

Coaches say get serious, have fun before Final Four

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The hype starts early and the pressure builds quickly in the final days before the Final Four. Coaches handle it off the court in ways as varied as their responses to a full-court press.

Rick Pitino, for example, wants his Kentucky players to enjoy themselves. North Carolina's Dean Smith prefers to stay home until it's time to come to the arena.

"John Thompson won a national championship, and Bobby Knight as well, keeping their teams secluded in different areas," Pitino said. "Jim Valvano did it the other way, everybody was dancing at the pool right before they left to go to the arena. Everybody does it differently. There's no right way."

For Pitino, the seclusion route of Georgetown and Indiana isn't right. But his players probably won't be poolside like North Carolina State's,

either.

Kentucky players were scheduled to arrive late Wednesday afternoon, however, so they would have plenty of time to enjoy their stay.

"I've always believed you just let your guys enjoy it, smell the roses so to speak, get out there among everybody and have a good time," Pitino said.

Michigan, which plays Kentucky in one of the semifinals Saturday, was also due to arrive Wednesday afternoon, but not so the team could have time to tour. Coach Steve Fisher said his team was looking for its reward on the court, not in the French Quarter.

"We'll give our kids a touch of a taste of what the Final Four is like," Fisher said. "But we're here to play basketball and that's our main goal."

Kansas was to arrive today at 5

p.m. and North Carolina wasn't due in until noon on Friday, and even that was too early for Smith.

It's not that Smith doesn't like New Orleans. He does, and not just because he won the national title here in 1982. It's not even because he missed dinner at Brennan's when his team came here to play Tulane a few years back and ended up playing four overtime periods before they got a victory but not a meal. It's just that he doesn't like helping his players cut class.

"The only reason we're coming in that early is that it's required to have one practice and one press conference at the site," Smith said Wednesday. "We try not to miss too much class here."

Keeping your players focused is a lot harder now than when Smith first began taking them to the tournament, he said.

Injury-ridden NFL quarterback not invited to return to Seattle

Stouffer released after five seasons

SEATTLE (AP) — Quarterback Kelly Stouffer, who spent most of his five seasons with the Seattle Seahawks on the sidelines because of injuries or as a reserve, will not be invited back this year, Coach Tom Flores said.

Flores said he phoned Stouffer Tuesday in Rushville, Neb., to break the news.

"I don't think it's a surprise to him," Flores said. "It's a situation I had to address. I didn't want to prolong it...."

Stouffer said the call was no surprise. "I resigned myself to the fact I'd be

somewhere else next year," he said Tuesday night from his parents' home in Rushville.

"So there was no remorse or sorrow or anything like that when Tom called today," Stouffer said. "I knew it would come to this."

As an unrestricted free agent, Stouffer, 28, has until July 15 to sign with another team. He said he has been contacted by several teams about a backup job.

Stouffer was the sixth player selected in the 1987 draft by the then-St. Louis Cardinals. He was traded to Seattle for Pro Bowl safety Ken Easley and the Seahawks' 1989 first-round pick. But when Easley failed his Cardinals physical because of kidney problems, the Seahawks gave St. Louis their fifth-round picks in 1988 and

1989 in addition to the 1989 first-round pick.

Stouffer showed flashes of NFL-caliber talent, as in 1988 when he passed for a then-rookie-record 370 yards against New Orleans.

Stouffer started just two games the following season when Krieg was benched, and he did not play at all in 1990. He separated his right shoulder in the 1991 preseason opener and sprained a knee in his only regular season start that year.

Stouffer won the starting job last season, but suffered a shoulder injury in week five. He came back to start two games, but was benched in favor of backup Stan Gelbaugh for the final four games.

The conference champions would meet in the Stanley Cup finals.

In the Western Conference, formerly the Campbell, the Pacific and Central divisions will replace the Smythe and Norris. In the Eastern Conference, formerly the Wales, the Northeast and Atlantic will replace Adams and Patrick.

NHL reorganizes championships

NEW YORK (AP) - Citing "overwhelming support" from owners, the NHL announced a history-making realignment plan on Wednesday that will affect, among other things, the setup of the Stanley Cup playoffs and the defending champion Pittsburgh Penguins.

Under the plan, which will go into effect next season, the divisional play-

off format will be junked in favor of a conference format matching the strongest teams against the weakest.

Taking a page from the NBA, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman announced that the top eight teams in each of the new Western and Eastern conferences would compete in a descending order, starting with the No. 1 team against No. 8.

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Student football tickets to go on sale next week

From Staff Reports

Nebraska football tickets for next season will be on sale April 5-9 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the South Stadium Ticket Office in Memorial Stadium.

Only full-time students are eligible to apply, but student identification cards are not required. Full-time status will be verified by the registration office.

All students, regardless of registration status, will be eligible to apply for tickets after April 9 until Aug. 24.

The price is \$56 for students and \$150 for spouses. The ticket package includes seven home dates. Opponents include North Texas State, Texas Tech, Colorado State, Kansas State, Missouri, Iowa State and Oklahoma.

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