

Coach Davis' decision ends rumor feeding frenzy

Tom Davis and Bob Bowsby did the right thing Thursday afternoon. They announced at a news conference that Davis would finish his 10-year contract as Iowa's basketball coach next year, then call it quits.

In doing so, they extinguished a wildfire of speculation in the form of letters to the editor in newspapers, calls to talk shows and banter in the Internet chat rooms.

Let's hope it has ended, at least for a while.

Bowsby in particular ripped the

people — fans and news media representatives alike — who have criticized Davis since the season ended.

True, some irresponsible reporting has helped fuel the fire. For example, WGN radio of Chicago reported that Davis was finished at Iowa this week.

And *Hoop Scoop*, a "national" basketball publication, reported that word on the street at the Final Four in San Antonio was that Davis was out and Illinois State coach Kevin Stallings was in.

Then there are the on-line gripe sessions from people who simply don't have enough to do.

But those examples of unprofessionalism and just plain mean comments should not be confused with the fan who pays \$17 a game to watch the

Hawkeyes in Carver-Hawkeye Arena and criticizes the coach in a letter to the editor or on a radio talk show.

That person has paid for the right to say or write what he or she wants, as long as it is backed up with some logic.

Remember that Davis will make \$464,555 this year, including his UI salary and outside earnings. With that money should come the ability to accept criticism, which Davis has shown.

Davis also should get some credit where it is due.

Two years ago, he took Andre Woolridge and an unlikely group of players and turned them into a second-place team in the Big Ten.

Last season, the Hawkeyes went 9-

7 in the Big Ten and 20-11 overall.

Iowa finished the season with two losses, but they should not have been expected to win the Big Ten with two freshman starters and an unheralded lineup without Jess Settles.

Davis also has turned around some of the unsavory aspects of the program. There have not been any brushes with the law for a few years. That can't be taken for granted; just ask football coach Hayden Fry.

Davis reports that his seniors — Ryan Bowen, Darryl Moore, Greg Helmers, Vernon Simmons and Settles — all are on course to graduate. Settles is a candidate for an NCAA postgraduate scholarship, associate athletic director Fred Mims said.

Iowa's graduation rate with Davis

as head coach is not bad.

Of the 22 scholarship players who joined the Hawkeyes in Davis' first six recruiting classes (including transfers), 12 of them — or 54.5 percent — graduated within six years. That is higher than the latest NCAA average of 45 percent for Division I men's basketball.

There are some things to be proud of and some regrets. The Hawkeyes haven't won the Big Ten since my freshman year at UI, 1978-79.

Davis said the toughening of UI athletic academic policies following the **Norby Walters-Lloyd Bloom** sports agents trial made it tougher to recruit and retain good players.

But it can be done. Look at Stanford, which has some of the

toughest academic standards in the country but went to the Final Four this season. That, too, was a school where Davis thought it would be impossible to compete at the highest level, so he resigned and came to UI.

So who's next after Davis?

"I expect to go into the open marketplace and find a veteran coach who has proven experience and abilities and the integrity that Tom has shown," Bowsby said.

He also said a new coach must have a thick skin to take the criticism. That quality is becoming more important all the time.

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Coach Davis' upcoming retirement prompts Okey to play next season

Davis' decision disappoints Okey, transfer's dad says

By Pat Harty
The Press-Citizen

Now that Iowa men's basketball coach Tom Davis has revealed his plans for the future, so has Sam Okey.

Davis announced on Thursday that he will resign after the 1998-99 season, which is the final year of his contract.

His decision to leave the program convinced Okey — a 6-foot-7 transfer from Wisconsin — to play an abbreviated season next year instead of waiting to play the entire 1999-2000 season. Okey transferred to Iowa

Okey

in January midway through his junior season. He had planned on waiting until next December to make a decision.

"I think Sam is committed that next year's is going to be his year," Davis said of Okey, the 1996 Big Ten Freshman of Year. "Being my last year, I think he's committed to making this happen."

"He brings to the table, the credibility of an all-Big Ten performer. And I think he's going to be a real good team player."

Okey's father, Louis Okey, said Thursday night that his son wants to play while Davis is still the head coach. Sam Okey nearly signed with Iowa directly out of high school in 1995.

"With coach Davis leaving for sure, he wants to play," Louis Okey said from his home in Cassville, Wis. "Tom Davis is somebody we were thinking about going with when Sam was in high school."

"We're very disappointed that he's leaving."

The fact that Okey has a chance to be eligible in mid-December instead of mid-January as previously thought was another factor in his decision. Davis said Okey needs to accumulate 78 credit hours to be eligible at the end of the fall semester.

Meanwhile, Davis' decision to resign after one more season has cast of wave of uncertainty on the recruit-

The Davis File

Born: December 3, 1938

High School: Ridgeway High School, Ridgeway, Wis.

College: Bachelor of Arts, Wisconsin-Platteville, 1960; Master of Arts, University of Wisconsin, 1964; Ph.D in physical education, University of Maryland, 1970; his dissertation was on athletics in colonial Massachusetts and Virginia.

Family: Wife — Shari, son — Keno.

Basketball coaching career: Milledgeville (Ill.) High School, head coach 1960-61; Portage (Wis.) High School, head coach 1962-66; University of Maryland, assistant coach, 1967-69; American University, assistant coach, 1970-71; Lafayette College, head coach, 1971-77; Boston College, head coach, 1978-82; Stanford University, head coach, 1982-86; University of Iowa, head coach, 1986-present.

Did you know? Davis lettered four times in basketball at Wisconsin-Platteville, he led his college team to the NAIA tournament twice, team captain as a senior; shot 61.6% from the field as a senior.

Hobbies: Reading, playing golf.

Source: UI Basketball Media Guide

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ing front.

Iowa has five highly acclaimed recruits signed for next season. But what about the following year?

"It definitely makes you think about it," said high school junior Nick Collison from Iowa Falls. "If anything, it will make me wait longer for

"With coach Davis leaving for sure, he wants to play. Tom Davis is somebody we were thinking about going with when Sam was in high school."

Louis Okey

Father of transfer Sam Okey

a decision."

Collison, a 6-9 forward, is widely regarded as the top underclassmen in the state and one of the top juniors in the Midwest. He is being recruited by Iowa, Kansas and a host of other Division I schools.

But Collison admitted to being an Iowa fan.

"I'll still look into Iowa because I've always followed the team," Collison said. "It's good to finally know something."

Davis said he talked with UI athletic director Bob Bowsby about what effect his decision will have on recruiting.

"That's certainly an issue any time you're going to retire," Davis said. "I

think what we'll try to do is keep as many young players alive as we can and keep them in the ballpark."

Davis could have an additional scholarship if Ricky Davis follows through on his plan to declare himself eligible for the NBA draft.

"We will be looking in the next few weeks for somebody to fill that scholarship," coach Davis said. "If we can find somebody to make us better for next year, I owe it to this team to look for that person."

This year's recruiting class already consists of four high school players and one junior college player. They include Joey Range, a 6-4 guard from Galesburg, Ill.; Rod Thompson, a 6-6 forward from Galesburg, Ill.; Duez Henderson, a 6-7 forward from River Rouge, Mich.; Antonio Ramos, a 7-2 center from Spain who is attending high school in Minneapolis; and Jake Jaakes, a 6-10 forward from Marshalltown Community College.

"They're kind of limited because of the letter of intent thing," Davis said.

"They don't have many options. So we'll just reassure them that we're going to do the best possible job that we can for them next year and go from there."

"I don't anticipate any problems with that. They're five pretty solid guys. They probably all think they'll be here one year and go to the NBA anyway."

Ricky Davis from 1B

on."

His choice had nothing to do with Tom Davis' announcement Thursday that he would only coach at Iowa for one more season, Ricky Davis said. Playing time and style were not a factor, and Hawkeye players and coaches have been supportive, the freshman said.

"(Tom Davis) was a little surprised, but he pretty much supported me," Ricky Davis said. "He pretty much told me he has my back on whatever I do and wishes me well."

Ricky Davis, who broke the Iowa freshman scoring record with 464 points, said he has not contacted anybody in association with the NBA and that the people involved in his decision were his family, friends, coaches and teammates. However, he has not spoken to senior Jess Settles, who went through the NBA draft process in 1996 before returning to the Hawkeyes.

A sports-talk radio station in the city received phone call after phone call criticizing Ricky Davis' decision. However, the freshman said he does not pay attention to the critics and intends to continue with classes to ensure fall eligibility. He then could

take advantage of an NBA rule that would allow a return to Iowa should he not sign with a sports agent.

"I'm going to play it safe," the 6-foot-5 Davis said. "For those who have supported me, I appreciate it. The people that think I'm not ready; that's their opinion and I can't change it. The decision is mine, and I'm going to go with it."

Ricky Davis said he has talked to teammates and they told him they would welcome him back to the Hawkeyes should his professional dream not work out.

The cutoff point is the draft's first round, Ricky Davis said. Anything lower than the 29th pick and he will

come back to school. However, he feels his name will be called before round two.

"If I didn't, I wouldn't be standing up here today," Davis said Thursday. "College life; there's too much time on your hands. I'm ready to live my own life."

It would be a life of travel for a player that was competing in high school gymnasiums just over a year ago. His parents expressed concerns over that aspect of the move.

"It's a situation where we'll have to go with him for the first few years," said Linda Davis, Ricky's mother.

"Somebody needs to be there to say, 'Well Ricky, maybe that person isn't

Tom Davis from 1B

Invitation Tournament. The Hawkeyes also failed to win a game at the inaugural Big Ten postseason tournament.

Those factors led to Davis and the players being criticized by fans on radio call-in shows, in letters to the editor in newspapers and on the Internet.

Davis, 59, responded to the criticism Thursday by calling it unwarranted and disappointing. He said he thought about resigning shortly after the season because he was fed up with the negative feedback.

"I did because it really bothered me," Davis said of the criticism. "And it almost motivated me not to resign and come back because it bothered me so much."

"It was just so unfair. It's like they don't realize, 'Does this guy know how to coach defense? Or does he know when to press or not to press?' 'That's so stupid, that you're subbing.' 'Do they know what's going on?'"

Bowsby also defended Davis' performance as the Iowa head coach. Bowsby had refused to talk about the situation before Thursday's press conference at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Bowsby's reluctance to support Davis publicly fueled speculation that Davis might retire or be forced to resign under pressure this spring.

"There's been an awful lot of speculation going on," Bowsby said. "I think much of it has been pretty counterproductive to the process."

"I guess people are going to do what they're going to do."

Bowsby said he waited until after the season to talk with Davis because he wanted to avoid distractions.

"I wanted to make sure that Tom and his staff and all of our players had the opportunity to devote their focus and their energy to the basketball season," Bowsby said. "I think some of you chose to characterize that as a lack of support or a diminishment in our relationship. It certainly wasn't intended to be that way and I don't think that was the practical outcome."

Bowsby also ripped those who criticized Davis.

"In all frankness, I think the treatment he has received has been disgraceful, I think it's been mean-spirited and I think it's been altogether unwarranted," Bowsby said. "Tom Davis has discarded more about college basketball than the average fan will ever know."

Davis said he might deal with criticism more directly in his final season. "Maybe I should talk back," Davis said. "Maybe I will next year."

The fact that Davis has been the

The Davis record

Since he began at Lafayette College in 1971, basketball coach Tom Davis has gone to the NCAA tournament ten times (including eight as Iowa coach) and to the NIT tournament five times (twice as Iowa coach).

Yearly coaching record

Year	School	Conference	Overall	Postseason
1971-72	Lafayette	7-4	21-6	NIT
1972-73	Lafayette	7-4	16-10	
1973-74	Lafayette	6-5	17-9	NIT
1974-75	Lafayette	8-3	22-6	
1975-76	Lafayette	9-2	19-7	
1976-77	Lafayette	10-1	21-6	
1977-78	Boston College	-	15-11	
1978-79	Boston College	-	21-9	
1979-80	Boston College	2-5	19-10	NIT
1980-81	Boston College	10-4	23-7	NCAA
1981-82	Boston College	8-6	22-10	NCAA
1982-83	Stanford	6-12	14-14	
1983-84	Stanford	8-10	19-12	
1984-85	Stanford	3-15	11-17	
1985-86	Stanford	8-10	14-16	
1986-87	Iowa	14-4	30-5	NCAA
1987-88	Iowa	12-6	24-10	NCAA
1988-89	Iowa	10-8	23-10	NCAA
1989-90	Iowa	4-14	12-16	
1990-91	Iowa	9-9	21-11	NCAA
1991-92	Iowa	10-8	19-11	NCAA
1992-93	Iowa	11-7	23-9	NCAA
1993-94	Iowa	5-13	11-16	
1994-95	Iowa	9-9	21-12	NIT
1995-96	Iowa	11-7	23-9	NCAA
1996-97	Iowa	12-6	22-10	NCAA
1997-98	Iowa	9-7	20-11	NIT

Players graduating within six years of entering UI

Recruiting class	Students graduating within six years	Total students
1987	2	4
1988	4	5
1989	1	2
1990	3	7
1991	0	1
1992	2	3
Total	12	22

Hawkeye players drafted under Davis

Year	Player	NBA Team
1987	Brad Lohaus*	Boston Celtics
	Kevin Gamble	Portland Trail Blazers
	Gerry Wright	Detroit Pistons
1988	Jeff Moe	Utah Jazz
1989	B. J. Armstrong*	Chicago Bulls
	Roy Marble	Atlanta Hawks
	Ed Horton	Washington Bullets
1990	Les Jepsen	Golden State Warriors
1993	Acie Earl	Boston Celtics
1996	Russ Millard	Phoenix Suns

* = still active

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head coach at Iowa since 1986 could leave him vulnerable to critics who would prefer a fresh start.

"I do think that coaches that have been in their position for a long time have a real tough go of it because things tend to be cumulative and they pile up a little bit," Bowsby said.

Nevertheless, Davis seemed optimistic about next season. He left open the possibility that Ricky Davis might return for his sophomore season even though he declared himself eligible for the NBA draft on Thursday.

Coach Davis also said that Wisconsin transfer Sam Okey — a 6-foot-7 forward — is leaning toward playing next season.

As for coach Davis, he did not rule out the possibility that he might coach at Iowa beyond next season. Neither did Bowsby.

However, the chance of that happening seems remote.

"I would never say never," Bowsby said. "The expectation right now is that Tom is going to retire."

"But that isn't etched in stone."

Penders leaves, Majerus stays

Associated Press

Basketball coach Tom Penders took \$643,000 to leave Texas on Thursday while Arizona State discovered that more than that couldn't get Rick Majerus to leave Utah.

Penders, under fire for weeks after a number of players complained about the program and threatened to transfer, settled the four remaining years of his contract. He leaves as the winningest coach in school history with a 208-110 record in 10 seasons.

"It is with mixed emotions that I resign," Penders said.

"I dedicated the last 10 years of my life to bringing the university basketball program that everyone could be

proud of."

Penders said "the future is bright for Texas basketball and for me and for my family as well. It is the time in my life to pursue other options."

Majerus chose not to do that.

Arizona State was hoping to lure him away from Utah with an offer reported to be worth \$1 million a year. The coach met Arizona State athletic director Kevin White for five hours Tuesday after Utah lost the NCAA championship game to Kentucky the previous night.

But on Thursday, Majerus appeared on ESPN's *Up Close* with Chris Myers and said he was staying at Utah.

"I decided to decline," Majerus said, adding that he had made the

decision earlier Thursday afternoon. "I'm going to stay where I'm at. "It was flattering. I think you should listen. You explore options."

Majerus said he considered his own happiness and the happiness of others in reaching his decision.

"I've got recruits coming in," he said. "There are people that care about me and I care about them."

Meanwhile, the fallout of coach Jeff Jones' departure from Virginia continued.

Pete Gillen got the Virginia job, leaving Providence available for Tim Welsh, who moved up from Iona. Welsh's old job is expected to go to assistant Jeff Ruland.

Welsh was introduced as Providence's fifth coach in 12 years.

Jayhawks' junior Pierce turns to NBA

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Goodbye, Kansas. Hello, NBA.

Paul Pierce, the All-America forward from Kansas, announced Thursday he is forgoing his senior year to enter the NBA draft in June.

Pierce, who made the announcement at Inglewood High where he starred before going to Kansas, is the first player to leave school early to declare for the NBA draft in coach Roy Williams' 10 years as coach of the Jayhawks.

Darrin Hancock left Kansas after the 1993 season and was taken in the second round of the 1994 NBA draft.

"It's always been my dream to play in the NBA and hopefully this

is a good opportunity for me," Pierce told about 75 friends, former teammates and teachers gathered in the school's gym. "I feel like it's my time. I feel like I'm more than ready."

Williams, among those in attendance, had told Pierce "to be as selfish as he can be" in making his decision.

The 6-foot-7 Pierce was in his hometown to attend Friday's announcement of the John R. Wooden Award winner, being presented Friday at the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Pierce and teammate Raef LaFrentz, also a first-team All-America, were among the five final-

ists. "I told him there was no doubt in my mind that he was ready," Williams said. "I don't think there's any doubt it's the best decision for Paul. The young man has given us three great years."

Before Pierce made his announcement, he and Williams shook hands and embraced.

Williams called Pierce "a far, far better person than he is a basketball player."

Both Jacque Vaughn, a point guard who graduated last year, and LaFrentz, who just finished his senior season, decided against declaring for the draft before their college eligibility was finished.