Eastman steps down as WSU men's hoops coach

By John K. Wiley

PULLMAN, Wash. - Washington State men's basketball coach Kevin Eastman resigned Wednesday, saying "common sense and reality" dictated the move.

WSU athletic director Rick Dickson made the announcement a day after firing women's basketball coach Harold Rhodes and four days after the men's team finished the season in the Pacific-10 Conference cellar at 4-14.

"Emotion didn't even play a part in this thing ... common sense and reality did," Eastman said of his decision. "And reality is, recruiting would have been very dif-

ficult under the circumstances, and recruiting is the lifeblood of any program.

Dickson said he hoped to have replacements announced for Eastman and Rhodes around the time of the men's NCAA Final Four, which begins March 27.

Eastman said he gave Dickson a list of possible successors and acknowledged that Gonzaga head coach Dan Monson was on it.

Dickson said he had not yet contacted any prospective coaches for either job but had begun assembling a campus panel to help conduct the searches.

Reached at the NCAA regional tournament in Seattle, Monson

said he would assess his opportunities after the season ends.

"I don't have any interest in any job right now. I've got a great one, Monson said. "I love it at Gonzaga. I haven't thought of any other

Eastman, 43, said he resigned rather than face the "heavy, heavy scrutiny and maybe some craziness" in the final year of a fiveyear contract that was extended for a year after the Cougars' 1996 NIT appearance.

He said he wanted to avoid hurting the chances of his returning players because of poor re-

"We were getting hit pretty hard

this year in recruiting," he said.
"We were getting hammered big time.'

Eastman said he called the coaches or parents Tuesday night of four prep recruits who commit-ted early to WSU to tell them of his

Dickson said Eastman agreed to step down after a meeting Tuesday to evaluate the season.

"In that process, Kevin and I came to the agreement on exactly the status of our program and where we were," Dickson told a news conference.

"I did not ask for his resignation," Dickson said. "At his estimation, this was the best direction to go."

Eastman said the recent disappointments led to his decision.

"With some of the knocks we took this year both on the floor and in other areas, and what maybe surrounds the program because of those knocks, recruiting would have been very difficult,

"I want our guys to be very successful. I think we are quite close to having the type of season we would want to have. ... However, we are not there yet.

"I think you have to really think about those you're leading, and I think you have to make decisions based on what's best for them," he

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