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Slumping Lakers fire Del Harris

By John Nadel
The Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — In with the Worm, and out with the coach.

The slumping Los Angeles Lakers, considered one of the teams to beat in the NBA this season, fired coach Del Harris on Wednesday on the heels of three road losses in as many days.

The move was announced while Dennis Rodman, the NBA's leading rebounder the last seven seasons, was participating in his first practice session with the team after signing a contract Tuesday.

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

West said longtime assistant Bill Bertka will handle the head coaching duties Thursday night

against the winless Los Angeles Clippers in Anaheim before a decision is made on Drew or Rambis, both former Lakers players.

West didn't say when a final decision would be made, and added he had not spoken to former Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson or anyone else because things happened so quickly.

West also pointed out the Lakers usually hire coaches from within, and Harris said he hoped Rambis or Drew would get the job.

"I just feel the last two games we've played have not been acceptable," West said, referring to a 117-113 overtime loss in Denver on Monday night and a 93-83 loss at Vancouver on Tuesday night. "I just felt like there was a deterioration."

Denver's victory was only its second in 10 games this season, and the Grizzlies had never beat-

en Los Angeles in 12 previous games.

"I talked to [owner] Jerry Buss this morning and we just felt like the time was right now," West said. "Right now, we look like we're floundering. That's not what the fans pay to see."

The losses left the young, talented Lakers at 6-6 with 38 games remaining in the abbreviated season.

"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."

Harris, 61, was in his fifth season. He guided the Lakers to a 224-116 record and improved their regular-season record in four consecutive years, a feat accomplished by only eight other coaches in NBA history.

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Sports Brief

NCAA no longer bound by Title IX, court says

The United States Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that Title IX of the Education Acts of 1972 does not apply to the NCAA, the governing body of collegiate athletics.

The decision declared that just because the NCAA receives funding from federally financed col-

leges and universities does not mean it must also adhere to Title IX's regulations, which are aimed toward equaling opportunity between the sexes on collegiate playing fields.

James O'Fallon, faculty representative of the University Athletic Department, said the decision does not affect Oregon or any other universities around the nation now or in the foreseeable future.

"The effort was to make any organization receiving funding from a covered organization also covered by Title IX," O'Fallon said. "So it would have been a phenomenal extension of the coverage of the act."

The lawsuit was based upon claims of sexual bias from Renee Smith, an Ohio woman who said she was illegally ruled ineligible to play college volleyball.

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