

Jack of all trades

Cager assistant coach more than just recruiter

By DAVID COMER
Collegian Sports Writer

When Frank Haith was a graduate assistant coach at Wake Forest during the 1989-90 season, he helped lure current NBA players Randolph Childress and Rodney Rogers to the Deacons.

Then Haith went to UNC-Wilmington, where he was the Seahawks' recruiting coordinator and aided in making their program a winner. Haith then moved to Texas A&M and used his recruiting prowess to help the Aggies play in the NIT last season.

Now in his first season as an assistant coach for the Nittany Lion basketball team, Haith is the recruiting coordinator. But don't call Haith just a recruiter. He does more, including on-the-court coaching and scouting.

"(Lion coach) Jerry (Dunn) offered me an opportunity to be involved with the total program," said the 30-year-old Haith, who like Dunn, is a sharp dresser. "In this business, you don't want to be labeled. You want to be the total entity."

Haith enjoys coaching because it gives him an opportunity to teach, and he likes breaking down film of opponents.

But by all means, Haith relishes recruiting. After talking to him, it's easy to see why he is a successful recruiter. He is outgoing, friendly, positive, returns phone calls and likes to talk. He sounds interested in what people are saying.

"I get a thrill out of recruiting," Haith said. "I enjoy meeting people and to be a good recruiter, you have to enjoy meeting people. I spend a lot of time on the phone, and sometimes my wife could kill me."

During the recruiting process, Haith tries to create relationships, and in the process, develop bonds with the players he is courting. That, said his wife Pam, is why her husband talks on the phone so much. He is spending time learning about the recruit's family and about his life and interests.

"He loves to talk on the phone," said Pam. "Those phone calls aren't just for business. He is trying to develop relationships with the recruits and that is what produces the long conversations."

And when one of those players picks Haith's school, the coach gets a good feeling because he knows he will play a big part of the recruit's life for the next four years. Born in Queens, N.Y., and raised in North



Collegian Photo/Hector Caro

Men's basketball assistant coach Frank Haith ponders a referee's call. This season marks Haith's first on the bench at Penn State.

Carolina, Haith wanted to return to the East Coast, so he accepted the job with Penn State. After he met Dunn, he saw an opportunity to recruit quality student-athletes and realized the positive effects the new Bryce Jordan Center and the Big Ten could have on Lion basketball, Haith was sold.

He said his first months at Penn State have been great and the winning has helped make the transition even smoother. Things have gone pretty much as planned.

With the coaching experience Haith has had across the country, he has also been able to bring with him new coaching ideas and established recruiting contacts.

"He is really good on the floor with the kids, and you always need

fresh ideas," Dunn said. "He knows some different networks that we maybe were not familiar with."

Haith's job means long hours in the basketball office watching film and road trips for both recruiting and road games.

For Haith, that also means time away from Pam and their two-year-old son Corey.

"When we first started dating, he had such a love and a desire for what he was doing," Pam said. "I knew what his coaching would involve. I've become a part of that."

"My wife has been wonderful," Frank said. "She's the ultimate coach's wife."

And he's the ultimate assistant coach.

King of the Blues

By MICHAEL PALM
Collegian Sports Writer

If it were up to Wayne Gretzky, he would have been traded about four or five weeks ago. In a conference call yesterday, Gretzky said that's basically when the decision to move him was made.

It finally happened Tuesday, when the Los Angeles Kings sent Gretzky, the NHL's all-time leading scorer, to the St. Louis Blues for Craig Johnson, Roman Vopat, Patrice Tardif, a 1997 first-round draft pick and a fifth-round pick this year.

"We don't think in negative terms," St. Louis coach/general manager Mike Keenan said. "We only think in positives of winning the Stanley Cup. If it doesn't come to pass, I don't have any reservations."

The Kings apparently did. Rumors persisted, first sending him to the Blues. The New York Rangers were next on the hot list. But in the end, it came down to St. Louis.

"My priority was to play for Mike and the St. Louis Blues," Gretzky said.

His first game will be tonight, when the Blues play at Vancouver on ESPN2. The new captain of the Blues, Gretzky has close relations with St. Louis, making the transition easier.

"Our expectations and the expectations of our fans have increased tremendously."

— Mike Keenan
Blues' coach

He's good friends with Brett Hull, and the two should make a potent scoring tandem. And Keenan coached Gretzky in the Canada Cup of 1987 and 1991.

"I'm darn excited about being here," Gretzky said.

As is the rest of the team. Keenan has been adding pieces to the puzzle with the main goal being the Stanley Cup.

"Certainly, this is the biggest piece as far as the Blues are concerned," Keenan said. "Our expectations and the expectations of our fans have increased tremendously."

While Gretzky was eager to escape the misery of Los Angeles' subpar season, it doesn't appear he'll be leaving St. Louis soon.

"Hopefully, we can bring a championship here," Gretzky said. "This will be my last stop — hopefully."

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Icers

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Westfall teamed up two minutes into the third to extend the Icers' lead.

Kmit dug the puck out of the corner, passed it to Westfall behind the net, who in turn dished it off to Pietrangelo in front of the crease.

Pietrangelo one-timed it into the back of the net.

Keegan scored his second goal of the first round game a little over one minute later to finish off the Ice Devils.

"You need seniors to play big in big games," Battista said of the effort his seniors made. "All these guys really stepped it up."

Notes:
■ The Icers play Iowa State at 4:00 p.m. today. The Cyclones, ranked sixth in the tournament, upset No. 3 Arizona 3-2 yesterday afternoon.

"They looked good in beating Arizona," Battista said. "They have a big, strong team and a strong goaltender."

Penn State beat Iowa State, 6-5, on Nov. 24 in the Chicago Classic.

■ In other action yesterday, No. 4 Eastern Michigan beat No. 5 Michigan-Dearborn 5-2.

■ Defending champion and host team Ohio opened up its slate by crushing Delaware, 10-0, last night. Coach Battista said the shellacking may show the Bobcats are the team to beat, but in the same respect can be beaten.

"They are definitely heavy favorite to win it all," he said. "That doesn't mean a whole heck of a lot to us, we're here to win."

The shutouts by the top two seeds denote that goaltending and team defense may dictate the tournament flow, he said.

Through the ease of round one, the Icers coach warns of a dangerous path ahead toward the ACHA title.

"We have a tough, tough road ahead," Battista said. "We have by no means an easy way to the finals."

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