

BASKETBALL • Health

MUNCIE

Ball State fires Buckley, entire coaching staff

Ball State fired Tim Buckley as its basketball coach Wednesday after the Cardinals finished their worst season in nearly two decades.

Buckley was 143-139 in six years at Ball State, including 10-18 overall and 6-12 in the Mid-American Conference this season as the Cardinals finished with a losing record for the third time in four years.

His best season was in 2001-02, when the Cardinals finished 23-12 after upsets of Kansas and UCLA in the season-opening Maui Invitational. They won the MAC's West Division and received a bid to the National Invitation Tournament.

Since then, Buckley's only winning season was 15-13 in 2004-05.

Assistant coaches Steve Lynch, Jay Bryant and Jamall Walker also were removed. Michael Bennett, a former Ball State player and director of basketball operations this season, will remain with the program.



BUCKLEY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Brees said doctors gave him a 90 percent chance of a full recovery immediately after he had surgery in January to repair a torn labrum and partially torn rotator cuff in his right shoulder. He was spending about six hours a day on rehab and expects to begin throwing again by mid-to late-April.

"Definitely by training camp I'll be out there getting ready to have a great season," Brees said. "No concern whatsoever."

It doesn't matter what Brees says at this point. He's no longer trying to sell himself, having already signed a six-year, \$60 million contract that guarantees him \$10 million now with a \$12 million option in his second year.

If he comes through as promised, he'll earn about \$25 million in his first two years, including base salary, and the Saints will be doing something that's a bit of a novelty: winning.

Brees is undaunted by New Orleans' recent struggles, and he has the track record to back up his confidence, from his college days at Purdue to his first five years in the NFL with San Diego.

"It seems like at San Diego, and then the Chargers and then to here, it's kind of a situation where maybe they had a couple of rough seasons," Brees said. "The community was just craving that winner. And maybe there was a change, like a new coach, a new attitude and you're just able to step in and become a winner."

"That's what we did at Purdue and at San Diego, and now we plan on doing that here."

It didn't go quite that way in San Diego. Brees struggled often in his first few seasons, prompting the Chargers to trade for Philip Rivers during the 2004 draft.

The move seemed to motivate Brees, who threw for a combined 6,735 yards and 51 touchdowns during the past two seasons in leading San Diego to 20 victories and a playoff appearance in 2004.

He injured himself during the final game of the 2005 season. Yet Saints coach Sean Payton, a former college quarterback with a brief pro career in Canada and a replacement player in the NFL, made up his mind that Brees was a proven winner who could be effective by fall.

He noted Brees' 16-0 record in high school, his success making Purdue a Big Ten contender and recent success in San Diego.

"Those aren't by accident. That track record at this position is, I think, critical in the evaluation process," Payton said.

In other NFL news

CLEVELAND

McGinest joins Browns

Linebacker Willie McGinest signed with Cleveland on Wednesday, leaving New England to rejoin Browns coach and former Patriots defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel.

The 34-year-old McGinest, a member of three Super Bowl winning teams, had been with the Patriots since getting drafted in the first round in 1994. He's the NFL career leader in postseason sacks with 16 and has 78 in the regular season.

He signed a three-year, \$12 million deal with \$6 million in guarantees and incentives.

SEATTLE

Seahawks keep Bernard

NFC champion Seattle re-signed defensive lineman Rocky Bernard, who led the Seahawks in sacks in 2005. Bernard had been widely sought on the market.

The Seahawks also re-signed wide receiver and punt returner Peter Warrick, the fourth overall pick in the 2000 draft, whom they picked up when he was cut last season by Cincinnati.

NASHVILLE, Tenn.

Hope leaves Steelers

The Tennessee Titans agreed to a six-year contract with free-agent safety Chris Hope, who started the past 32 regular-season games for Pittsburgh. He had a career-high three interceptions last season.

"Pittsburgh was a great place," Hope said. "I was limited to just play in the middle of the field, but I have the ability to play either safety."

NEW YORK

Giants add safety

The New York Giants signed free safety Will Demps, who played his first four seasons with Baltimore.

Demps and newly signed veteran cornerback Sam Madison are likely to be starters for the NFC East champions, who earlier signed R.W. McQuarters and two other defensive backs to shore up what was one of the weakest secondaries in the NFL last season.

Pearl has Volunteers flexing their muscles

By KEITH PARSONS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENSBORO, N.C.

It's hard to say which was a worse look for Tennessee coach Bruce Pearl: the garish orange blazer he wore a few times this season or the sweat-soaked suit that clung to his body in a game at Florida.

Either way, he doesn't plan to change anything about his sideline persona.

"I'm not a fashion plate," he said Wednesday. "I try to bring a lot of passion to what I do. We do everything with a great deal of intensity, and that sometimes brings attention to yourself. I don't mean to."

In his first year, Pearl has the 18th-ranked Volunteers (21-7) back in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2001 after they won the East division of the Southeastern Conference over Florida and Kentucky.

Perhaps that partially explains why they received a No. 2 seed in the Washington Regional despite losing three of their past four games. Tennessee plays 15th-seeded Winthrop (23-7) in the first round today.

"We understand there's been a lot of discussion about whether we deserved a No. 2 seed," Pearl said. "We had an unbelievable regular season. We've got to find the hunger once again to prove people that we're deserving and



AP PHOTO

Tennessee men's basketball coach Bruce Pearl talks with his team during practice for the NCAA Tournament in Greensboro, N.C., on Wednesday.

continue to bring honor to Tennessee basketball."

He already tried to do that with the bright blazer he donned for the four games against Kentucky and Vanderbilt this season, a nod to the one worn by Ray Mears, the longtime Tennessee coach.

Mears' 278 career victories is the most in school history, and his success against those rivals was unprecedented.

Pearl had a bit of his own earlier this season, helping the Vols win at Rupp Arena for the first time in seven years. As his players began celebrating on the bench during the waning seconds, he hid behind to act as if they'd been there before.

Yet when everyone reached the locker room, Pearl ripped off his

shirt and mockingly flexed his muscles in front of the team.

"It was kind of funny; buttons were flying everywhere," forward Dane Bradshaw said. "We all laughed and gave him a Gatorade bath in there."

Of course, all this would mean very little if the Vols weren't winning. They finished a combined two games over .500 in four years under Buzz Peterson, who was fired and eventually ended up at Coastal Carolina.

Pearl, meanwhile, led 12th-seeded Wisconsin-Milwaukee to the NCAA Tournament round of 16 last season with upsets of Alabama and Boston College.

He was hired by Tennessee in March and has done nothing to disappoint a rabid fan base.

• Hoosiers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

In the month since Davis announced he would step down after the season, he has seen a team that put behind it an agonizing midseason swoon. The questions about whether Davis would return next season have been replaced by questions about who will take over, a much more muted distraction for now.

Even the protests from hometown fans have long been forgotten now that the Hoosiers have managed to fight their way into the NCAA Tournament for the first time in three years.

What happened? Davis' decision helped change the team's perspective.

"We're really pulling together as a team and playing hard,"

guard Errek Suhr said. "We're doing it for coach, but he's not the only one we're doing it for. We're doing it for the fans."

A month ago, none of this seemed possible.

When Davis made the announcement Feb. 16, two key players, Robert Vaden and D.J. White, immediately walked to the podium and said they would probably transfer next year. Coming in the midst of a four-game losing streak, it appeared to be the final blow in a promising season that had gone terribly wrong.

Then Indiana lost its next game at Illinois, and it all looked downhill.

But since then, the Hoosiers have shown their mettle. They closed the regular season with four straight wins and knocked off Wisconsin in the Big Ten quarterfinals to secure their NCAA bid.

On Saturday, they rallied from

a late nine-point deficit against then-No. 7 Ohio State before missing two potentially winning shots in the final 5 seconds.

But that has not shaken the players' confidence or their desire to keep Davis around a little longer.

"It's an honor to play for him," said Roderick Wilmont, who missed the final shot against the Buckeyes. "This team has fought real hard to get where we've gotten. Four weeks ago, we could have let the season go, but we've fought hard."

Davis attributes the improvement to a more relaxed approach that has helped him become a better coach.

"Before, I was trying to coach every possession," he said. "You know, you get upset with them because you want them to do what you want them to do so badly. ... It's been a great, great process that I've developed."

• Madness

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

the bar. But he stopped the past few years because of the NCAA's crackdown on bars using NCAA logos and trademarks.

But he still loves college basketball.

Casey remembers how packed the Oaken Barrel was when Butler played in the 2003 NCAA men's tournament and how thrilling it was to watch the Bulldogs' run to the Sweet 16.

"It's my favorite time of the year," Casey said. "Games are on all over. You can watch different ballgames all day. I'm just a fan of sports."

Alan Blanchard is primed and ready for the challenge of the next four days.

Manager of the Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant and bar in the Center Grove area, he and his staff survived football season. But now comes another test: the NCAA Tournament.

He expects all 44 tables in the restaurant and 15 in the bar to be filled.

Blanchard has stocked the

kitchen with extra food and worked on shoring up employees' schedules.

He said he usually keeps the same amount of staff but adds 10 more hours to their normal 40-hour work week.

"We probably do 25 to 50 percent more business than what we normally would," Blanchard said. "It's wonderful for business and wonderful for being able to get our name out with people."

"BW3's is not exactly a secret in Indianapolis, but we'd like to try to reach as many people as we possibly can."

Indiana is the only state team in the men's tournament. But Lancaster Enterprises owner Gene Lancaster said the Hoosiers' success has a dramatic effect on sales at the Domino's Pizza at 1713 N. Morton St. in Franklin.

Lancaster said he expects a 25 to 30 percent increase in sales because IU is playing in in the tournament. And the further the Hoosiers go, the more pizza people buy.

"We have to play pretty close attention to (tournament)," Lancaster said. "Our success largely depends on the success of IU. When IU went to the (2002) finals, we had a lot of response."

HOW WE SEE IT

Members of the Daily Journal staff make their NCAA Tournament selections.

Paul Hoffman

Special publications editor
Biggest first-round upset: No. 11 seed Wis.-Milwaukee over Oklahoma
Lowest seed to reach Sweet 16: Wis.-Milwaukee

Final Four teams: Duke, Memphis, Nevada and North Carolina
National champion: I really wanted to pick Nevada or Gonzaga or Wis.-Milwaukee or even Albany, anybody but Duke, because I tend to pick Duke about every other year or so. But I must confess that the Blue Devils have the best array of talent in the field and a coach as good as anybody who has ever coached college basketball.



HOFFMAN

Jeff Decker

Assistant sports editor
Biggest first-round upsets: No. 12 seeds Kent State over Pittsburgh and Utah State over Washington

Lowest seed to reach Sweet 16: No. 7 seed Wichita State

Final Four teams: Texas, UCLA, Connecticut and Boston College
National champion: Connecticut

The Huskies would make a pretty fair NBA team. Yes, they lost to Syracuse in the Big East Tournament. But the Huskies had little to gain, having already earned a No. 1 seed in the Big Dance.



DECKER

Rick Morwick

Sports editor
Biggest first-round upset: No. 12 seed Utah State over No. 5 Washington

Lowest seed to reach Sweet 16: No. 6 seed Indiana

Final Four teams: Duke, Kansas, North Carolina and Ohio State

National champion: As much as I hate to go with the obvious, I'd rather be right. And Duke is the right choice. Talented, deep, expertly coached and hungry for their first title since 2001, the Blue Devils are the class of this year's field.



MORWICK

John Groth

Staff writer
Biggest first-round upset: No. 12 seed Utah State over Washington

Lowest seed to reach Sweet 16: No. 11 seed Wis.-Milwaukee

Final Four teams: Connecticut, Boston College, Pittsburgh and Duke

National champion: UConn has been the dominant program all year. They have the experience, depth and inside-outside combination to win it all. Marcus Williams, Josh Boone and key sixth man Rashad Anderson will power the Huskies to another national championship.



GROTH

HOCKEY

TRENTON, N.J.

Gretzky's wife will be called to testify in probe

Wayne Gretzky's wife will be subpoenaed to testify when a grand jury looks at charges in the case involving a betting ring reportedly run by an NHL assistant coach, New Jersey's attorney general said Wednesday.

In her first major interview since being sworn in as attorney general six weeks ago, Zulima Farber said that Janet Jones would be called to testify about the high-stakes gambling ring as soon as a grand jury convenes.

"She would be getting a grand jury subpoena, so when the grand jury convenes, she'll get a subpoena," Farber said. "She'll be served. She hasn't been because there is no grand jury yet hearing the case."

Farber said authorities would convene a grand jury to hear evidence in the gambling case relatively quickly.

"We're not talking years; we're talking weeks or months, not years," she said.

Gretzky and Jones have been linked to the ring reportedly run by Phoenix Coyotes assistant Rick Tocchet, a former NHL player and close friend of Coyotes coach Gretzky. Jones is reported to have placed large bets through Tocchet.

TENNIS

INDIAN WELLS, Calif.

Andreev tops Roddick in Pacific Life Open

Andy Roddick fought his way back into the match and just as abruptly thought his way back out of it.

Prolonging Roddick's 2006 frustrations, Igor Andreev beat him 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-1 Wednesday at the Pacific Life Open.

No. 1 Roger Federer had no such problems, taking a 6-3, 6-4 victory against 19-year-old Richard Gasquet of France.

In a women's quarterfinal, Martina Hingis was impressive again in the latest victory of her return, rolling to a 6-3, 6-4 quarterfinal win against Dinara Safina.

SKIING

ARE, Sweden

Miller second to Svindal in final downhill event

Bode Miller came in second, but at least he got on the podium Wednesday in the World Cup season finale.

Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway covered the course in 1 minute, 42.40 seconds for his first downhill victory and second career win, edging Miller by .20 seconds. Peter Fill of Italy finished third.

Defending World Cup downhill champion Michael Walchhofer of Austria held on to his title despite finishing in 11th place.

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