at both ends of the court. Sampson is by far the more accomplished offensive player. He could play the low post position offensively.

Defensively, Bol could keep the opposition's center occupied while the more mobile Sampson could line up against the power forward. This would also allow Bol to clog the middle.

Of course if Sampson is moved to the power forward and is unhappy about it, the Warriors have a simple solution. They could always trade for benchwarmer Chuck Nevitt of the Detroit Pistons. The 7-foot-5 Nevitt would allow Sampson to make the move to small forward.

Bubka breaks vault record

BRATISLAVA, Czechoslovakia (AP) — Sergei Bubka of the Soviet Union broke his world record in the pole vault during an International Amateur Athletic Federation Grand Prix track and field meet. Bubka cleared 19 feet, 10 1/4 inches.

Bubka's leap surpassed the mark of 19-9 1/4 he set June 23, 1987, at Prague.

Bubka cleared the record height on his first attempt, the official CTK news agency said.

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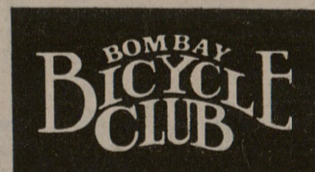
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