

Despite poor record, Rockets earned spot in playoffs, says coach

HOUSTON (AP) — Never mind that the Houston Rockets have the worst record of any team in the NBA playoffs. They belong there, says coach Don Chaney.

"I think the teams who made the playoffs deserve to be there whether they stumbled in, walked in backwards, ran into it or crawled in," Chaney said.

Houston (41-41) lurched into the playoffs Sunday after Golden State eliminated Seattle in the final minute and the Rockets beat Utah in the Summit.

"It's not how you get there, it's what you do when you get there," Chaney said.

The Rockets begin a best-of-five-game first round playoff Friday in Los Angeles against the Lakers (63-

19), who own the best record in the playoffs.

The Rockets would like to forget how they got into the playoffs for the sixth consecutive year.

It took them until the final game of the season to clinch a spot, and it took Golden State's victory over the Supersonics and a 100-88 Rockets victory over Utah to get in.

The Rockets finished the final 27 games with a 17-10 record, aided by inspirational play from center Akeem Olajuwon and an added spark from guard Vernon Maxwell.

But it was a struggle every step of the way.

"I feel like we've already completed two playoff series," Chaney said.

Seniors movers, shakers Legends' course made easier at Barton Creek

AUSTIN (AP) — When the Legends of Golf tournament moved from the birthplace of the Senior Tour, the Onion Creek Club, organizers said the Barton Creek Country Club would provide a sterner test for golfers. It didn't. The winning score was 39 under par.

In capturing the title and \$140,000 prize, the team of Charles Coody and Dale Douglass won with a 249 total, seven shots better than runners-up Al Geiberger and Harold Henning.

That compared with the previous tournament record of 251 set last year by Geiberger and Henning, but their score was shot at Onion Creek, a par-70 course. Henning and Geiberger were 29 under par, 10 less than Coody-Douglass at the par-72

Barton Creek layout.

Although a tougher course wasn't the primary reason for moving, Legends operations director Stu Lerner had cited last year's 29-under score as unacceptable.

Lerner said he expects Barton Creek to play much tougher next year, assuming the tournament isn't shifted to a new, Ben Crenshaw-designed course being built at the Barton Creek complex.

"The first time I came out here, I said this is such a tough golf course that they'll never shoot 29 under again," Lerner said of Barton Creek's Hill Country layout.

"When I found out the PGA Tour (officials) set the course up at less than 6,700 yards instead of 7,000, I couldn't believe it."

Draft

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Battalion file photo by F. Joe

Texas A&M safety Gary Jones was taken in the ninth round by the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Allen chosen by Minnesota on the ninth.

Meanwhile, Atlanta continued to draft players who fit coach Jerry Glanville's black-hat image and the new black uniforms the Falcons will wear.

On the sixth round, they picked running back Mike Pringle of California State Fullerton, the nation's leader in all-purpose yardage last season with 2,690.

Pringle has been arrested twice in the last month following altercations in barrooms, the first of which also involved running back Steve Brown, the Falcons' first-round pick. They join Atlanta's second-rounders Jackson State linebacker Darin Conner, whom Glanville described as "like a borderline trained killer."

Four punters were taken, with John Nies of Arizona, chosen by Buffalo in the sixth round to replace Plan B defector John Kidd, the first to go. Only one kicker was drafted — Matt Stover of Louisiana Tech, taken by the Giants with the 329th of 331 picks that consumed 16 hours and 38 minutes over two days.

On the seventh round, the Denver Broncos took wide receiver Shannon Sharpe of Savannah State, the larger and slower brother of Sterling Sharpe, Green Bay's All-Pro wide receiver. On the eighth, they took Southern Cal center Brad Leggett, son of Earl Leggett, their defensive line coach.

Playoff sweep within one game for Bruins

MONTREAL (AP) — The Boston Bruins moved within one game of their first playoff sweep of Montreal in 61 years as John Carter scored twice to lead a 6-3 victory over the Canadiens in Game 3 of the Adams Division finals Monday night.

The Bruins, whose only other sweep of Montreal was in a best-of-5 series in 1929, their first-ever playoff meeting, can advance to the Wales Conference finals with a victory at the Forum on Wednesday night.

Carter broke a 2-2 tie at 5:30 of the second period when he took a pass from Ray Bourque and beat Patrick Roy for his second goal of the game and third of the playoffs.

NC State names Valvano's successor

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Les Robinson, a former North Carolina State player, was named Monday to succeed Jim Valvano as the Wolfpack's basketball coach.

Robinson, coach and athletic director and coach at East Tennessee State, takes over a program that has been under scrutiny for nearly 1½ years and still has another year of NCAA probation to serve. The program remains under investigation.

The appointment of Robinson came 16 days after Valvano was forced out when NC State officials agreed on a \$500,000 settlement — a \$212,000 contract buyout and the balance from the school's booster group, the Wolfpack Club.

Last Friday, NC State named Todd Turner as its new athletic director, a post Valvano was forced to give up last year after the basketball program was placed on two years' NCAA probation when it was found that players sold complimentary tickets and sneakers.

Robinson, who signed a four-year contract at \$95,000 per year, also faces the task of trying to keep one of his top players — guard Chris Corchiani — from leaving. After Valvano left, Corchiani said he would transfer but he has yet to do so.

"There is no other coaching job in the United States

that I would rather have," Robinson said. "I don't know how long they will want me here, but I'm going to be here until they run me off. This is a very, very exciting moment for me, one of the biggest days of my life."

Valvano was under fire because of the poor academic records of his players. Robinson, meanwhile, has been coaching for 16 years and all but one of his players have graduated.

Other problems hounding NC State involve point-shaving allegations and former player Charles Shackelford, who admitted he took \$65,000 from two men while still at the school.

The 47-year-old Robinson, a 1965 NC State grad, is the 16th head coach for the Wolfpack.

"Les understands the tradition of this university, both athletically and academically there couldn't be a more suitable candidate to lead this program in its continued quest for greatness," said Harold Hopfenburg, acting athletic director until Turner takes over July 1.

Robinson guided the Buccaneers to a 27-7 record and the Southern Conference championship last season. But NC State was also interested in his ability to work under NCAA restrictions inherited from former coach Barry Dowd.

Cowboys

(Continued from page 7)

Harper was all-Northern California Athletic Conference second-team in 1988. As a halfback, he had 114 yards against the University of California at Davis in 1988. He was a transfer from Weaver State who graduated from Eureka, Calif., High School.

Dallas' trade of Herschel Walker to Minnesota left them without their only legitimate running threat. But Terrence Flagler, obtained from the

San Francisco 49ers in a trade, and Smith give Johnson a one-two running back punch.

The Cowboys, 1-15, also were hurting at wide receiver because Kelvin Martin and Michael Iru were hurt last year. Dallas took Dennis McKinnon and Rod Harris in the Plan B period and added Wright, who could draw double coverage respect deep.

Johnson said Dallas didn't go for defense in the first two rounds because it would have been a gamble on the quality of the players.

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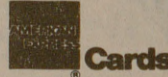
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