

Trailblazers: Musical chairs again

by Ron Sykes

Rolland Todd, Jack McCloskey, Lenny Wilkens, and the beat goes on. For those of you that are new to Blazer basketball the above named fellows are former Trailblazer coaches. Tuesday, at a press conference called by the Blazers, Jack Ramsay was handed the reins and will attempt to do what no other coach in Blazer history has done, that is to lift the Blazers to the play-offs.

So with Ramsay's hiring the question is: Were the Blazers fair to Lenny Wilkens? Wilkens believes that with a little more time he could have produced a winner. Last year, Lenny's first, the team put together 38 wins, the most ever for a Portland team. This was accomplished with an injured Bill Walton. So naturally things looked promising for the next year. But as we all know these promises quickly fell by the wayside with reoccurring injuries to Bill.

It has been said that with Walton in the line-up the Blazers were a solid championship team, and that could further be substantiated by their performance in that memorable seven game stretch back in January, where they literally blew everyone out. During this much talked about stretch the team was altogether and one could easily see the things finally falling together -- at last we had a team.

So it is my belief that Coach Wilkens was fired too hastily. When asked about his firing, Lenny had this to say. "He told me the reason was that we hadn't made enough progress in the last two seasons," Wilkens said.

Wilkens said the whole thing was a surprise to him. "I had heard rumors, but I didn't pay much attention to them," he said. "I really didn't think this was going to happen. Less than a week ago, I was looking ahead to the Collegiate draft and to our rookie camp."

Wilkens seemed a little bitter, and one can easily understand why. His final statement was, "I can see it now. Walton will stay healthy all next season and Jack will become coach of the year." I don't know about Ramsay becoming coach of the year but I'm almost positive that Bill won't stay healthy all year.

So it brings us back to "Happy Jack" Ramsay. What are his goals? What are his plans as far as making changes?

On a local talk show Tuesday evening, Ramsay said, "I like to play a big forward and a small forward. I believe it gives the team a tremendous amount of flexibility." If Ramsay adheres to this philosophy, then we will no longer see Super Sid and Lloyd Neal on the floor together.

Ramsay says that Petrie is already a premier guard in the NBA and Lionel



LENNY WILKENS

Hollins will be good. I can't agree with Ramsay on this, I believe his analysis is a little off. At best, Geoff is an adequate guard, by no means a premier guard. My

EOC coach retires

Following a distinguished fourteen year coaching career at Eastern Oregon State College, head wrestling coach Erling Odegaard, 52, has announced his retirement because of medical reasons.

Odegaard, whose teams were ranked in the top twenty small college poll at one time for eight years in a row, says that a continuing poor heart condition has brought about the early retirement. "My doctor," Odegaard said, "says that I must immediately cease both coaching and teaching if I want to continue living. I want people to know that my early retirement has nothing to do with the dropping of Wrestling next Fall at EOSC."

The rotund coach, affectionately known by all as "Ode," elaborated further on the decision to drop wrestling and the future of athletics at EOSC: "EOSC has had to make some hard decisions this year. I respect Dr. Briggs' decision and am very supportive of him. He's not out to win a popularity contest. It is my hope that wrestling can one day regain the successful position it has enjoyed at the college for many years. I believe the move will, in the long run, help to strengthen the athletic program."

Over the years, Odegaard's wrestlers received awards as small college All-Americans eighteen times. More than fifty of his former wrestlers are now active in the teaching and coaching ranks throughout the state of Oregon. "Dropping wrestling," Odegaard said, "is like losing a child. But, something had to be done with the fiscal problems faced by the athletic department. Wrestling is not a mandated sport by the Evergreen Conference, and by officially dropping the sport, those wrestlers who want may immediately transfer to another viable wrestling program anywhere in the region."

EOSC President, Dr. Rodney Briggs termed Odegaard's career "one of the most distinguished ever performed by an EOSC coach."



Woman ski racer in national finals -- Lucille McGee, 52, can ski only three hours a day before her ski-injured leg tightens up, but she skied well enough to qualify for the 8th annual Schlitz/NASTAR Finals at Aspen, Colorado, in April. Miss McGee, an electronics assembler from Minneapolis, Minnesota, was the first Black skier to qualify for a NASTAR Finals where the national recreational ski racing championships are decided.

Above, Miss McGee speeds through a gate on the giant slalom finals course. Skiers in eight age and sex classifications won gold, silver and bronze Schlitz Cups.

Pocket billiards tourny here

The first Oregon State Pocket Billiards Tournament sponsored by the National Pocket Billiards Association, Incorporated will be held at the Memorial Coliseum on June 19, 1976.

The National Pocket Billiards Association was organized to foster and develop a greater interest in the playing of pocket billiards and to render a service to business organizations catering to people interested in playing pool.

Play is open to verified tavern and lounge league teams only, as this tournament caters to the amateur player, not

the professional. Prize monies and trophies are to be awarded to the top twenty place teams. The action is to be projected onto a 20' x 30' screen via closed circuit television, portions of which will be taped for future use.

1976 World Open Eight Ball, Nine Ball Pool Champion, Dan Louie, of Seattle, has contracted to exhibit his skills during the tournament.

Disc jockeys from eight local television and radio stations have accepted an offer to play an exhibition match with the winners receiving a trophy.

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belief is that a premier guard would be one that can do it all, so far Petrie doesn't fit this category.

I agree wholeheartedly with Ramsay's assessment of Lionel. He is good now and will be a premier guard in the years to come. Anyone knowing anything about basketball can easily see that Hollins has all the tools. I'm still trying to understand how Blazer fans can cheer Petrie and Steele, and be so hostile toward Lionel. I just can't understand it.

Ramsay has stated that his plans for Larry Steele are at the forward position. Ramsay says that with Steele and Gross among the forwards, there is plenty of speed. Also, he thinks it will be difficult for others to run against the Blazers. I sincerely hope that the Blazers will not stand pat. It is necessary that they re-assess their present situation and make changes as needed. If Mr. Ramsay does elect to go with what he has -- then the beat will indeed go on bad in the game of musical chairs. Mr. Ramsay will find himself without.

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