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# McKay has work cut out for him

By Landon Hall  
The Associated Press

CORVALLIS (AP) — Ritchie McKay stirred the passions of Oregon State basketball fans Monday, recalling the school's rich past while assuring them that he's here for the near future.

"I don't want to make promises that I can't fulfill, but I'm really excited and have a vision for this program to get to a position where they return to the glory days," McKay said in his first public appearance since being named the Beavers' coach last Friday.

"I don't know if we can be No. 1 in the nation, but I do think we can get in the postseason," he added.

McKay, 34, coached at Portland State for two years and Colorado State for the last two, with his eye apparently on the University of Washington, where he was an assistant from 1993-95.

Flanked by orange and black balloons, McKay tried to assure the small gathering of boosters at Gill Coliseum that Oregon State has all the qualities he would have wanted in Seattle — namely, that it's part of the Pac-10 and in the Northwest, where he said he had longed to return.

"I think there are so many things you can build on here in Corvallis, and I'm very anxious to get started and hopefully restore the tradition and pride that we once had," he said.

"In other words, I'm not looking to go anywhere."

McKay's deal, which will pay him about \$350,000 to \$400,000

annually including endorsements and other bonuses, includes a buyout clause that will force any other school to pay around \$250,000 to hire him away, athletic director Mitch Barnhart said.

Oregon State had to pay a much smaller amount — \$108,000 — to get him out of his final four years at Colorado State. Washington was the only school that would have been exempt from the clause.

"He never raised that issue with us," Barnhart said of the buyout clause. "Ritchie's made it very clear — he wants to be here for a long time."

McKay, who said he felt "sorrow" when Eddie Payne was fired at OSU on March 12, added that it was "a bit agonizing" to leave Fort Collins. He also said he was misquoted two years ago when he reportedly called Colorado State his "dream job."

"I did say I had dreamed of playing at Colorado State, but I never called it my dream job," McKay said.

McKay also put to rest his rumored concerns about the aging, rundown facilities at OSU, namely Gill Coliseum. It was no coincidence that Monday's feel-good news conference was inside the 50-year-old building.

"I think Gill Coliseum is a great place to play," he said. "I'm excited, especially to play the Ducks, get the place packed and see if we can't make some noise in here. I really think this atmosphere and the tradition are great positives to build on."

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