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Sports
Wisconsin State Journal Thursday, November 27, 1986, Section 5 ●

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Hilles interview changes nothing

By Tom Butler
Sports reporter

Interim coach Jim Hilles had his formal interview for the University of Wisconsin's football coaching job Wednesday, but thinks the decision is cut and dried, and not in his favor.

He is apparently correct.

Athletic director Elroy Hirsch will recommend Tulsa University coach Don Morton for the position to the UW Athletic Board at a meeting Friday afternoon, sources said Wednesday.

Hirsch had already said that emphatically, if prematurely, Tuesday morning in a radio interview at the Dane County Regional Airport.

Hirsch was saying goodbye to Morton and his wife at the time, following the coach's daylong interview with university officials Monday. Hirsch insisted he meant to say Morton was one of the front-runners. Morton was the first man to have an on-campus interview.

"I have to admit, when that news broke and the way things happened, I was angry," Hilles said. "I also understand that sometimes things can be said and there can be a statement that's made somewhat out of context. That was my initial reaction.

"Then I went up and spent an hour or so with those people (Hirsch and associate director Otto Breitenbach) and they explained to me what was said was not an accurate representation. So, I'll go with that."

Hilles said he had a cordial interview Wednesday with Hirsch, Breitenbach, deputy director Ralph Neale, Athletic Board chairman Maurice "Barney" Webb and the UW's Big Ten representatives, Diane Lindstrom and David Tarr.

"We went through all the issues that were involved," Hilles said. "I expressed my feeling on my status and I had a chance to express everything I wanted to. And they asked the questions they wanted to ask."

Hilles said he has no contingency plans and never was one of those coaches who is constantly trying to set up new situations.

"So I find myself with not too many contacts right now with places to go," he said. "But that's the nature of the coaching profession. I've been here nine years and that's the longest I've ever been anywhere in my coaching career."

Hilles might not continue in coaching. He said he wouldn't rule out another job with the university, possibly in an administrative capacity, but not as part of another football staff.

"I would be open to staying with the university," he said. "I've grown to love the city of Madison and particularly the University of Wisconsin."

Hilles' last official act as UW coach might have been at Tuesday night's football banquet, which he called probably the most difficult thing he ever had to do in his life.

"I don't consider that a forte of mine, anyway," he added. "It was difficult. I really didn't want to handle the responsibility, but we spend so much time telling our players that when things happen that go against you and the going gets tough, there's only one way to respond.

"It's been a bizarre circumstance to say the least. It's been an exciting five months and in some ways a very rewarding five months and a disappointing five months."

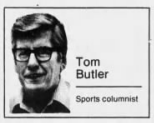
Hilles has received much mail and numerous telephone calls in recent days — little of it negative.

"It's been a very positive thing for me, which gives me a good feeling," he said. "And I'll take that good feeling and my nice-guy image and look for another job."



UW interim coach Jim Hilles was interviewed Wednesday, but doubts he'll be retained.

Hirsch's announcement ill-timed, unfair to Hilles



Tom Butler
Sports columnist

Elroy Hirsch's exuberance, always such an admirable quality, got the best of him Tuesday morning at the Dane County Regional Airport.

While bidding Tulsa coach Don Morton goodbye following Monday's interview, the University of Wisconsin athletic director as much as told interviewers this was the man he wanted to lead the Badger football program.

It was ill-timed and unfortunate. Like a quarterback who throws a football into double coverage, Hirsch wishes he could erase that incident from history.

I can't remember when some of his most loyal supporters were so upset. One called it "tacky" and an unconscionable insult to interim coach Jim Hilles, a decent person who deserves better treatment.

There's no question Morton is the front-runner, at least in Hirsch's mind. He thinks the Tulsa coach has a young, vibrant personality and an innovative football mind. Still, Hirsch should have tempered his enthusiasm.

But that's Elroy Hirsch.

He's high-strung like a race horse. He's emotional. He's sensitive, but sometimes can also be insensitive, for which he is often sorry afterward. On Tuesday afternoon, when more reporters tried to corner him for further comments, he brushed past them with a curt remark and then apologized later.

But the damage was done, not by the reporters, but by what Hirsch had said earlier in the day. It was a slap at Jim Hilles, something Hirsch regretted and agonized over later and probably always will.

It put a damper on a football banquet that already was a tough sell. To the credit of Jim Hilles, he handled a delicate situation with class. The banquet evolved into a tribute to Hilles as much as anything, and justifiably so.

Maurice "Barney" Webb, the Athletic Board chairman, praised Wisconsin football players and coaches, but it was more of a testimonial to Hilles because those working under him reflect his personality.

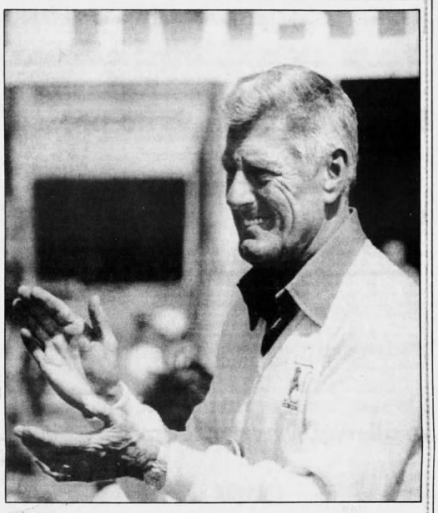
Webb talked about the season and said, "During this time the football players and all the coaches have handled this bad luck and adversity with real class. I've heard no complaining or excuses, no dissension. They have been magnificent representatives of the university."

Linebacker Craig Raddatz, who was co-captain with Joe Armentrout, spoke of the love and loyalty his players have for Hilles. "It's unfortunate that (the 3-9 record) is all that gets recognized," Raddatz said. "If you could only see the intangibles that are also involved in the program."

It was obvious there is mutual respect between coach and players.

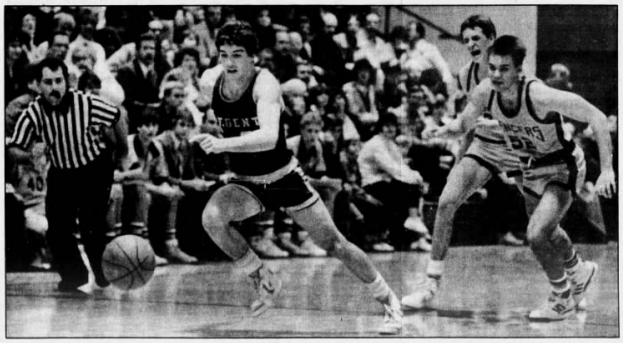
"The character that is represented on this football team far surpasses any group of young men I've had the pleasure of working with down through 38 years of playing and coaching experience," Hilles said.

No matter what happened Tuesday and during the season, Hilles came out a winner.



UW athletic director Elroy Hirsch, usually loved by fans for his exuberance, has drawn criticism by announcing Don Morton as his first choice to be the Badgers' new football coach. He did so on the day of the team's annual banquet and before formally interviewing interim coach Jim Hilles.

—AP Laserphoto



Eyes on the ball

An elusive basketball was the object of attention in Wednesday night's Big Eight Conference game between Madison West and host Madison La Follette. An official watches as West's Dan Toomey, left, an unidentified La Follette player and La Follette's Mark Paulson, right, give chase. West won, 39-37. Story on Page 3.

—State Journal photo by Carolyn Pflasterer

Martin regrets hit on McMahon

Associated Press

Green Bay Packer defensive lineman Charles Martin, who is appealing a two-game suspension for slamming Chicago quarterback Jim McMahon to the turf, said Wednesday he regrets the incident.

"I feel if I had a chance to scratch it off and throw it away and wish it had never happened, I'd do it," Martin said. "I didn't realize how bad it was until the media and TV and all that stuff was showing it every day.

"I felt like I did something real terrible. But it wasn't intentionally done to try to hurt him, to put him out of the game. I feel sorry for myself, for what I did. It was wrong."

Martin, who is 6-foot-3 and weighs 275 pounds, threw McMahon down on the quarterback's already sore shoulder in the second quarter of Sunday's game at Chicago well after McMahon threw an interception. Martin was penalized and ejected from the game.

The Bears defeated the Packers, 12-10, even though McMahon later left the game. McMahon has an aggravated rotator cuff tear and will miss the rest of the season.

On Tuesday, National Football League commissioner Pete Rozelle suspended Martin for two games without pay, saying Martin's action came when the play was clearly over.

Martin, a third-year player, said he thought Rozelle's decision was fair.

"For my actions, I think so," Martin said. "What I did was wrong. I realize that it's wrong now."

It was the most severe penally handed down for an on-field incident in Rozelle's 26 years as commissioner. If the suspension stands, it will cost Martin about $15,000.

Martin will be able to play in today's Green Bay-Detroit game after the Packers said he would appeal the decision. Rozelle will conduct the appeal hearing Monday. Packer coach Forrest Gregg had no comment on the suspension, but said Martin will start.

Meanwhile, Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier blew the whistle on Bear coach Mike Ditka for criticizing Gregg.

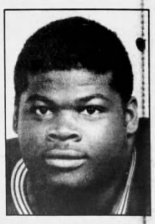
Maier sent a telegram to Ditka assailing the Bear coach for questioning Gregg's integrity. Ditka had said the Packers have declined in character since Gregg replaced Bart Starr.

"I take strong exception to your statements impugning the character of coach Forrest Gregg, and your direct attacks upon coach Gregg's integrity," Maier said in the telegram.

"Your sobriquet of 'Iron Mike' must also apply to your head."

According to a Bear spokeswoman, Ditka had not seen the telegram as of late Wednesday afternoon.

Packers vs. Lions: More on Page 2



The Packers' Charles Martin feels his two-game suspension for slamming Jim McMahon into the Soldier Field turf is fair.

Bucks give Nelson 500th victory

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The National Basketball Association's 500-victory club inducted its newest member Wednesday night as Milwaukee coach Don Nelson became the 11th coach to win 500 games in his career.

The Bucks helped Nelson earn that honor as they beat the Washington Bullets, 122-103.

"I had a great feeling the whole night," Nelson said. "I just hoped it would be an easy game."

Nelson said he was proud he reached the milestone sooner than any NBA coach. It took him 817 games, four fewer than Red Auerbach's 821.

"I most admire the fact that I reached goal in fewer games than Red," Nelson said. "It's really nice."

He received a standing ovation from what was left of the sellout crowd of 11,052 with 21 seconds left in the game.

The Bucks, who had a 52-48 halftime lead, used a 45-point third quarter to take a 95-76 lead.

Ricky Pierce, who leads the league in field-goal percentage, made 11 of 12 shots and finished with 28 points.

The Bucks opened the third period with a 15-4 run for a 67-52 lead. Pierce scored 18 points and teammate Terry Cummings 17 in the third quarter as the Bucks made 18 of 24 field-goal attempts in the quarter.

"We were more relaxed and comfortable with what we were doing at the start of the third quarter," said Cummings, who led all scorers with 30 points.

Jeff Malone led the Bullets with 23 points and Moses Malone added 19.

The Bucks put guard Sidney Moncrief on the injured list because of sore knee. Moncrief, who was not in uniform for Wednesday's game, will miss at least the next four games.

They plan to activate rookie guard Scott Skiles, who was on the injured list with a sprained ankle.

Washington ..... 32 36 39 37 — 143
Milwaukee ..... 34 18 45 27 — 122

WASHINGTON — Cotleaze 3-8 0-0 16, C. Jones 0-3 0-0 0, M. Malone 6-10 7-8 19, J. Malone 4-10 11-11 20, Whatley 3-3 0-0 6, Cook 5-10 0-0 10, Roundfield 2-6 0-2 4, Williams 0-1 0-0 0, Ruland 1-2 0-0 2, Reynolds 2-4 2-2 6, Dreiling 0-1 0-0 0, Ehlers 4-10 0-0 8. Totals 36-67 21-28 93.

MILWAUKEE — Cummings 12-17 4-6 28, Pressey 4-9 2-2 14, Sikma 7-13 2-2 16, Hodges 2-6 0-0 10, Pierce 11-12 4-4 26, Brown 2-7 2-2 6, Lohaus 0-1 0-0 0, Reynolds 3-4 1-2 7, Grayer 1-1 0-0 2, Skiles 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 42-70 13-18 122.

Rebounds — Washington 43 (C. Jones, Bol. Adams 6), Milwaukee 51 (Cummings 8). Assists — Washington 26 (Adams 12), Milwaukee 26 (Pressey 9). Total fouls — Washington 25, Milwaukee 28. Technical — Washington coach Laughery. A — 11,052.

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