



The waiting game ends with Runge's resignation



TWO MINUTES FOR CROSSCHECKING

PETER HOCKADAY

If you love sports, there's nothing worse than waiting. Even baseball games only take a few hours to wrap up.

And boy, did we wait for those words to come out of Athletic Director Bill Moos' mouth Monday afternoon.

We waited nearly two months, but it seemed like two years.

Finally, Oregon women's basketball head coach Jody Runge decided to end our endless monotony. She stepped down. Flew the coop. Took a hike.

Good riddance? I don't think so.

We are in no position to judge Jody Runge's character. We have no idea what she's like off the court, in her home.

We do know she yelled at her players. We do know, for a fact, that she made poor decisions dealing with the social aspect of her team. We know she stalked the sidelines like a general, and she was no Beetle Bailey.

But college prepares you for the real world, and that — like Jody Runge — is harsh. Angelina Wolvert and Jenny Mowe started training for the WNBA immediately after losing in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, and both were drafted. Shaquala Williams, when she graduates, will be drafted. A host of other Oregon seniors will probably go on to play ball in Europe, or South America, or wherever.

The real world. Scary, isn't it?

The real world is populated by people such as Eugene resident Paula Gourley, an ex-teacher who said she once filed a pay-equity lawsuit against a state university.

"The rules for women are different," Gourley said. "If women speak out, they will pay a bigger price than anybody, and now Runge will be tainted."

It's doubtful that all the players heading into post-collegiate basketball will have sickly sweet, roses-in-your-mailbox coaches when they get there. For every Ernie Kent, there's a Jody Runge. For every Joe Torre, there's a Bobby Knight.

Not to say that Runge should have been reinstated, given a Mercedes and sent on her way to diagram plays for



Emerald

Former Oregon women's basketball head coach Jody Runge guided the Ducks to an 87-19 record at McArthur Court.

■ The Duck players give their thanks to Runge, but they are looking forward to moving on

By Jeff Smith

Oregon Daily Emerald

There weren't any signs of sadness. No sight of grief.

Rather, the Oregon women's basketball players greeted the news of coach Jody Runge's resignation Monday with a strong sense of relief, as if the dark clouds that hung over their heads had cleared.

"We're just pleased that it's over with and there's finally closure on the issue and we don't have to answer any more questions about what's going to happen," point guard Shaquala Williams said. "We can move on."

As Athletic Director Bill Moos announced the news in a press conference in the Casanova Center Monday afternoon, the players were already trying to put the past behind them by holding a workout in the Moshofsky Center.

The team has grown weary of the controversy that has circled them ever since news leaked of the eight unidentified players meeting with Moos on March 4 to air their concerns about Runge.

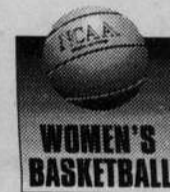
"We were all kind of in limbo for about eight weeks, not knowing what was going to happen," forward Ndidi Unaka said. "I think a lot of us feel relief that finally something has happened."

Many players admitted they didn't even read the newspapers or watch the numerous television reports that regarded their program and the private law firm that was investigating it.

"Got tired of it," Williams said. "Every time some new rumor comes up, people are calling your house and wanting to get an interview, so we're happy it's over with."

Those individuals who did speak Monday, though, made sure to thank Runge for bringing them into the program and for raising Oregon women's basketball to a high level. In eight seasons, Runge coached the Ducks to eight NCAA Tournament appearances and to a combined record of 160-73.

"I think everyone needs to give



Turn to Hockaday, page 9

Turn to Players, page 9

Runge era was filled with wins, but also controversy

■ Jody Runge enjoyed unparalleled success on the court, but her actions off it prompted a closer look

By Robbie McCallum
Oregon Daily Emerald

She is, for now, the most successful coach in Oregon basketball history. And while her exit from the University will be clouded by controversy, Jody Runge's tenure at Oregon was filled with nothing but success on the court.

It ended Monday after eight years of service when Runge resigned as head

coach of the women's basketball team.

"The events of the last six weeks have led me to the conclusion that it is in the best interests of the program to resign at this time," Runge said in a released statement.

Runge was hired in 1993 following the firing of 17-year veteran Elwin Heiny. She took over a 9-18 program that hadn't had a winning season in three years.

"I'm very excited about the opportunity to coach at a prestigious institution like Oregon," Runge told the Emerald on April 9, 1993, when she was hired. "I want to put Oregon back on the map."

The former Missouri assistant had immediate success, guiding the hungry Ducks to a 20-9 record and their first NCAA Tournament appearance since 1987.

Runge would find much more success on the court over the next seven years. Her Oregon teams won no fewer than 17 games and qualified for the NCAA Tournament each year.

Off the court, however, tensions began to rise between Runge and the Athletic Department. As early as 1995, Runge and then-Athletic Director Rich Brooks battled over an extension of her one-year, \$42,000 contract. This started a rift between Runge and the Athlet-

ic Department that lasted until her resignation Monday.

Following the Ducks' third straight NCAA Tournament appearance under Runge, more trouble arose. Runge revoked the scholarship of sophomore Kristin Niemann after the 1995-96 season, causing Niemann to leave the team and go into psychological counseling.

Later in the year, guard Elsa Oliveira accused assistant coach Kelly Kebe of slapping her in the face. At the beginning of the 1996-97 season, two Australian players, Renae Fegent and Natasha O'Brien, were suspended for

Turn to History, page 8



RUNGE