

ALUMNI

Chaney has no qualms about speaking his mind

John Chaney's body English on the sidelines tells the whole story about what he's seeing on the court as Temple's basketball coach.

His penetrating eyes scrutinize every offensive and defensive move that his players make. He winces at a blown defensive assignment and agonizes over missed free throws. He doesn't want his troops to beat themselves. His mind is always completely immersed into an Owls basketball game.

Chaney's roots go back to black college basketball when he played for and graduated from Bethune-Cookman. The 56-year old coach guided his team to a 32-2 mark last season, and they were ranked No. 1 in the land in the final regular season polls. They were heavy favorites to reach the Final Four, but they fell short in the Final Eight, losing to Duke in the regionals.

Over the last two seasons as the Owls guiding hand, the team has finished at 64-6.

Chaney was voted as college basketball's coach of the year for last season. Entering the '88-'89 campaign (his 17th), his career coaching record was 379-97, which calculates to a .796 winning percentage. Among active Division I basketball coaches, Chaney's percentage is No. 2, the only coach doing better being Jerry Tarkanian of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (.825).

That feat is a story in itself. In terms of winning percentage, his labors have produced more victories than such coaching notables as Dean Smith (North Carolina), Denny Crum (Louisville), John Thompson (Georgetown), Bobby Knight (Indiana) and Eddie Sutton (Kentucky).

Before becoming the head guy at Temple, Chaney worked his magic at Cheney State, a historically black college. And his crowning achievement at that school manifested itself in '78 when he coached the Wolves to top of the heap and won the Division II national title. During his six-year tenure at Cheney, he compiled a 129-36 mark.

It's very likely that Chaney's coaching style was molded during his days at Cheney. The differences between Division I and II are all too obvious in his mind.

"You have to do more teaching (at Division II)," Chaney explains. "And you have to do more as a coach because you don't have the resources and facilities. Without question, it's a big problem when you compare the two situations."

The Owls headmaster has a reputation among his peers as a strong teacher. He's also known as somewhat of a drill sergeant type who deeply cares about the welfare of his players beyond the hardwood. His 5:30 a.m. team practices have been well documented. But the results speak for themselves. It's apparent that while this approach is deemed unconventional, it has proven to be effective. There hasn't been any public

disclosures about Chaney's athletes not going to class and not graduating. When you play for Chaney, it's all business on the floor and in the books.

Chaney can be viewed as a wise old Owl (no pun intended). He's experienced much by having coached in both divisions. He didn't get his first Division I coaching job until he was 50 and that came when Temple offered him the job right after the Wolves won the national title.

Still, the Temple coach hasn't forgotten from whence he came. Elements such as Proposition 48, the NCAA's academic guidelines for freshmen athletes disturbs him. He's been known to have long talks with his black college counterparts such as Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines of Winston-Salem State and Don Corbett of North Carolina A & T about the dilemma facing black athletes on the college level.

So what are these conversations all about?

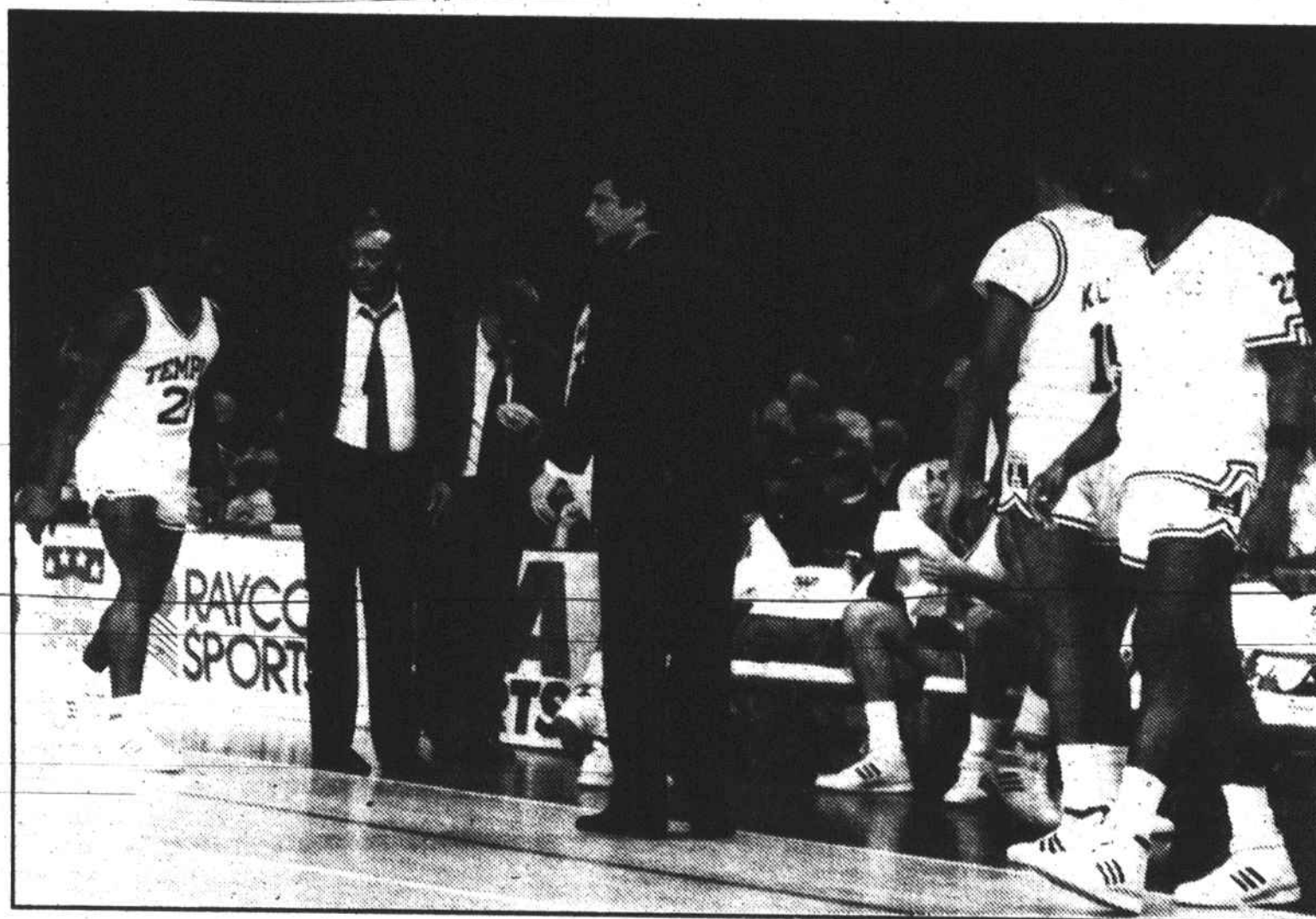
"The rules that the NCAA has imposed victimizes blacks schools and black kids," he says. "The NCAA is saying that Proposition 48 is working. How can that be? What we have is roughly 33 percent fewer blacks being involved in higher education. It's very discomfoting and very upsetting. Black colleges, in particular, are being devastated because the same top 50 or so schools are still able to dominate things in the major sports."

The B-CC graduate has been very outspoken about Proposition 48. Many people in the college athletic community feel that it's something that's here to stay, so they'll just have to dance to the music if they choose to stay under the NCAA umbrella.

Chaney, however, doesn't believe that has to necessarily be the case.

The Temple coach reminds us that when Proposition 48 was being formulated, there was no black college representation on the committee that fashioned that legislation. That oversight, he stresses, is possible grounds for a lawsuit if those opposed to it, choose to pursue it.

"This thing is clearly moving into the area of equal opportunity and civil rights," he says. "Let me put it this way. If you



Chaney (loosened tie) hustles a player to the sidelines during a time-out.

Photo by The Magnificent Eye

came up with a rule that would affect all people, but didn't have those people represented when you made that rule, they would be left out. They wouldn't have equal protection under the law. In a case like that, they would have the grounds to take you to court."

And anyhow, he continues, the major colleges who are after the Mercedes Benz type athletes will eventually get them anyway, irregardless of Proposition 48. "All of the big schools know about the top kids coming out of the high school all across the country," he notes. "There are usually 25 or 30 each year. So for those who don't meet the requirements as freshmen, the big schools send them all off like cattle to a junior college or community college (where they can become eligible to play)."

The problem, as Chaney sees it, is the pre-college educational system in the U.S. "A lot of kids aren't really being educated at a young age. There needs to be more money spent at the lower levels starting with the elementary and junior high school levels. Right now, because not enough money is being spent, those kids aren't being exposed to the proper academic courses. Why punish a kid at the end of his trip (in the educational system)?"

As one of the more notable blacks at the top of the college coaching profession, it would seem that the Black Coaches Association would be an organization that Chaney would be heavily involved in. One major reason why the BCA was formed,

was to help blacks at predominantly white schools become more entrenched in jobs as head coaches and athletic administrators. In the vast majority of cases, it's been demonstrated that there are very few blacks who are head coaches or athletic administrators at major Division I colleges around the country. According to the BCA, slightly less than two percent of Division I men's athletic directors are black. No black women have such positions. In all men's athletic administration positions (Division I), only 4.1 percent are being held by blacks. Black women, the BCA says, hold 1.6 percent of women's athletic administrative jobs.

In terms of Division I basketball for men, black student-athletes make up for 43 percent of the athletic scholarship recipients, while black head coaches comprise just eight percent of the total.

Chaney doesn't see where the BCA can be effective as it stands right now. "I don't join anything unless it's totally representative of everyone," he says. "It's not a policy making group. I just don't see how the organization can be effective. You can't get anything done with a sideshow."

John Chaney has never been one to mince words. You may not always like what he says. But he commands your respect when he speaks. At least you know where he stands.

And that's a real change.

-Craig T. Greenlee