

SPORTS

Valvano's greed leaves State in shambles

Editor's note: It's no secret that money runs the world of sports, but every once in a while, its effects hit close to home. Over the past two weeks, ACC schools have served to remind us that kids' games have become big business. This is the first in a four-part series.

By MARK ANDERSON
Assistant Sports Editor

On April 7, N.C. State terminated the contract of head basketball coach Jim Valvano "without cause," but not without cost. Valvano will receive \$488,500 from the school and from its athletic boosters. It's fitting that a tenure ruled by money from the hiring to the firing ended in contract negotiations.

Legally, Valvano is entitled to that money — maybe more — but morally, Valvano should have forfeited the terms of his contract and resigned. Instead, his greed added five weeks of messy negotiations to the 15-month storm cloud he had already drawn over the university.

Valvano's five-year contract called for N.C. State to pay him \$100,000 for every year remaining on the contract if he were fired for anything less than a felony conviction or a NCAA rules violation for which he was personally responsible. Failing to prove either stipulation, N.C. State was forced to negotiate for a firing "without cause."

But the termination was without cause in "legalese" only; Valvano skirted the edges of several of his contract's provisions.

In December, his basketball program was placed on two years' probation and barred from postseason play for one year for two major NCAA violations. But the NCAA said only that the university "failed to control its intercollegiate athletics program." It did not directly blame Valvano.

How could a man who oversaw the basketball program and also served as athletic director not be responsible for the sale and misappropriation of the tickets and shoes that he distributed? The NCAA apparently had an answer, and its soft ruling allowed Valvano to slip through the legal cracks in his contract.

Another gray area was the academic standing (or lack of it) of Valvano's athletes. The situation came to a head when N.C. State's attorneys threatened to sue Valvano for failing to ensure his players' academic progress toward



graduation as required in his contract.

Although rumors of academic abuse had been flying since the 1984 recruitment of Chris Washburn (he of the 470 SAT score), Valvano's program did not come under official scrutiny until last year. A commission appointed by C.D. Spangler Jr., president of the University of North Carolina system, found that NCSU players were kept eligible by abusing academic standards. As a result, one of Valvano's biggest supporters, Chancellor Bruce R. Poulton, resigned.

Last month, Poulton's replacement, Interim Chancellor Larry K. Monteith, delivered a report to the NCSU trustees stating that many basketball players had made little progress toward graduation under Valvano. N.C. State records show that only 11 of the 41 players who played for Valvano through 1988 had "C" averages or better. Of the 12 players on the 1988-89 team, 10 were under academic warning.

In addition to this swirl of controversy, Valvano was faced with the revelations that he had covered up the arrests of eight N.C. State wrestlers and that Charles Shackelford received more than \$60,000 while playing for the Wolfpack. Yet, he refused to submit quietly, coming to the bargaining table demanding full payment.

The threat of a lawsuit brought Valvano's price down, but N.C. State's legal ground was shaky at best. In the end, the university will pay Valvano \$238,509 — two years' salary at

\$106,000 a year and \$26,509 for the rest of this academic year. This will be paid from public funds out of the UNC system.

Because the settlement was not termed a resignation, Valvano is also eligible for a provision allowing him to collect a \$250,000 annuity from the Wolfpack Club (Why is a booster group involved in paying coaches? That's another column).

Valvano carried the popular support of Wolfpack boosters and the vocal support of his athletes like Chris Corchiani throughout this affair. His defenders blamed the NCSU trustees and asked us to look at what Valvano has done for the school.

On the plus side, Valvano was a winning basketball coach (209-114 overall). He was 14-6 in the NCAA tournament, including his magic 1983 title, and won two ACC titles. Because of his success and his personality, he returned N.C. State to the recognition level it received in the early '70s — and recognition means financial contributions.

On the negative side, Valvano destroyed the academic reputation of a university. He recruited athletes who were questionable as people, as well as students. Shackelford and Washburn were among those in and out of legal trouble.

Valvano made a financial killing off the school's name. Besides his salary and settlement, he received about \$500,000 a year in outside income: \$160,000 a year from a Nike contract, at least \$212,500 from a speaking contract, at least \$50,000 from a summer basketball camp and unknown amounts for his radio and TV shows and his contract with South Square Motors.

Why did Valvano stay until the bitter end? Because he was making money, lots of it. Why did N.C. State stick with him as long as possible? Because he was making the school money, lots of it.

That's what the university hired him

to do, and, ironically, it's what brought about his downfall. After Norman Sloan went 20-8 in 1980, N.C. State basketball was among the nation's elite programs and could have selected any number of coaches. Yet, Wolfpack officials picked the unknown Valvano out of Iowa.

He was plugged as an outstanding recruiter who could also unify the financial supporters Sloan had alienated. School officials knew Reynolds Coliseum was going to be replaced, and they needed someone who could head the drive.

And head it Valvano did. By the time he won the NCAA championship in 1983, he was unstoppable. He was a national hero, which allowed him to concentrate on coaching and speaking, his two loves. Unfortunately, the more he spoke, the more responsibility in his program he turned over to others.

His program was recruiting athletes unworthy of a college education, and Valvano had lost control of the everyday workings. Yet in 1986, N.C. State hired him as athletic director, namely because the drive for a new coliseum was kicking in. Valvano had much more influence on donations from his dual position, but he had even less time to supervise his team.

So the monetary greed of both parties is to blame, but Valvano made out like a bandit. He gets to keep all the money he made, plus some after the fact. On the other hand, N.C. State has to use some of the funds Valvano collected to pay him, and the plans for the new coliseum have been put on hold.

In the end, the university is the loser.

Youthful Jones given Cavs' coaching post

From staff and wire reports

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Assistant Jeff Jones was named Monday as Virginia's basketball coach, ending a search that saw three more prominent coaches turn down a chance to succeed Terry Holland.

The 29-year-old Jones, who becomes the youngest coach in the basketball program's 84-year history, became an assistant at Virginia in 1982 and played under Holland in 1979-82.

"Any success that we accomplish will be built on the foundation he has established," Jones said of Holland, who left after 16 years to become athletic director at Davidson. "There will be some changes, but I promise you that the physical and mental toughness and pride with which players wear the Virginia jerseys will continue."

Player reinstated after arrest

UNC baseball coach Mike Roberts reinstated reserve infielder Cy Richardson last week after Richardson received a deferred prosecution for a larceny charge.

Richardson, who was caught stealing merchandise from the UNC Student Stores on March 29 and subsequently suspended indefinitely by Roberts on April 5, appeared in Orange County District Court in Hillsborough on April 6. He agreed to pay a \$100 fine and serve 50 hours of

community service over the next six months in exchange for having his case dropped by the district attorney at the end of that period.

Richardson, who will reappear in court on October 4 for review by the district attorney, also agreed to stay out of the Student Stores "except to buy and sell books."

The redshirt sophomore from Hartsdale, N.Y., rejoined the Tar Heels late last week and traveled with the team to Virginia over the weekend.

Baseball ranked 11th and 24th

The UNC baseball team garnered a No. 11 ranking in this week's Collegiate Baseball/ESPN poll and No. 24 spot in Baseball America's ratings.

The Tar Heels, who improved to 33-8 and 13-2 in the ACC by taking two of three at Virginia over the weekend, stayed at the 11 spot in the Collegiate Baseball poll for the second straight week. In the Baseball America poll, however, UNC dropped four slots from a No. 20 rating last week.

Also over the weekend, senior shortstop Ron Maurer extended his record-threatening hitting streak to 26 games. Maurer, who holds the second-longest streak in UNC history, went 2 for 3 in a 6-5 loss to the Cavs Sunday to edge ever closer to Scott Bradley's 30-game mark set in 1980.

Club Sports

Friday, April 20
MEN'S LACROSSE, Tournament, at Durham, TBA
Saturday, April 21
MEN'S LACROSSE, Tournament, at Durham, TBA
WOMEN'S LACROSSE, vs. N.C. State, at Raleigh, 2 p.m.
RUGBY, vs. Duke Graduate, Chapel Hill, TBA
Sunday, April 22
EQUESTRIAN, Show vs. Yonals, TBA

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• Research Analyst • Radiologic Technologist
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• Data Technician • Pharmacy Technician
• Medical Technologist • Pharmacy Technician Trainee
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