

Coach Hamilton resigns from 19-63 Wizards

By Joseph White
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Leonard Hamilton, Michael Jordan's hand-picked rookie coach of the Washington Wizards, announced his resignation Wednesday night following a season-ending loss to the Toronto Raptors.

Hamilton was summoned to Jordan's office immediately after the game, leaving assistant Larry Drew to hold the customary post-game news conference. Hamilton and Jordan met for at least two hours before Hamilton made his surprise announcement.

"I've decided to resign as coach of the Washington Wizards, effective

immediately," Hamilton said. "I think it's in the best interests of everybody that I allow their progress to move on with me going in another direction."

Hamilton said he had been thinking about quitting for "quite some time," but had given no indication of his plans. Before the game, he said he was planning a full day at the office Thursday. He gave no explanation for not telling the players of the decision after the game, saying only that he had just told his wife after the long meeting with Jordan.

"I kept this as close to the vest as possible," Hamilton said.

When challenged on whether he was forced to resign, Hamilton said:

"I'm straightforward and honest in what I said."

Even though the team said Hamilton had been summoned by Jordan, Hamilton said he and Jordan had "made this decision that we would talk a while back."

If the Wizards had fired Hamilton, they would have been obligated to pay him the remaining three guaranteed years — worth \$6 million — of his four-year, \$8 million contract. By resigning, Hamilton forfeits that money, unless Jordan offered to buy him out in exchange for making the departure a resignation.

Jordan left the building without comment. A team spokesman said no statement would be made, other

than Hamilton's.

Hamilton becomes the third full-time Wizards coach to resign or be fired in three seasons, and the second in Jordan's 15 months as president of basketball operations.

The Wizards (19-63) fell 98-92 to the Raptors to set the franchise record for most losses in a season. The 63 losses is one more than the 1961-62 Chicago Packers, who finished 18-62 in an 80-game schedule two years before the team moved to the Baltimore-Washington area.

Hamilton, 52, rebuilt college programs at Oklahoma State (1986-90) and Miami (1990-2000) before Jordan lured him to the professional ranks. Jordan was determined to hire

a college coach and pursued Hamilton after talks with St. John's Mike Jarvis fell through.

Hamilton, by his own admission, had a tough learning curve in his first year in the NBA. He tried to stay in the shadows while Jordan attempted to make trades to free salary cap room in future years.

On Tuesday, Hamilton said he was "disappointed" in his own performance this season.

"I have to say that I'm unhappy and I'm disappointed, because I don't feel that I have been able to — regardless of injuries, trades — have the types of wins that we needed to have," Hamilton said.

Canseco teams with twin brother at independent Newark

By Ben Walker
The Associated Press

Jose Canseco, hoping to prove he's healthy enough to play again in the majors, decided Wednesday night to join his twin brother on the Newark Bears of the independent Atlantic League.

"It's a great situation for me," Canseco said from his home in Miami. "I'm looking forward to getting there."

"I didn't want to get locked into a Triple-A deal

where one team controlled my contract. Now, if a major league team wants me, they can go ahead and grab me."

Released by the Anaheim Angels right before opening day, Canseco had an offer from the Toronto Blue Jays to sign with Triple-A Syracuse. His agent, Jeff Borris, also had been talking to the New York Yankees about playing for Triple-A Columbus, though no deal was in place.

Canseco hit 15 home runs with 49 RBIs in a combined 329 at-bats for Tampa Bay and the

Yankees last season. He batted .252 in 98 games, his playing time cut once he joined the eventual World Series champions in early August.

Now, he'll be playing close to New York, across the Hudson River in New Jersey.

The minor-league Bears, owned by former Yankees catcher Rick Cerone, open their 140-game season May 4 at Nashua, N.H. Their first home game is May 11. Newark starts its 10-day spring training this weekend at the Kansas City Royals' complex in Haines City, Fla.

The 36-year-old slugger ranks 23rd on the career home run list with 446. The 1988 AL MVP has been picked for six All-Star teams, most recently in 1999 with the Devil Rays.

Last season, Ozzie Canseco set Atlantic League records with 48 home runs and 129 RBIs. The Cansecos played together briefly for the Oakland Athletics in 1990.

"It'll be fun playing again with my brother," Jose Canseco said. "We haven't done that for a while."

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (April 19). If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. This especially pertains to travel, higher education and true love. The first setback is educational, but by the end of April, you should have found the information you need. Stick to your budget in May, ignoring temptations to splurge. After a debit is paid in June, go out and celebrate. Where do you want to live, how, and with whom? Choose wisely in July. Reconnect to a goal in August, and to your mate in October. The other way around works, too. Break out of the ordinary in December. Friends inspire you in February to do good deeds for others. That's what you'll value most highly when you add up your wins and losses in March.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is a 6 — Problems surface, but that's good. You want them out where you can see them. Don't believe everything you read. Check for errors. Encourage a distant friend to proceed with caution.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 5 — Keep your cards close to the vest for a little while longer. Keep your money in your pocket, too. It's not quite time to make your move. Meanwhile, gather information. Listen through keyholes. You'll get an earful.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 6 — Whatever can go wrong most likely will. Things won't be where you left them, or get to where they should be going. A friend will come to your rescue just in the nick of time. This is one of those days when you'll find out who your real friends are. Be one, too.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is a 6 — Your favorite brat will be in a better mood after the big job is completed. Unfortunately, all is not going smoothly. Don't cringe; it's not your fault. Remind the impatient one to chill out.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 7 — You've got lofty dreams, and you want them all to come true right now. That's not going to happen. If it were that easy, where would the challenge be? The challenge is what makes them

lofty dreams.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is a 6 — This is another of those scrambled days. Everybody is hurrying off in different directions. They're worried, but are they efficient? Are they getting anything done? You can figure that out. If you steer them straight, you'll be the hero.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Today is a 7 — There's more work and less fun, unless you can make the work fun. Creativity is required, and that's a plus. What you already know doesn't work, which is a minus. That rowdy partner of yours could have the answer. That can either be a plus or minus, depending on you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — Today is a 6 — Today, you're the one who offers comfort. Isn't it strange how that happens? One day you take, the next day you get a chance to pay back. Provide something a loved one needs — at no charge.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — Today is a 6 — You're getting into the tough part. This is when you really appreciate all that homework and planning you've done. You have done the homework and planning, haven't you?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Today is a 6 — Work-related hassles have you jumping. There'll be all sorts of surprises, and maybe even some breakage. If you pay attention, you can prevent disaster. Conditions are changing for the better, but it will take a little while.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — Today is a 7 — Once you get the financial situation straightened out, everything will go smoothly. With luck, you'll enter into this state of bliss over the weekend. Meanwhile, keep smiling, and keep dialing.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Today is a 7 — You may be slightly tweaked by a couple of irritations. You might even feel pushed to make a change. Maybe that's not a bad idea. It's important that you are treated with respect. Insist upon it. If you aren't getting it where you are, why are you there?

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