



Tark hired to head Fresno St.

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Jerry Tarkanian, the towel-chomping coach with the highest winning percentage in NCAA basketball history, was hired Wednesday to coach Fresno State, his alma mater.

The former UNLV coach, whose disputes with the NCAA ran for years and reached the Supreme Court, replaces Gary Colson, who resigned March 15 after five seasons.

Tarkanian, the only candidate to interview for the job, signed a three-year contract.

"I know that the support here is unmatched," Tarkanian said at a news conference. "I've always said the Red Wave is maybe the best fans in the entire country."

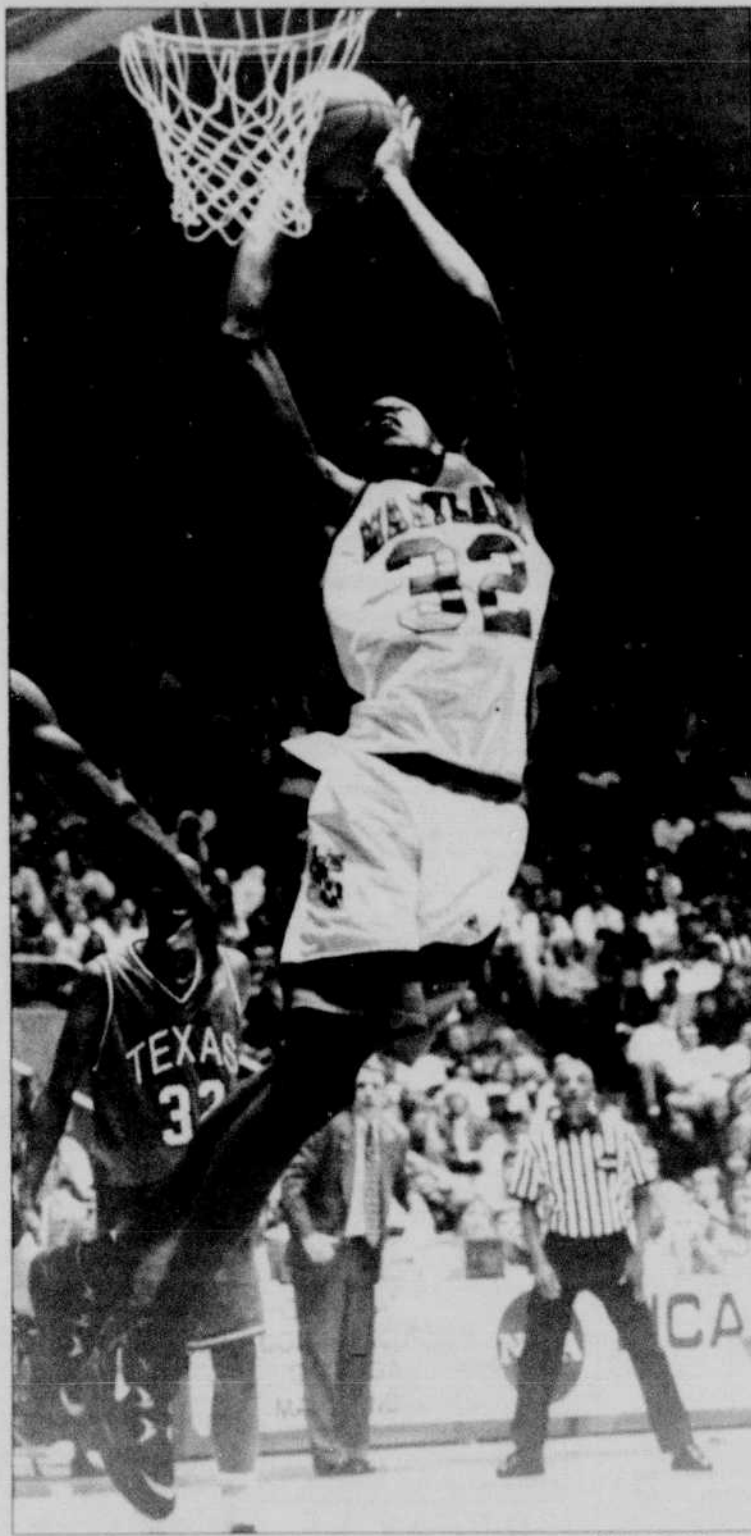
"Hopefully, we can get a program going to the level to bring a lot of excitement and a lot of pride to the people of the San Joaquin Valley."

Fresno State president John Welty, who had the final word on hiring Tarkanian, said the contract "establishes the responsibility of the coach to adhere to NCAA regulations."

In addition, Welty said the athletic department will hire a compliance officer to guide coaches in all sports in following NCAA rules.

Tarkanian, 64, will try to revitalize a team that has had only two winning seasons in the past 10 years. The Bulldogs were 13-15 last season, finishing seventh in the Western Athletic Conference.

Bruins do conference proud



Once again, stars like Maryland's Joe Smith ensured that the ACC remained as the premier basketball conference. The Pac-10 stepped up in 1994-1995 with a solid year and a national championship.



CHRIS METZ

In bars and in round table discussions from coast to coast, one of the most interesting and intense annual sport debates is over which conference can lay claim to the best overall basketball programs.

Going into this year's NCAA Tournament, it was generally thought that the Pac-10 was seriously in need of a good tournament to defend its integrity and its long-standing tradition as one of the nation's premier basketball conferences.

As much as everyone would like to think that they know which is the best basketball conference, the fact remains that there is really no way of scientifically gauging just which league is the best from top to bottom.

It's really very hard to say which conference is the best. Most leagues have a few strong teams at the top, but fall off considerably after that.

Most people would say that the Atlantic Coast Conference is easily the best. And why not? Since the Pac-10 last won a national title (UCLA in 1975), the ACC, along with the Big Ten, has claimed five national championships, including three of the last five.

Although only four teams made it in the field of 64, the ACC produced a No. 1 seed in Wake Forest, a No. 2 seed in North Carolina, a No. 3 seed in Maryland and a No. 4 Virginia. In addition, some of the best players in the nation came from the ACC led by All-American center Joe Smith from Maryland

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THURSDAY

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Expos' Hill, Wetteland dealt

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — In their second major deal of the day, the Montreal Expos traded starting pitcher Ken Hill to the St. Louis Cardinals today for two young pitchers and an outfielder.

Earlier, closer John Wetteland was dealt to the New York Yankees for a minor league prospect, a player to be named later and money.

The cash-poor Expos, who lost \$15 million because of the strike, want to reduce their payroll from about \$18 million in 1994 to as little as \$10 million this year.

Hill made \$2.55 million in 1994 and Wetteland made \$2.225 million. Both are eligible for arbitration this season, and the Expos could not afford to pay them.

Outfielder Marquis Grissom, who made \$3.56 million last season and also is eligible for arbitration, could be dealt by Friday, general manager Kevin Malone said.

McRae off to Cubs

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Cubs acquired outfielder Brian McRae today in a trade with the Kansas City Royals for two minor league pitchers.

McRae, 27, batted .272 with four home runs and 40 RBIs last season. In his four-plus year career with Kansas City, McRae has hit .262 with 30 home runs and 248 RBIs. He was a first-round draft pick in 1985.

The Cubs will send pitchers Derek Wallace and Geno Morones to the Royals. Wallace pitched for Orlando and Iowa in the Cubs farm system last year, while Morones spent last season at Class A Daytona.

Baylor assistants busted, Johnson cleared

WACO, Texas (AP) — Former Baylor basketball coach Darrel Johnson was acquitted Wednesday, but three assistants were convicted in connection with their recruitment of five junior college players in 1993.

The federal jury found that although Johnson was responsible for the basketball program, he was unaware of improper help his assistants gave to enable the recruits to pass classes they needed to enroll at Baylor.

Woods ready despite back spasms

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — For a few minutes Wednesday, it looked like Tiger Woods' debut at the Masters was going to end before it ever began.

But it turned out the 19-year-old Stanford phenom was only suffering back spasms when he cut short a practice round.

"I'm okay," Woods said after being treated for the injury, which didn't stop him from taking part in a par-3 tournament later in the day. "I've done it before. It's no big deal."

Woods, who qualified for his first Masters by winning the 1994 U.S. Amateur, winced after hitting his tee shot on No. 5 during a practice round, then grabbed his back in pain after hitting the second shot.

He walked to the green, picked up his ball and, after talking with tournament officials and one of his playing partners, Nick Price, hopped in a van to be taken for treatment on the eve of the biggest tournament of his young life.

"It's always been my biggest fear: keeping him

physically fit for tournaments," said his father, Earl Woods. "He's not physically mature yet. Mentally, he's 19 going on 30. But physically, he's a teenager about ready to go into adulthood."

"Till he fills out his muscle structure and there's full support for full adulthood functions, I'll worry."

But the younger Woods brushed off his brush with pain. He spent about an hour in the PGA fitness van, where the back was treated with electrical stimulation and ice packs.

"I'm fine," Woods said. "They worked out it out and there's no pain now."

As if to prove his point, Woods headed off the practice green, where he worked on his putting while joking around with Peter Jacobsen. Afterward, Woods sauntered over to the crowd to sign a few autographs and even had his picture taken while holding a baby.

He then hit dozens of shots on the practice range before taking part in the par-3 tournament, where he struggled to a 2-over-par 29.



Tiger Woods will get his shot in today's Masters.