

Longhorns capture dubious triple crown

AUSTIN (AP) — University of Texas athletics have been making the wrong kind of history lately.

The Longhorns' baseball team ensured its first losing season since 1956 by dropping one of three games to Nebraska over the weekend.

But the baseball team's misery also marked the first time since 1954-55 that the three major men's sports at Texas — football, basketball and baseball — have suffered losing seasons in the same year.

Even the women's basketball program headed by Jody Conradt, the winningest coach in the history of her sport, had a losing season.

"When we started the year, we were not in bad shape," Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds said Monday. "We were in good shape."

"People were predicting good things for our football and basketball teams. But it was one of those years where everything collided at once, and it was all unrelated."

In the last two years, Dodds has replaced baseball coach Cliff Gustafson, football coach John Mackovic and basketball coach Tom Penders.

To get rid of Mackovic, the school reassigned him within the athletic department and will pay him \$1.8 million — the value of

the three years he had left on his contract — unless he takes another job.

As part of a resignation settlement with Penders, the school paid him \$643,000, his final month's salary and \$157,000 that was in a special UT investment account in his name — roughly \$850,000.

Those sums paid to departed coaches as well as the salaries being paid to their replacements — \$750,000 to new football coach Mack Brown and \$700,000 to new basketball coach Rick Barnes — has faculty in an uproar.

Each of the coaches' salaries more than triples that of the school's new president, Larry Faulkner, who earns \$220,000 annually.

Dodds has repeatedly noted that all the money being spent by the athletic department is generated from athletics revenue or gifts, not from students or taxpayers.

Still, there have been several protests on campus by faculty who accuse the school of having misplaced priorities by allowing frivolous spending in athletics at a time when professor salaries and research dollars are tight.

"We are in a marketplace in athletics, and it's different," Dodds said. "In the world that we live in, the change we made in football, if you look at it purely

financially, we are in better shape. "We did not make the change for financial reasons, but if we had not made the change, the \$600,000 we are paying per year (to Mackovic) would not have been realized in income."

In other words, alums and big-money donors are much more willing to contribute and buy new luxury suites now that Mackovic is out and Brown is in.

"We've had a traumatic year, but I don't think we've ever been in better shape to go forward," Dodds said.

A turnaround, however, may not come quickly.

Despite a warm reception for the enthusiastic Brown, which included more than 20,000 people attending the football team's spring scrimmage, he inherited a squad with one of the worst defenses in the country and a schedule next year that includes road games at UCLA, Kansas State and Nebraska.

The basketball team was in disarray at the end of the season after a player revolt that included the

decision by freshman Luke Axtell, the second-leading scorer on the team, to transfer to Kansas.

The baseball team has struggled in each of the past two seasons under coach Augie Garrido, who replaced Gustafson after the 1996 season.

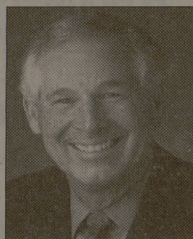
Last year, the Longhorn's baseball team was 29-22, failed to qualify for the Big 12 tournament and produced the fewest victories since Gustafson's first year as coach in 1968, when the Longhorns went 23-11.

This year, the Longhorns (23-29), who still have three games left against Oklahoma, showed flashes of strong play in early victories over Louisiana State, but then failed to qualify for the Big 12 postseason tournament again.

Garrido, whose team this year included 15 freshmen, has not lost any support from Dodds and continues to recruit top talent.

"When you take a program that is as successful as the University of Texas has been, the standards are high, and we accept that," Garrido said Monday. "These things are always sensitive and hard to get started."

"Anything worth having is sometimes difficult. But we'll get it turned around. I think we'll be contending for a top spot in the country next year."



Garrido

Aging Rockets will not be the same next season

Houston (AP) — This is not a routine goodbye until next season. This one's for good.

Hakeem Olajuwon, Clyde Drexler and Charles Barkley, three of the game's greatest players, will not be together as a unit next season, and the Houston Rockets probably will get a whole new look.

The changes — triggered by a first-round loss to Utah — will mark the close to an era during which the Rockets won championships in 1994 and 1995.

The Rockets, an eighth seed, seemed on the verge of one final tantalizing run by stretching the Jazz to five games. But Sunday's 84-70 loss forced the team to face reality.

The game was the last for Drexler, who is retiring to coach his alma mater, the University of Houston.

Will Barkley retire, too? Will the Rockets use their salary-cap money to sign a big-name free agent such as Scottie Pippen?

Coach Rudy Tomjanovich isn't saying. "There's only one guy who knows he won't be here next year and that's Clyde: He's got a job next year," Tomjanovich said. "With our veteran guys we put our team in the situation where we could go for all the marbles. There will be a time when that won't be the main goal. The main goal will be to start planting some seeds and rebuilding."

Olajuwon is among only four players with contracts for next season, along with Kevin Willis, Rodrick Rhodes and Brent Price.

Mario Elie, who hit a 3-pointer to clinch a

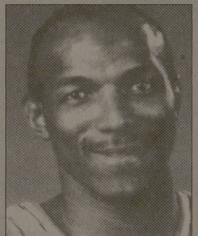
1995 playoff series against Barkley-led Phoenix, is likely gone.

Matt Bullard, a member of the 1994 championship team; embattled starting guard Matt Maloney; and veteran Eddie Johnson also could go as well. Charles Jones, at 41 the league's oldest player, already has announced his retirement.

Barkley, a free agent, had surgery on his torn right tricep on Monday and still faces surgery for a hernia that troubled him all season.

"Right now, I'm just so down and I've got to go through rehab not just for basketball but for the future," Barkley said. "When something like this happens you've got to work harder. I got a little disappointed and a little frustrated."

"This is a very serious thing and I've got to rehab for three months before I even think about my future."



Drexler

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