

Kidd Issues Ultimatum to Dallas: Trade Jim Jackson or Trade Me

■ Mavericks' all-star point guard cites personal differences with backcourt mate in demands to Dallas management.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — If Jason Kidd thinks he can push around the Dallas Mavericks' new front office, the team's minority owner says the star point guard had better think again.

"No one player is bigger than the Dallas Mavericks organization," Frank Zaccanelli, the frontman for the new owners, said Monday. "This is not going to alter our direction one inch."

Kidd told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in Monday's editions that if neither he nor backcourt partner Jim Jackson is traded, he would consider sitting out next season. The pair began squabbling early last season over who should be the team's leader.

"I told (management) one or the other needs to be — has to be — traded," Kidd said. "We've tried to patch things up. But it's more a basketball thing than our personalities."

"I'm not trying to run the team, but my only goal is to win a championship," he added. "To do that we need 12 guys willing to dump their own agendas and bust their butts. I'm not sure (Jackson) is committed to that."

Kidd told the newspaper he first gave his ultimatum to majority owner Ross Perot Jr. and minority owner David McDavid last month, then reiterated his stance last Friday to new coach Jim Clemons and Zaccanelli.

"I understand everything isn't great, but the fact remains: on what basketball club or what work environment is everything great?" Clemons said.

"You can find ways to work around situations and put your best foot forward."

When Clemons was hired May 31, he said smoothing out the internal problems would be one of his top priorities. He's been in Dallas less than a week and felt things were being worked out until reading Monday's newspaper.

"I respect Jason's opinion — I just disagree with it," Clemons said. "We're not going to allow this to fester and grow."

Jackson did not immediately respond to Kidd's latest comments to their feud. Clemons said he also had not reached Jackson since the article was published. He spoke with Kidd early Monday and the point guard stood by his quotes.

Jackson has become somewhat of a lightning rod for criticism since last season, when he also had a spat with forward Jamal Mashburn. The trio was supposed to be the foundation for the team's turnaround but many have speculated that there are too many problems and the "three Js" should be split up.

Jackson has been deemed the most tradable because Kidd is too valuable and Mashburn is coming off a knee injury.

Zaccanelli said Monday there still could be a trade, but it wouldn't have anything to do with Kidd's comments.

"If in the next 24 to 48 hours a trade is made that involves these individuals, it has nothing to do with any ultimatum that's been made," Zaccanelli said.

Player personnel director Keith Grant, who joined Clemons and Zaccanelli at Monday's news conference, said he would never ask Kidd to approve any kind of transaction.

Grant added he doesn't believe Kidd's comments would harm any deal he may already be working on.

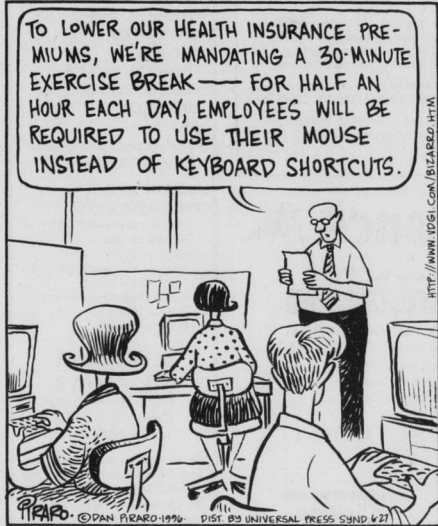
Grant already has cut one deal, sending the No. 6 pick in Wednesday's draft and Dallas' first-round pick in 1997 to the Boston Celtics for Eric Montross and the No. 9 pick Wednesday.

Management said Monday they did not appreciate Kidd's comments coming just two days before the draft and two days after the acquisition of Montross (which, by the way, Kidd liked).

Montross said he was happy to be in Dallas, even with the problems among the backcourt starters.

"There are always certain situations going on behind the scenes," Montross said. "I've got enough confidence in the organization that this will get worked out."

Bizarro



Let Hoops Players Do What's Best for Them, Whether It's Going to Class or NBA Courts

I'm not gonna get preachy on a touchy subject in college basketball such as underclassmen entering the NBA Draft years ahead of schedule. Everyone's in an uproar about it right now, preaching particularly with high schoolers Kobe Bryant, Jermaine O'Neal and little-known Taj McDavid declaring themselves eligible for Wednesday's draft. This year, 36 underclassmen entered the NBA Draft.

And I say, "So what?"

I used to be a die-hard, stay-in-school-all-four-years kind of guy. I admit, that sound you heard when Jerry Stackhouse, Rasheed Wallace and Jeff McInnis left North Carolina for a higher hardwood was my horrified gasp.

"How could they leave?" I kept asking. "They're leaving so much behind."

But that's when myself-indulgent hopes for basketball victories became apparent for what they were — selfish. Most of my thoughts were about the void they left at UNC, not about their chances in the NBA.

Most opponents of underclassmen leaving school are the fans of the schools who are hit head-on with the recent trend.

They mask it well enough, talking about how the player needs to "do himself a favor" and stay in school. But they fear harassment from their friends about a shaky season from their favorite team more than the player not making it in the NBA, or in the real world for that matter.

And how can the players, many of whom don't have enough money to order a pizza from any of Franklin Street's numerous greasy establishments, say "no" to their ultimate goal?



AARON BEARD FROM THE STANDS

At school, they have to get out of bed at 8 a.m. for the class taught by the evil professor who likes to spring the dreaded weekly pop quiz. In the NBA, there's no more late-night studying. No more empty wallets. Their future is secured by doing exactly what they love to do the most.

Yet, most seem to think that reaching into the NBA piggy bank a little early is wrong. They yammer on about the virtues of education over the glamorous lifestyle of the pros. If it were anything other than basketball (or their favorite team the player was leaving), would they object?

Let me put it this way: If a major national newspaper called me and offered me a job with a guaranteed six-figure salary, saying only, "You're ready," I can't say I would just smile and politely decline.

I enjoy school and working for the pa-

per, but some deals are too good to pass up. Such is the case for these athletes.

Granted, many would do themselves a service by staying in school to improve their game. After all, many treat college like a brief rest stop on a busy highway.

The problem is that high schoolers are blindly following their college heroes into a league they, realistically, aren't ready for.

Bryant and O'Neal have the skills, but they lack the maturity to compete nightly in the NBA. Nevermind O'Neal's wry 6-foot-11 frame. He can't even make it to the right school for his SATs.

But it's their decision and their dreams at stake. Many people go straight from high school into the work force. There isn't much of a difference if the job is at an office or on the court of an arena.

If these stars want to pursue their dreams early, let them. They have to do what's best for them, not our favorite team.

The public doesn't raise much of a fuss when a 10-year old wants to go to college. So why should the public try to dissuade the hoop prodigies from using their talents in pursuit of their dreams?

But with more entering the high-stakes pursuit, don't be surprised if those hoop dreams become hoop delusions, leading some phenoms into a career that will fizzle in a few tumultuous seasons.

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