

Tech announcer calling it quits

By Betsy Blaney
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LUBBOCK, Texas — The audience for Jack Dale's first play-by-play broadcasts were the crops on his family's Kansas farm.

Having learned the names of Army and Navy football players by listening to their games on radio, young Dale would climb atop a tractor and narrate imaginary games. He knew then that he wanted to make a living in broadcasting, not farming.

For the past 50 years, Dale has done so as the voice of Texas Tech men's basketball games. His run of more than 1,500 games will soon come to an end, as he's retiring after this season.

Dale, 70, stopped calling football games after the 1999 season, having done it for 47 years. He missed it for a while, but that feeling went away.

"And I think that's probably the way it's going to be with basketball," he said. "Since I've made the decision, I can't hardly wait until the end of the season to sort of put it behind me."

School officials also are establishing endowed communications and athletic scholarships in his honor, ensuring that his name and ambition will be passed on.

"I want to see it happen," Dale said. "I don't have money to do it myself, but I'm going to do everything I can do to help."

Dale moved from the tractor to the sideline with a nudge from Max Falkenstein, who was early into his ongoing 57-year run as the play-by-play voice of the Kansas Jayhawks.

"I told him you can't just walk into a station and say, 'I want to be a broadcaster,'" Falkenstein said. Falkenstein pointed Dale to a Kansas City broadcasting school. Six months later, Dale began his career in Altus, Okla., then went to Topeka, Kan.

Dale sent out more than 110 letters to radio stations across the country. He wound up at KFYO

in Lubbock.

In January 1953, Dale made his debut on Tech basketball. He's remained behind the microphone through three facilities and six coaches.

"I think he is the greatest in announcing the game of basketball," former Tech coach Polk Robison said. "His speed of delivery, his enunciation and his knowledge of the game — all of it enters into his outstanding ability. He amazes me."

"... I think the people of Texas Tech University and Lubbock have had a treasure in Jack Dale over the past 50 years."

— Bob Knight
Texas Tech basketball coach

Dale had a tough time picking a favorite player, but settled on Bubba Jennings, who played for Tech in the early 1980s and now is one of Bob Knight's assistants.

"I liked him because he was a little guy who could shoot," Dale said.

Dale is glad to have made it into the Knight era.

"It's sort of icing on the cake to work with a guy with that reputation, a real legend," Dale said. "That's been a good way to end it up, two years with Bob Knight."

Knight said he commends Dale for his dedication to the university and the region.

"I have really enjoyed working with Gentleman Jack over the last two seasons, and I think the people of Texas Tech University and Lubbock have had a treasure in Jack Dale over the past 50 years," Knight said through a team spokesman.

Dale thinks the game is better

now than when he began. Back then, there was no shot clock and no 3-point line.

But the most exciting game Dale remembers is from that slower era.

It was in 1956, and Tech was playing without its two top scorers. The Red Raiders had won the Border Conference, but NCAA rules made those two players plus two junior college transfers ineligible to play against SMU in a first-round NCAA matchup in Wichita, Kan.

A football player and a team manager suited up, and one of the ineligible players helped Dale with his radio broadcast.

"He sort of broke into tears toward the end of the game just seeing what this team was doing," Dale said. "It had to be one of the most memorable ball games for Texas Tech basketball because they fought this SMU ballclub and finally SMU won the game 68-67."

SMU went on to earn a berth in the Final Four.

Dale has called games from more than 100 cities and has traveled as far as Japan to cover Tech sports.

During the days of the Southwest Conference, games were clustered in Texas and Arkansas. Dale carried himself on the road as if he was an ambassador for Texas Tech.

"There'll not be anybody who can do what he's done for Texas Tech," said former Tech football coach Spike Dykes. "I don't think you replace people like that. You just go on and do the best you can. But there's not going to be another Jack Dale, I can tell you that."

Tech athletic director Gerald Myers, a former Red Raider basketball coach, said Dale's loyalty to the school has meant a lot.

"I really have a lot of admiration for and appreciation of what he's done," Myers said. "He's been able to make (basketball on the radio) very exciting and has been instrumental in building a fan base in West Texas."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Knight's day comes in Lubbock

LUBBOCK (AP) — The honors just keep coming in for Texas Tech coach Bob Knight.

Lubbock Mayor Marc McDougal has planned a news conference Friday to announce Coach Bob Knight Day in Lubbock on Saturday when the Red Raiders face Oklahoma at United Spirit Arena.

The special proclamation by McDougal commemorates Knight's 800th career win Feb. 5 when the Red Raiders beat Nebraska 74-49.

During his coaching career, Knight's Indiana teams won three national championships. Knight, 62, also coached the U.S. Olympic team to a gold medal in 1984.

Knight became only the fourth men's NCAA basketball coach to reach 800 wins.

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(979) 693-4701
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Weekend Shuttle Route: CS West
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