

Haskins to leave Minnesota coaching job

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Clem Haskins, national coach of the year in 1997 after taking Minnesota to the Final Four, is out of a job although investigators found no evidence implicating him in an academic fraud scandal.

But university President Mark Yudof, who announced a \$1.5 million buyout of Haskins' contract, said it is "extremely likely" that fraud did occur and said a change was necessary to restore confidence.

"It is clear that on his watch, substantial, numerous violations of our academic conduct code have occurred," Yudof said. "We thought it's time for a management change."

Haskins will step down June 30, three years before his 10-year contract was to expire.

He compiled a 240-165

record in 13 seasons. The Gophers lost to Kentucky in the semifinals of the Final Four in 1997.

University officials said they will begin searching for a permanent or interim coach immediately.

Haskins has been under pressure since March, when former tutor Jan Gangelhoff said she did more than 400 pieces of course work for at least 20 basketball players from 1993 to 1998.

In the three months since then, the investigation has widened to include accusations of improper payments, travel irregularities and improper relationships between the team and university police investigating possible crimes involving players.

Haskins asserted his innocence when the scandal broke on the eve of the

Gophers' first-round NCAA game against Gonzaga. Four players were made ineligible for that game, a loss that ended Minnesota's season.

He has maintained since then that he had no knowledge of wrongdoing. Phone calls to his suburban Minnetonka house Friday went unanswered.

But several players stopped by to visit Haskins, and McKinley Boston, vice president for student development and athletics, and talked to the coach at his home.

"He's disappointed, obviously, in the outcome, but he is not bitter," Boston said outside Haskins' home. "He remains loyal to the university. He wants to see the players rally and support each other. He's hoping there is no exodus."

Haskins issued a statement

saying he had been honored to coach the Gophers and would continue to support them. The statement made no mention of the allegations or investigation.

Seven players held a news conference to express their disappointment.

"The past few weeks leading up to this has been tough on me," Gophers center Joel Przybilla said. "Not just for me, for everyone. And today it just broke my heart. I just love the guy to death."

Interim reports from investigators make it "extremely likely there will be numerous findings of academic fraud, primarily and entirely connected to the writing of papers for students," Yudof said.

Though no evidence links Haskins to fraud, "it is clear that public confidence in the academic integrity of the

university has been eroded by the allegations. In order to restore that public confidence, a change in leadership is warranted," Yudof said.

The university is expected to report on its investigation to the NCAA in September. Yudof said earlier this week that the university was likely to sanction itself if its investigation showed wrongdoing. Enforcement records show the NCAA generally is less harsh on universities that deal decisively with rule-breaking.

Yudof acknowledged that people, including Gangelhoff, say Haskins knew about academic cheating by players. But he said "when it comes to direct, provable evidence today — maybe not for all time, but for today — that evidence

does not exist."

As a matter of decency and fairness, Yudof said, he felt the university should honor Haskins' contract. The buyout will be paid with money from the men's athletics department.

The buyout agreement calls for Haskins to cooperate with any investigation and have a joint news conference with the university at a later date.

Jim Lord, an attorney for several people who have alleged wrongdoing in Minnesota athletics, called the buyout bad public policy without considering a challenge to Haskins' contract.

"He orchestrated the scandal and in return they stuffed his pocket so full of money he has to waddle out of Williams Arena," Lord said.

Jurors say they voted for doctor, against Lewis

BOSTON (AP)—Several jurors have ended their silence about the Reggie Lewis malpractice trial, shedding light on the impasse that forced a judge to order a mistrial.

The deadlocked panel voted 9-6 on their final ballot to clear cardiologist Dr. Gilbert Mudge of charges he was careless in treating the late Celtics captain, juror Marian Regan said Friday.

Regan, who is white, said race wasn't an issue during deliberations. Some of the seven minorities on the jury voted with Mudge, while some of the eight whites voted against him, she said.

She also said deliberations focused on medical evidence presented during the trial — evidence that convinced her Mudge had treated Lewis appropriately.

The nearly two-month-long trial against Mudge ended last week after jurors said twice they could not

reach a verdict. Lewis' widow, Donna Harris-Lewis, had accused Mudge of mistreating and misdiagnosing Lewis before his death in July 1993.

Regan, who voted for Mudge, told *The Boston Globe* evidence introduced by Mudge's attorneys of alleged cocaine use by Lewis was not credible.

Mudge alleged Lewis admitted he had used cocaine two weeks before he died. The cardiologist contended the late confession made an accurate diagnosis impossible.

Harris-Lewis denied the cocaine allegations.

"There was no substantiated proof so I didn't even use it in my deliberations," Regan said.

At a May 10, 1993 news conference marking Lewis' discharge from Brigham and Women's Hospital, Mudge said Lewis suffered from neurocardiogenic syncope

and had a normal heart with "no evidence of (heart disease) or abnormal life-threatening arrhythmias."

Yet Mudge testified at the trial that when he spoke to the media he was concerned Lewis might have an arrhythmia.

He said the medication Lewis took twice daily was meant to treat both the fainting disorder and the possible cardiac condition.

"It wasn't Dr. Mudge's fault," Regan said of Lewis' death at age 27. "It wasn't Reggie Lewis's fault. I just don't feel he was negligent."

Regan said the jury needed only one vote to decide consultant Dr. Mark Creager was not negligent and two votes to determine the second consultant in the trial, Dr. Peter Friedman, wasn't negligent.

For Mudge, the jurors voted four times, according to Regan, needed 13 of 15 votes in order to reach a

verdict. The jury split evenly on the first vote before finally settling into a 9-6 division after 35 hours of deliberation.

Also Friday, juror Iris Mederos said the panel did the right thing in not reaching

a verdict on whether Mudge was negligent in caring for Lewis.

"I don't have any regrets about the decision because I think that we did the best job we could," Mederos told

WFXT-TV (Channel 25).

Another juror, who asked not to be identified, told the *Boston Herald* that if the jury had stayed for another two weeks, it still would have remained deadlocked.

Spurs fans welcome champions home

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—The San Antonio Spurs came home Saturday to share their NBA championship trophy with a city starved for a winner. The Spurs won their first NBA title in the franchise's 26-year history, beating the New York Knicks in five games in the finals. San Antonio clinched the series with a 78-77 victory Friday night that touched off a downtown celebration for which fans had ached.

That the Spurs won the series in New York's Madison Square Garden instead of the Alamodome mattered little to the thousands who greeted the team's plane at San Antonio International Airport Saturday afternoon. Nor did it matter that the

championship capped a lockout-shortened season in which the league was often criticized for sloppy play.

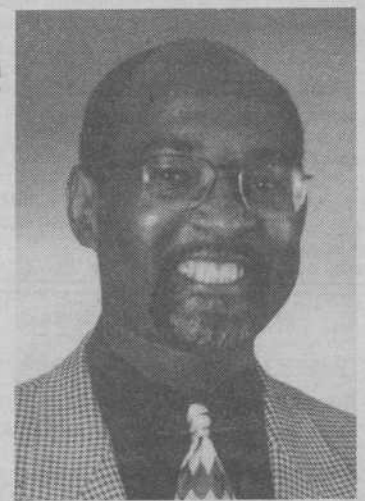
"It's about showing that nice guys do finish first. Hopefully, this is the start of a dynasty. There's a lot of pride with this. It's as important as the Alamo," fan Frank Cassiano said. "Remember the Alamo! Remember the Spurs!"

City merchants agreed. Downtown stores were fully stocked with Spurs championship T-shirts, and congratulatory banners hung in shop windows.

The Spurs returned the appreciation with a full-page ad in the San Antonio Express-News thanking fans for their support.

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