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Ditka gets boot after 5-11 year

LAKE FOREST, Ill. (AP) — Mike Ditka's 11 years as the bellowing, bullying coach of the Chicago Bears ended Tuesday with a tear in his eye and a quiver in his voice.

Ditka, who led the Bears to a 1986 Super Bowl victory, was fired nine days after the end of a disastrous 5-11 season. He will stay on indefinitely as a consultant.

"We're going to have to find some new ways to do some things, ways different than we've done them in the past," Bears president Michael McCaskey said. "There's going to be a premium on fresh ideas, and a new start."

"I've come to the difficult conclusion that it's best to start that process with a new head coach."

The 53-year-old Ditka, who spoke haltingly at a press conference that lasted less than six minutes, said: "Scripture tells you that all things shall pass. This, too, shall pass. Regrets, just a few, but too few to remember. Thirty-two years, and I have a lot of people to thank.

'The Bears will come back. Mike Ditka will survive. I'll land on my feet. There's no problem about that.'

— Mike Ditka,
Ex-coach of the Chicago Bears

"I want to thank the players most because they make it happen. Thank you, fans of this city."

"The Bears will come back," he said. "Mike Ditka will survive. I'll land on my feet. There's no problem about that."

Ditka and McCaskey left the news conference quickly, leaving many unanswered questions.

As for hiring a new coach, McCaskey said, "The quicker, the better. Maybe some of the coaches I want to interview are

with playoff teams and we would have to wait until their season ends."

McCaskey's reply increased speculation that Richie Petitbon, defensive coordinator of the Washington Redskins and a former Bears player, would be among those considered.

McCaskey also said Bears coordinators, Greg Landry on offense and Vince Tobin on defense, deserve consideration.

The Bears finished with their worst record since 1975, and it was only Ditka's third losing season. He had a 106-62 regular-season record and led the Bears to six divisional titles. The 1986 Super Bowl championship followed a 15-1 regular season.

But after going 14-2 in 1986, there was a gradual slide. In 1989 the team fell to 6-10, but came back with two 11-5 seasons before this year's collapse.

Some say it began Oct. 4 at Minnesota when the Bears, who were 2-2 at the time, held

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Bobo follows Bledsoe to NFL, leaves Wazzu

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Phillip Bobo, the second-leading receiver in Washington State history, will bypass his senior season and enter the NFL draft this spring. The Associated Press learned Tuesday.

Bobo, a redshirt junior, caught seven passes for 212 yards and two touchdowns from Drew Bledsoe in Washington State's 31-28 victory over Utah in the Copper Bowl at Tucson, Ariz., this past week.

That turned out to be the final college game for both players. Bledsoe announced Monday he was making himself available for the NFL draft and is expected to be one of the top players picked.

Wednesday is the deadline for underclassmen to declare their intention to enter the April 25-26 draft.

Bobo was a starter for nearly all of the three seasons he played at Washington State, finishing his college career with 148 receptions for 2,182 yards and 16 touchdowns. The 2,182 yards represents the third-highest total in school history and the 16 touchdown catches ties him for second.

"I decided yesterday," Bobo told the AP. "I thought about it a lot. My mind's at ease with it."

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UCLA safety opts to forego senior year

LOS ANGELES (AP) — UCLA free safety Othello Henderson will bypass his senior season to make himself available for the NFL draft, the school announced Tuesday.

Henderson spoke with Bruins coach Terry Donahue, who is at the American Football Coaches Association convention in Atlanta, on Monday afternoon and informed him of the decision, the school said.

"We are very sorry that Othello will not be with us next year," Donahue said in a statement issued by UCLA. "He is an impact player who enjoyed an outstanding season in 1992 and would have been even better this coming year."

"Obviously, we will miss a player of Othello's caliber, but I know that he is doing what he feels is best for his family and himself. He feels he will be a first-round choice and I think he will be a great professional player. We certainly wish him great success in the NFL."

Henderson, a junior, was a two-year starter for the Bruins. He led UCLA with 90 tackles this past season, 29 more than any other player on the team. He was selected as the Bruins' most valuable defensive player and was a second-team All-Pacific 10 Conference selection.

Henderson, 20, attended Ellison High in Killeen, Texas.