

Media reports: Tapes indict ex-Baylor coach

WACO, Texas (AP) - Former Baylor basketball coach Dave Bliss tried to cover up alleged NCAA violations by telling assistant coaches and players to lie and say a slain player had been dealing drugs to pay for school, secretly recorded audiotapes reveal.

The recordings were made by an assistant coach who turned them over to Baylor and NCAA investigators on Friday. Copies of the tapes were obtained by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

"The tapes reveal a desperate man trying to figure out how to cover himself and

to cover up" NCAA violations, said Kirk Watson, counsel for Baylor's in-house investigations committee.

Bliss talked to two or three players about the scheme, although only one took the phony story to investigators and he has since recanted. Watson would not identify the player.

Neither Bliss nor any of his assistant coaches actually used the fake story with investigators, Watson said.

The review committee found no evidence Patrick Dennehy was involved in drug dealing.

Watson said the tapes

would be turned over to prosecutors to determine whether a crime had been committed.

Neither Bliss nor assistant coach Abar Rouse, who made the tapes, could be reached for comment Saturday. An AP reporter went to Bliss's home, where no one answered the door and the blinds were drawn. Attempts to reach Baylor players and other assistant coaches Saturday were unsuccessful.

Bliss, however, acknowledged the cover-up to the Star-Telegram and The Dallas Morning News in Saturday's editions.

"The bizarre circum-

stances painted me into a corner and I chose the wrong way to react," he said. "I have cooperated completely and will continue to do so because I have disappointed a lot of people."

Bliss was among 10 Baylor officials to attend Dennehy's memorial service on Aug. 7, the day before he resigned as coach.

"I keep going back to him shaking my hand and me thanking him for coming," Dennehy's stepfather, Brian Brabazon, said in a telephone interview Saturday after learning of the tapes. "Had I had even an inkling of this, I

would have grabbed his hand and his throat and thrown him against the wall and beat him."

In a statement Friday night, Baylor President Robert B. Sloan Jr. said he felt betrayed by Bliss' attempt "to suppress and conceal the truth."

Earlier this month, Sloan said an internal review found that two players had received improper tuition payments and that Bliss had admitted involvement. The tapes reveal an attempt to divert investigators away from those improper payments.

"I think the thing we want to do - and you think about this - if there's a way we can create the perception that Pat may have been a dealer," Bliss is heard saying on one tape. "Even if we had to kind of make some things look a little better than they are, that can save us."

Rouse, who joined Baylor on June 1, said he made the secret recordings after Bliss told him he would lose his job if he didn't help carry out the deception.

Bill Underwood, a member of the Baylor internal committee, told the Morning News that the panel also found that Bliss wrote scripts for players and coaches to review before talking with authorities. The scripts included fabrications alluding to drug use by Dennehy.

Bliss said on the tapes that Dennehy couldn't deny the

allegations because he was dead.

"When he said Patrick couldn't refute that, he forgot something: Patrick's other half - me," Dennehy's girlfriend, Jessica De La Rosa, said Saturday. "I'm still here and I will speak for him. I will defend him with everything that I have."

In one conversation, Bliss indicated another player, Harvey Thomas, would be willing to lie about Dennehy's activities because Baylor coaches had publicly denied knowledge of threats Thomas allegedly made to Dennehy before Dennehy's disappearance.

"Harvey will do anything," Bliss told Rouse. "And the reason is because we did it for Harvey."

Thomas has denied making threats or any involvement in Dennehy's death. A former teammate, Carlton Dotson, has been charged with Dennehy's murder.

Dennehy, whose body was found in a field outside Waco on July 25, died from two gunshot wounds to the head. An autopsy found no alcohol, opiates, amphetamines or barbiturates in his system, but his body was too decomposed to test for marijuana.

Dotson told FBI agents that he shot Dennehy after the player tried to shoot him, according to the arrest warrant affidavit. But after his arrest, Dotson told The Associated Press that he "didn't confess to anything."

Film parallels Kobe Bryant debacle

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Sometimes life really does imitate art. Or the other way around.

A highly respected NBA star's life is turned upside down after a woman accuses him of rape. That's both the story of Kobe Bryant and the plot of an independent film that completed shooting last February, months before Bryant's real-life drama began.

"I was just amazed," Jennifer Harper, the film's writer and director, told the Los Angeles Times recently. "We were calling each other like, 'Can you believe the timing of this?'"

The movie was the brainchild of Portland Trail Blazers center Dale Davis, who hopes to have it sold to a distributor before the



Portland Trailblazer Dale Davis has produced a movie about an NBA player accused of rape. The film predates the problems surrounding LA Lakers superstar Kobe Bryant.

upcoming NBA season.

Even more remarkable, Harper said, is that Bryant was the model for the lead character, played by actor Allen Payne.

"In rehearsals, Allen Payne asked, 'What athlete is this based on?' I said, 'Just think of Kobe Bryant,'" Harper said. "He's loved by

everybody. He has all the endorsements. That's who this character is."

Bryant, who turns 25 later this month, was charged July 18 with felony sexual assault of a 19-year-old woman in Colorado.

In the film, Payne plays Cedric Tinsley, a 27-year-old NBA superstar who is the

subject of a paternity suit by a woman who threatens to accuse him of rape if he doesn't agree to an out-of-court settlement.

The movie's title, "Playas Ball," refers to the party held during NBA All-Star week, which attracts professional athletes and others. Davis, who financed it for less than \$1 million through his Atlanta-based company, World Ain't Right Entertainment, said he made it to show how high-profile athletes can be exploited.

"It happens to athletes in general, entertainers in general," he told the Times. "Sometimes these are the things you have to go through if you have money, and the extent some people will go through to try and get it."

NFL camp aims to assist minority coaches

By Donald Hunt

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHILADELPHIA (NNPA)—Eighty-one Black coaches are taking part in this summer's NFL Minority Coaching Fellowship Program. In two of the past three years, graduates of the program have become NFL head coaches: Herman Edwards of the New York Jets in 2001 and Marvin Lewis of the Cincinnati Bengals this year.

The program, begun in 1987, annually provides NFL training-camp positions to minority coaches. Many current NFL coaches have participated in the program.

"I am a head coach in the NFL today because of the opportunity the program provided me," said Edwards,

who interned with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1989. "The program is really the thing that jump-starts your career. It really worked perfectly for me. I was in the right place at the right time."

Lewis interned with the San Francisco 49ers in 1988 and the Chiefs in 1991. He went on to build one of the most dominant defenses in NFL history as the defensive coordinator of the Super Bowl XXXV-champion Baltimore Ravens.

"I believe I have a situation to uphold," Lewis said. "I represent coaches who came up the way I did—from Division I-AA and being a graduate assistant. This is a positive step—White, Black or green. Winning football

games and working hard at it, that's what people appreciate."

Ironically, Lewis' first game as the Bengals' head coach was against Edwards on Aug. 10. The Jets won 28-13.

Another graduate of the coaching fellowship program, Karl Dorrell, was appointed head coach at the University of California-LA last December. Dorrell interned with the Denver Broncos in 1993 and 1999, and spent the past three seasons as the club's coach for wide receivers.

As part of training camp coaching staffs, the fellowship coaches perform duties that mirror those of full-time NFL assistant coaches. They

become working members of the NFL staffs for the summer and are responsible for specific assignments, including planning and directing workouts, formulating scrimmage and preseason-game strategies, breaking down videotape, and evaluating players. Nearly 900 coaches have worked in the training camps.

The Eagles have four minority coaches from the program in training camp gaining valuable work experience. They are Frank Gonzalez (no affiliation), Kevin Ramsey (Arizona State), James Salgado (Hofstra) and Jimmie Johnson (Shaw University).

Donald Hunt writes for the Philadelphia Tribune.

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