



Monday, November 4, 2002

Francis steps down as basketball coach

Oakland University head women's basketball coach Beckie Francis stepped down from her position, effective Oct. 31, on the advice of personal physicians and specialists and is on indefinite medical leave from the university. Francis suffers from ulcerative colitis, which physicians advise has been made worse by the rigors of collegiate coaching.

"I can't tell you how deeply appreciative we are that Coach Francis was able to stick with this job as long as she has, given her worsening condition," OU Athletic Director Jack Mehl said. "If you know anything at all about this disease and the challenges it poses to day-to-day living, you can appreciate how dedicated she has been to the university and her team over the past few months."

"Doctors have advised Coach Francis that the severity of her ulcerative colitis is incompatible with her current profession," Mehl said. "In layman's terms, she needs rest and time to get her health back. The grind of coaching at the Division I level is tough for even a healthy person."

"The doctors say that with rest and recuperation, her condition will improve dramatically. We are looking forward to that day and praying for her speedy recovery," Mehl said. "Beckie will consider options for working at the university in a non-coaching capacity as well as career options outside the university."

Francis has coached at Oakland for the past five seasons. In her three years in the Mid-Continent Conference, she led Oakland to two Mid-Con regular-season titles (1999-2000, 2000-01) and a Mid-Con Tournament Championship in 2001-2002. Also in 2002, Francis led OU to its first ever trip to the NCAA Division I Tournament as her Grizzlies defeated Valparaiso, 52-40, in the 2002 Mid-Continent Conference Tournament championship game.

Eileen Shea-Hilliard, assistant women's basketball coach at the University of Michigan, was named the new head women's basketball coach.

SUMMARY

Oakland head women's basketball coach Beckie Francis stepped down from her position, effective Oct. 31, on the advice of personal physicians and specialists and is on indefinite medical leave from the university. Francis suffers from ulcerative colitis, which physicians advise has been made worse by the rigors of collegiate coaching. Eileen Shea-Hilliard, assistant women's basketball coach at the University of Michigan, was named the new head women's basketball coach.

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