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Fox continues shakeup of Dodgers organization

Peter O'Malley said Monday he would have done the same thing

By Beth Harris
 The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The firing of Los Angeles Dodgers manager Bill Russell and general manager Fred Claire had the appearance of still another bold move by new owner Fox.

But Peter O'Malley, who sold the team to Rupert Murdoch's Fox Corp., and remained the Dodgers' chairman of the board, insisted Monday that he would have done the same thing even if the team didn't have new ownership.

"I've been asked 100 times since this morning, 'If the O'Malleys still owned the team, would you have done the same thing?'" he said. "The honest answer is yes. I've been disappointed in the team's performance."

"I felt we were flat and had been for some time."

Tom Lasorda, who retired as the Dodgers' manager in 1996 and has remained as a vice president, will become the GM for the rest of this season.

Glenn Hoffman, who was the manager at Triple-A Albuquerque and who played for Lasorda during part of his nine-year major league career, will replace Russell on an interim basis.

Team president and CEO Bob Graziano said Hoffman could have the interim removed from his title if the team does well the rest of this season.

Lasorda helped Hoffman don a

blue and white No. 22 Dodgers jersey.

"Wear it with pride, dignity and character," Lasorda told him.

The firings Sunday are the latest major changes under the Fox ownership. The Dodgers recently traded fan favorites Hideo Nomo and Mike Piazza, who had spent his entire career with Los Angeles. Both are with the New York Mets.

The Dodgers, who missed the playoffs last season under Russell, were 12 and a half games behind first-place San Diego in the NL West going into Monday night's interleague game against Anaheim.

Graziano, promoted to team president and CEO when Fox bought the Dodgers, said the decision to fire Russell and Claire was his, in consultation with O'Malley.

"It's always a difficult transition when you transition out people who have been with the organization for many years," said Graziano, who also said that he informed Fox of his decision and "that was extent of their involvement."

Lasorda, 70, who remains a fan favorite in his 49th season with the club, was elected to the Hall of Fame last year. He guided the Dodgers to two World Series titles, but the last was a decade ago.

"It was sad to see both Billy and Fred leave, but we've got to look forward and think about the future," Lasorda said. "There is a lot of talent here."

"These fellas can play better baseball. Our job is to get this ball club (going) in the right direction."

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