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Lakers fire Harris

L.A. coach departs after 4 1/2 seasons

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — The Los Angeles Lakers, mired at .500 12 games through the abbreviated NBA season, fired coach Del Harris today.

Jerry West, the team's vice president of basketball operations, said that one of two assistants — Kurt Rambis or Larry Drew — will handle the coaching duties for the rest of the season.

The team, which has lost three straight games, made the announcement as it was adding Dennis Rodman to what on paper is one of the more talented teams in the league.

West said longtime assistant Bill Bertka would handle the head coaching duties Thursday night against the winless Los Angeles Clippers before a decision is made on Drew or Rambis, both former Laker players.

"Particularly for me, the thing that makes it so awkward is that Del has been a friend for many

years," West said. "The direction of a team is very important. We do feel like we have the talent here."

"I just feel the last two games we've played have not been acceptable. We just felt like there was a deterioration. I talked to (owner) Jerry Buss this morning and we just felt like the time was right now."

The Lakers lost three games in three days in three different cities.

They were beaten 92-89 Sunday at Seattle; 117-113 in overtime at Denver Monday night, and 93-83 at Vancouver Tuesday night. Denver's win was only its second in 10 games this season and the Grizzlies had never beaten Los Angeles in 12 previous games between the teams.

The three losses left LA with a disappointing 6-6 record.

Most of a team that reached the Western Conference finals before being swept by the Utah Jazz last spring is back, but the Lakers have

Leaving Los Angeles

SEASON	RECORD	PLAYOFFS	Del Harris
'94-'95	48-34	Semifinals	Years exp.: 14
'95-'96	53-29	First round	Record: 556-458
'96-'97	56-26	Semifinals	Playoffs: 38-38
'97-'98	61-21	Conf. finals	Former head coach of Milwaukee, Houston
'98-'99	6-6	N/A	Took '80-'81 Rockets to Finals, losing to Celtics among NBA's all-time top 20 in coaching

been on-again, off-again since the start of the campaign.

Harris, 61, was in his fifth season as Lakers head coach and has been under criticism from many directions. However, as recently as Tuesday night Lakers star Shaquille O'Neal said the team's problems weren't the coach's fault.

Harris has 556 career wins to rank among the top 20 coaches of all time. He previously coached the Houston Rockets and Milwaukee Bucks.

When asked if he had spoken with former Chicago coach Jackson or anyone else as a term successor, West said he had not talked to anyone.

Only two days before the firing, former Lakers point guard Nick Van Exel, who was traded to Denver following last season, called Harris a "cancer" and a stormy relationship over the four seasons.

Jones celebrates 10th anniversary

Cowboys owner reflects on past wins, looks to future of 'Team of the '90s'

IRVING (AP) — Jerry Jones will spend the decade anniversary of his takeover of the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday like he did the first day he bought the franchise — planning and scheming ways to get his team into the Super Bowl.

Under Jones' ownership, the Cowboys have won six NFC East titles, appeared in four NFC championship games, won three Super Bowls and become worth an estimated \$400 million.

Yet, if the Denver Broncos win a third consecutive Super Bowl this upcoming season, Dallas might lose the coveted title of "NFL team of the '90s."

Under former coach Tom Landry and former general manager Tex Schramm, both of whom were fired by Jones, the Cowboys lost to Pittsburgh in the '70s and San Francisco in the '80s as the team of the decade.

Dallas won back-to-back Super Bowls under Jimmy Johnson, who exited the team because of a personality conflict with Jones, and a third Super Bowl under good buddy Barry Switzer, who finally wore out his welcome.

The Cowboys just finished a 10-6 regular season and first-round playoff loss to Arizona under Chan Gailey.

"We were disappointed with the way the year ended in the playoffs, but we are close to getting where we want to be again," Jones said. "We're never satisfied until we get to the Super Bowl. I think we are very close to getting there next year."

The owner's rancor with Landry, Schramm and Johnson has been well publicized. Jones has said he handled the Landry dismissal poorly. He has never been able to get on the same wave length with Schramm, who is in the Professional Football Hall of Fame in Canton but has yet to be put in the Cowboys

"We made positive progress last year, and I feel good about our immediate future and long-term future."



— JERRY JONES COWBOYS OWNER

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"My relationship with the Cowboys hasn't been good," Schramm, who still attends home games in his Texas Stadium suite, said. "You have to admire the way they brought in the talent to win the Super Bowls. Getting Jimmy was a big key. If Tom had retired, Jimmy would have been one of my top picks."

Under Johnson, Dallas was 44-36 with two Super Bowl wins and a 7-1 postseason record.

Under former University of Oklahoma coach Switzer, Dallas was 40-24, 5-2 in the postseason, and a winner of the 1995 Super Bowl.

"It probably would have been best if I had encouraged Barry to leave after we won the Super Bowl," Jones said, adding hindsight is 20-20. "But he never got credit for the job he did."

In this offseason, Jones plans to give contract booster shots to Deion Sanders and quarterback Troy Aikman and to try to find an impact free agent wide receiver.

"We made positive progress last year, and I feel good about our immediate future and long-term future," he said. "We will make the moves we feel we have to make to get to the level where we feel we need to be. We'll win again."

Jones does not spend much time celebrating anniversaries. Denver's late dominance in the 1990s threatens to take some of the luster off a decade of overall excellence for the Cowboys.

"We have established a track record of being at the highest competitive level year in and year out," he said. "I see some very unique things that are cause for confidence in the future."

Basketball player dies after fall

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Devin Cuningkin, who led his high school basketball team to a championship, died Wednesday after apparently striking his head on the floor during the game.

Cuningkin, 18, fell and hit his head on the floor during a game, his step-brother Pledger said. The player was taken to the hospital after scoring 12 points in the game. The Rock County coroner said Cuningkin was taken to the hospital after a fall during a game in the District 5A-South title.

Cuningkin was taken to the hospital after a fall during a game in the District 5A-South title. He was taken to the hospital after a fall during a game in the District 5A-South title.

"The team has voted to play for him and do the best we can," McClellan coach Tom Pledger said. "One of the players we're going to have an autograph next week. We're going to have autographs from the players out there."

McClellan will face Jackson in a state tournament game next week.

The Pulaski County Coroner's Office had not determined the cause of death. A medical exam was planned Thursday, coroner Mark Malcolm said.

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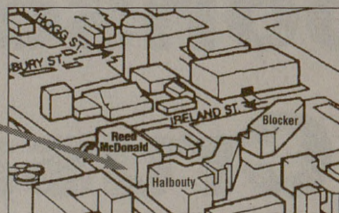
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