

SPORTS

NBA

Dave Joerger spurns Minnesota, staying in Memphis with Grizzlies

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Dave Joerger watched Memphis Grizzlies owner Robert Pera fire two of the team's top basketball executives after a 50-win season and had a sinking feeling that he was next. So he headed back home to Minnesota to talk to the Timberwolves about their coaching opening, figuring he couldn't pass up the job if, as rumored, Pera was unhappy with the first-round loss to Oklahoma City in the playoffs. It turns out all that was needed was a little communication.

After Joerger interviewed with the Timberwolves twice in three days, Pera had several conversations with the coach and convinced him to stay in Memphis, where Joerger has spent the last seven years.

"I never really talked (one-on-one) with Joerger before this weekend," Pera tweeted on Sunday. "I think he's a great coach."

Pera's efforts to keep Joerger marked a reach toward stability after two seasons filled with turnover in the front office and on the bench. Last summer, Pera decided not to bring back popular coach Lionel Hollins, who had just finished leading the Grizzlies to the Western Conference finals, because of reported disagreements with executives including CEO Jason Levien and director of player personnel Stu Lash.

In stepped Joerger, who was an assistant in Memphis the previous six years. He guided an injury-plagued team to the seventh seed in the West and took the Thunder to seven games in the first round of the playoffs. But Pera again decided to change things up, getting rid of Levien and Lash.

Pera then granted the Timberwolves permission to interview Joerger, which was widely viewed as a sign for the coach to get while the getting was good. Joerger, who is from Staples, Minnesota, met with Wolves president of basketball operations Flip Saunders on Thursday, then with a group of Wolves officials including owner Glen Taylor on Saturday evening before boarding a plane back to Memphis.

Joerger and Saunders have known each other for years, and the small-town coach also hit it off with Taylor, but left without any agreement in place.

That's when Pera reached out directly to Joerger, offered to sweeten his contract in a good faith gesture to assure Joerger of his job security and had conversations that put the two men on the same page.

"Minnesota did everything right," agent Warren

LeGarie said. "Dave would've had no problem going there. It was just that he and owner Robert Pera were able to come to a much clearer understanding and ultimately the owner made it clear. He backed it up with words and deeds."

LeGarie would not comment specifically on any changes to Joerger's contract, which had two years remaining.

When Joerger left town on Saturday night, the Timberwolves had come to the conclusion that he was their man. But they were aware of Joerger's contract situation in Memphis and concerned that Pera may ask for significant compensation to let him out of that deal. The Timberwolves were reluctant to give any compensation, believing like many others that Pera intended to fire Joerger and look for a new coach.

Instead, Pera locked down the one he already had and tweeted that the two sides never got down the road of discussing compensation for Joerger.

"I think Dave is a great coach," Pera tweeted. "But, personnel has to want to be in Memphis. I know now Dave 100 (percent) wants to be here."

Where both teams go next is still up in the air.

The Grizzlies have brought Chris Wallace back from exile to be the acting general manager while Pera reshapes the front office.

"We are conducting a search now," Pera tweeted. "Whether we decide on Chris or not for GM, I want him in the organization in some capacity."

The Timberwolves, meanwhile, are back to square one in their search for a replacement for the retired Rick Adelman.

Joerger fit a lot of the qualities Saunders has been looking for in a coach, namely experience as a head coach in a high profile situation and an ability to be a leader and be flexible with the roster that is given him. Joerger's journey from the minor leagues to the NBA also appealed to Saunders, who followed a similar path more than two decades ago.

The list of available candidates includes Hollins, former Raptors coach and Timberwolves player Sam Mitchell and, perhaps, Saunders himself. Saunders is reluctant to come down from the front office to take the job, but the opening has also been met with a timid response from some of the most established names in the business thanks to the uncertainty surrounding star forward Kevin Love.

EMO SPEEDWAY



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY BY TAMMY MCNALLY-STRACHAN

Christopher Leek (17), shown lifting a wheel while racing around the track, won Saturday's season-opening WISSOTA Midwest Modified feature at the Emo Speedway.

Davis, Leek, Gamsby win season-opening features

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The 2014 racing season began Saturday at the Emo Speedway with the opening-night feature winners including Jamie Davis in the WISSOTA Modifieds, Christopher Leek in the WISSOTA Midwest Modifieds and Kendal Gamsby in the Emo Street Stocks.

Davis also won in the heat, while John Hettinga won the WISSOTA Midwest Modified heat and Emo Street Stock feature runner-up Tylar Wilson picked up the heat victory with each racing class holding a single heat before the features.

Racing resumes at the Emo Speedway on May 31 when it will be "Emo Wall-eye Classic and Candyman Night" with the hot laps beginning at 7 p.m. and racing starting at 7:30 p.m.

Emo Speedway
May 24 Results
Summary

WISSOTA Modifieds
Feature – Jamie Davis, Jeff Davis, Steve Nordin, Brian Nelson, Garrett



Jamie Davis (85) won Saturday's season-opening WISSOTA Modified feature at the Emo Speedway.

Gamsby, Phil Gavel, Jake Rea.
Heat – Jamie Davis, Jeff Davis, Steve Nordin, Brian Nelson, Garrett Gamsby, Phil Gavel, Jake Rea.

WISSOTA Midwest Modifieds
Feature – Christopher Leek, Cody Ossachuk, Jake Rea, Chuck Lambert, Don Scholler, Brody Strachan, Kenny Perry, Matt Depiero, John Hettinga.
Heat – Hettinga, Leek, Depiero, Perry, Ossachuk, Strachan, Rea, Lambert, Scholler.

Emo Street Stocks
Feature – Kendal Gamsby, Tylar Wilson, Chris Shine, Dean Kellar,



Kendal Gamsby (33) won Saturday's season-opening Street Stock feature at the Emo Speedway.

Terry Henry, Devin Brown. Shine, Gamsby.
Heat – Wilson, Brown, Kellar, Henry,

Bud Grant autograph hot item at his garage sale

BLOOMINGTON (AP) — The hottest item at Bud Grant's garage sale on Thursday was the Hall of Fame coach's autograph.

Shoppers lined up to have the former Minnesota Vikings coach sign the team souvenirs and outdoor gear they bought. Even a gun.

The 87-year-old signed a poster for 7-year-old Preston Oberloh, of Rapid City, South Dakota, whose family happened to be in town. His father, Aaron Oberloh, said

he thought it would be cool to get next to the coach and get a picture, even though at 33 he wasn't even born when Grant led the Vikings to four Super Bowl appearances.

If people didn't buy anything, Grant's signature came at a price.

"Now if you buy my stuff, these autographs are free. But if you just come here to get an autograph, and don't buy anything, then I charge you 25 dollars," Grant said as \$20 and \$5 bills piled up on

the table in front of him.

Grant, an avid outdoorsman, signed a floating fishing chair that Kristen Strain, of Hudson, Wisconsin, bought for her 10-year-old son, Austin, as well as a Vikings drink glass for her 12-year-old daughter, Taylor. Strain said they're originally from Rochester and find it a little strange living as Vikings fans in Packers territory.

"My kids have issues with the green and the gold," Strain said.

It was Grant's 10th garage sale. He billed it as his last. It began Wednesday evening and ran through Friday.

Grant said his goals were simple: Get rid of stuff and make some money.

One table Thursday held Vikings memorabilia, including 40th anniversary posters from 2000 and Game 900 T-shirts from when the Vikings played the Lions in 2004. That merchandise belonged to a dealer. Grant said he let him come to draw a crowd.



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