

Popular, controversial, Jim Valvano dead at 47

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jim Valvano died Wednesday, a year-long battle with bone cancer finally stilling the flash and sass of a gifted college basketball coach who led his team to a miracle championship and left it after a messy scandal.

With his family by his side, the 47-year-old former North Carolina State coach died at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, according to his attorney Woody Webb.

Valvano pulled off one of the great upsets in college basketball history in 1983 when the Wolfpack beat favored Houston in the NCAA tournament final on Lorenzo Charles' buzzer-beating dunk. Seven years later, Valvano was forced out after an NCAA investigation determined that his players violated rules by selling their sneakers and complimentary game tickets.

It wasn't long after leaving the Wolfpack that Valvano returned to the college basketball scene as an analyst for ABC and ESPN. Earlier this year, he won an award

from the cable television industry for his work.

Coaching was Valvano's first love, and he expressed that affection in a 10th anniversary celebration Feb. 21 that marked the first time he had been on North Carolina State's home court since he left the job in 1990.

"Nobody had more fun than I did in the 10 years that I was fortunate enough to stand in that corner right before every game and thank God for the opportunity to coach at North Carolina State University," Valvano said.

Standing at center court, he told a cheering crowd of more than 12,000 that his championship team taught him a lesson he carried through his illness:

"Number one, hope — hope that things can get better in spite of adversity. The '83 team taught us that.

"That team taught me persistence, the idea of never, ever quitting. Don't ever give up. Don't ever stop fighting," Valvano shouted.

During a March 4 speech at the American Sports Awards telecast on ESPN, Valvano said: "Cancer can take away all my physical

abilities. It cannot touch my mind, it cannot touch my heart and it cannot touch my soul."

Valvano succeeded Norm Sloan as N.C. State's 15th head coach on March 27, 1980.

Valvano's first Wolfpack team struggled to a 14-13 record, but followed with a 22-10 season and an NCAA tournament berth in the 1981-82 season.

The Wolfpack finished the 1982-83 regular-season with a 17-10 record, then went on a tear that began with the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament. North Carolina State defeated North Carolina in the semifinals, then knocked off Virginia and Ralph Sampson to take the ACC title.

Six more victories followed, most of them nail-biters in the NCAA West Regional. The Wolfpack had taken its second national championship, 54-52, defeating the high-flying Phi Slamma Jamma Houston team led by Clyde Drexler and Akeem Olajuwon.

Valvano worked for all three major television networks during his coaching career and afterward. In addition to his ABC and ESPN work, he was a college basketball specialist for CBS and a color ana-

lyst for NBC in the midst of the 1984-85 season.

Valvano was born March 10, 1946, in New York City. He was a three-sport star at Seaford High School on Long Island and the son of a high school basketball coach, Rocco Valvano. He earned 10 letters and was the first athlete in the school's history to gain all-league honors in three sports.

He attended Rutgers and was the school's senior athlete of the year in 1967, leading the Scarlet Knights to a third-place finish in the National Invitation Tournament. Valvano finished his career with 1,122 points, 21st on the school's all-time list.

He began coaching in 1969 with a 10-9 mark at Johns Hopkins, the school's first winning record in 24 seasons. In 1973, Valvano moved to Bucknell and managed a winning season in the last of his three years there.

He coached at Iona from 1975 through 1980, taking it to the NCAA tournament in his final two seasons.

Valvano, who lived in Cary, is survived by his wife, Pam, and three daughters, Jamie, Nicole and Lee Ann.

McCray

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with these skills and it is up to me to take advantage of them," said McCray. "Talent is given to some, but hard work makes talent better. It is up to me to use that talent."

Coach Nelson knows he has a gem in McCray and makes no bones about it. Nelson even com-

pare the young freshman to former Aggie and World Record holder Curtis Mills, who held the record in the 440 yard dash (comparable to the modern day 400 meter dash) in 1969.

"He has got a lot of talent, especially in the 400," said Nelson. "Danny has as much talent, if not more than him (Mills)."

The young star looks to continue shining as the SWC Championships (May 19-21) and the NCAA Championships (June 2-5 in New Orleans, LA.) lie ahead.

Rangers get by Tigers in 11, 6-5

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON — Julio Franco doubled home the winning run in the 11th inning Wednesday night as the Texas Rangers rallied from a four-run deficit and beat the Detroit Tigers 6-5.

Rafael Palmeiro led off the 11th with a pop-fly single off Mike Munoz (0-1). Franco took two strikes attempting to bunt, then delivered his game-winning hit.

Tom Henke went three innings for the first time since Sept. 9,

1989, and gained his first victory for Texas. Henke (1-0) struck out four in three perfect innings.

Texas, trailing 5-1 in the eighth, tied the game on Ivan Rodriguez's three-run homer off David Haas, and consecutive singles by Manuel Lee and pinch-hitters Doug Strange and Gary Redus.

Detroit starter Mike Moore allowed one run and five hits in seven innings, walked four and struck out one.

Texas starter Kevin Brown gave up five runs — two earned — and nine hits in seven innings.

Astros club Cubs, 6-1

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Greg Swindell won his fourth straight start and the first-place Houston Astros won for the 12th time in their last 16 games, taking a 6-1 victory over the Chicago Cubs on Wednesday night.

Swindell (4-1) pitched eight innings, giving up seven hits, striking out two and walking none.

The Astros scored four runs in the second inning off Chicago starter Jose Guzman (4-2).

Ken Caminiti lined a one-out home run to right, his second

homer in as many nights, to make it 1-0. Andujar Cedeno followed with a two-out single, his sixth consecutive hit, and scored on Eddie Taubensee's triple.

Swindell singled home Taubensee, moved to second on a walk and scored on a throwing error by first baseman Mark Grace.

Houston increased its lead to 6-0 in the fourth. Craig Biggio started things off with a walk and moved to second on a single by Luis Gonzalez. Both runners advanced on a wild pitch by Guzman before Jeff Bagwell singled in Biggio.

UT wins womens golf title

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Texas senior Jenny Turner shot a one-under-par 71 Wednesday to win the 11th annual Southwest Conference Women's Golf Championship, while the Lady Longhorns claimed the team title by a record 54 strokes.

Turner, a Round Rock resident, tied the tournament record

for low round since the event was moved to The Club at Sonterra in San Antonio.

Jamie Fischer of Texas and Barbara Blackwell of Southern Methodist also shot 71's during the three-day tournament.

Turner, who had never finished higher than eighth at the SWC Championship, recorded four birdies and three bogeys in the final round.

Harrison

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fortysomething Moon when the Oilers need a proven contributor at left tackle for their waning chances at reaching the Super Bowl?

The NFL's offensive linemen have been the main beneficiaries since Judge David Doty rubber-stamped the NFL's new, improved — but still constitutionally unsound — Plan C free agency.

Why not get the free agent experience already out there on the line, and pick up a quality first round impact receiver/return man like Kevin Williams?

Alright, so Hopkins did protect the running-and-shooting Illinois quarterback Jason Verduzco from the left tackle spot and is graded as one of the best athletes in the draft.

Exactly why am I not singing in the rain? Because past experience shows the Oilers rarely get

it right on draft day. In 1960, the first year of the Houston Oilers franchise, the Oilers drafted Billy Cannon, who did lead the team in rushing for two years.

In 1961, Houston selected Mike Ditka, the first tight end to be elected into the NFL Hall of Fame — as a Chicago Bear.

In 1976, a slow, little-known fourth-round wide receiver from Tulsa was drafted and cast off. Seattle picked up the Oilers' trash and, surprise, found Steve Largent, the man with arguably the best hands ever in the league, who logged in 14 solid years as a future Hall of Famer in the NFL.

The best move the Oilers have ever made was beg and plead away the first overall pick of 1978 from Tampa Bay for the rights to Earl Campbell, and then the Oilers never could build a team around Earl to compete with their indomitable, division rival Pittsburgh Steelers.

This year, the Oilers were in the same shoes as the talented Kansas City Chiefs, who needed

a few key acquisitions to put them into Super Bowl contention. While the Chiefs shelled out for quarterback Joe Montana, the Oilers created a problem letting Maggs go, and missed their chance in the first round to land desperately needed receiver and a return speed threat.

It's not the end of the world to get a talented offensive lineman in Hopkins, and the Oilers desperately needed a linebacker with the coverage and big play potential of second rounder Michael Barrow from Miami.

In Barrow, the Oilers get the speed that was lacking in "The NFL's Most Embarrassing Playoff Losses" to Buffalo and, most notably, Denver when the Broncos' John Elway beat Houston by running circles around Houston's linebacker "spies."

But, the only receivers drafted were five-foot seven, 4.37-in-the-40 burner Travis Hannah in the fourth round, who looks like a fast, but inexperienced Tony Jones clone, and five-foot seven,

4.5 marginal return prospect Pat Robinson in the seventh.

The Oilers haven't had a good return man since Carl Roaches departed in the mid-80s, and last year Houston fumbled away promising Corey Harris, via a waiver wire gaffe to Green Bay.

But instead, don't laugh, Houston did sign a cornerback in the eighth round who runs a — Hoo-RAY! — 4.6 in the forty, only .05 faster than Barrow runs as a linebacker.

It will be strictly special teams for him — if he can even make the expanded 53-man cut.

Hopefully, the Oilers will continue to deal and land some impact players such as the Wilber Marshall deal and a fast receiver/return man, or the last of 37-year old Warren Moon's Super Bowl hopes will almost assuredly end this year.

Otherwise, Houston will have to rebuild again if the club opts to starve as they stubbornly watch other teams feed in the free agent frenzy.

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