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SPORTS

Exclusively with Rollie Massimino

"3 X 7," COACH MASS IS HANGING TOUGH

W.G. Ramirez

"A major disappointment; Major Disappointment. But I'm 3-times-7 and I can handle it," commented UNLV Head Coach Rollie Massimino, while using his hands to display just how tough he is hanging in, while "local-ites": fans, media, boosters, etc., are striving to bring him down.

"Winning cures a lot of woes, but everything else has to be taken care of. This is a great University, a great place to live and I'd like to be a small part of it, of the whole community itself." What many may not realize is that Rollie Massimino is already a BIG part of this community.

Massimino's efforts off the court have been geared toward's local youth, hoping to instill the value of an education. Coach

Mass, who doesn't like to "blow his own horn," has been involved with elementary schools, recreation groups, church groups, Stay In School programs and other assorted activities to help out the kids.

In January, Coach Mass visited with the schools: CP Squires, Kit Carson, Quantah McCall, Gilbert, Matt Kelly and Jo Mackey urging kids to read more. The Reading With Rollie program was a success according to Administrative Assistant John Galascione.

"Coach has exerted a lot of energy and personal time doing community things," says Galascione.

But, with UNLV basketball suffering its worst season in over twenty years, diehard Rebel fans are asking for Rollie's head, and at certain times it seems as if the

local media is giving them a bit of a push. Every Sunday the Las Vegas Review-Journal continues to print letters sent in from readers. The thing that amazes me is that every week, its as if "I Hate Rollie" letters were the only ones that made it to the news room.

This past weekend at the Thomas and Mack Center, UNLV played host to the Big West Tournament, meeting San Jose State in the first round Friday night. The ritual pre-game light show was taken out of the itinerary since "neutral court" rules were in effect, only those attendance decided to provide their own fireworks.

As the introductions concluded, I couldn't believe that "boos" were louder than "cheers" from fans in the seats. Then again from the materialistic town

this has grown to be, it doesn't shock me.

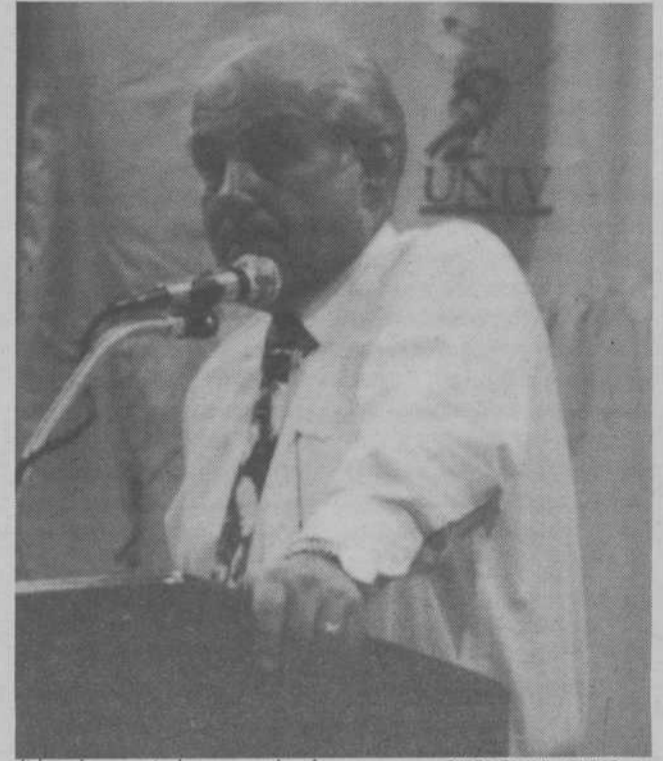
Do you really despise Rollie Massimino this much?

Lets take a look at the season that just passed.

An early season pummeling by UCLA might have been expected. Nobody said the Rebs were going to be the traditional powerhouse. UCLA was! Moving on...

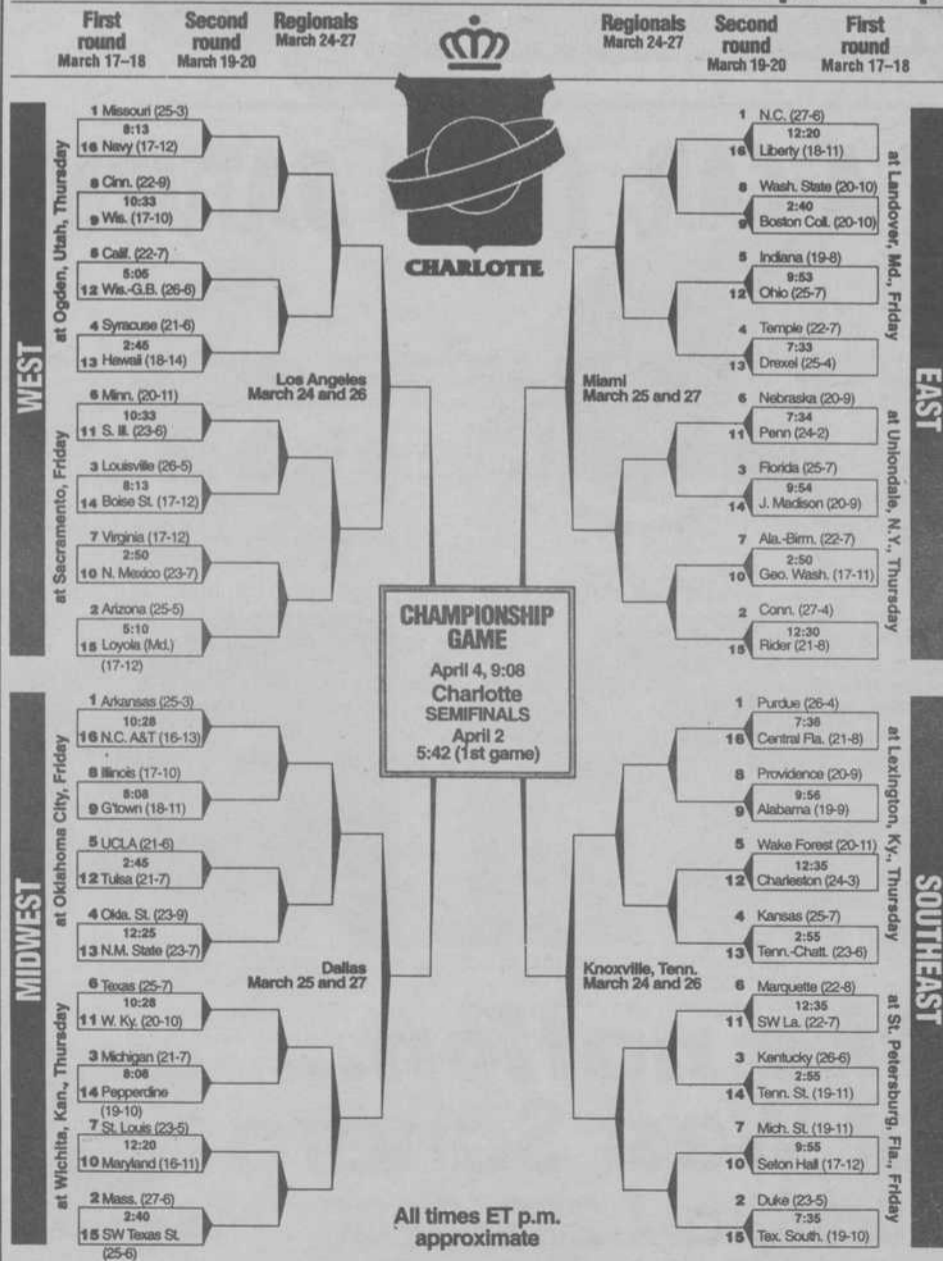
UNLV outplayed Texas A&M but fell short, then dismantled Loyola-Marymount, Vermont, Eastern Kentucky and Adelphi. This is when things began to crumble for Coach Mass.

A humiliating loss to Virginia on ESPN at the 'Mack, raised questions if UNLV could match up with big-time schools they'd grown accustomed to facing. Was UNLV going to sink back



It has been a trying campaign for UNLV Head Coach Rollie Massimino, with critics all over his back. PHOTO: Eric Haber/LVSV Sports

NCAA Division I men's basketball championship



NCAA Division I women's basketball championship

