

# Timberwolves Have Their Coach: Flip Saunders

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Timberwolves' best days came with Flip Saunders on the sideline.

Now that the organization is shrouded in uncertainty surrounding the long-term future of star forward Kevin Love, Saunders is returning to the bench to try to revive a franchise that hasn't made the playoffs in 10 years.

With the team's coaching search complicated by Love's status, the Timberwolves decided the best course of action was to have Saunders, who was hired last season as president of basketball operations, step in for a second stint as coach until the situation stabilized, Saunders said in a text message Thursday. The official announcement will come at a news conference on Friday afternoon.

Saunders previously coached the Timberwolves from 1995-2005. He won 411 games in 10 1/2 seasons in

Minnesota and guided the Wolves to the only eight playoff appearances in franchise history, including the Western Conference finals in 2004. He has a career record of 638-526 in 16 seasons as an NBA head coach, a career that also includes stops in Detroit, where he coached the Pistons to three straight Eastern Conference finals, and Washington.

Saunders is joining a short list in the NBA of coaches who also have final-say executive authority, one that includes newly hired Stan Van Gundy in Detroit, Doc Rivers with the Los Angeles Clippers and, to a certain extent, Gregg Popovich in San Antonio. Saunders will continue to work closely with GM Milt Newton in the front office while handling coaching duties.



Saunders

When Rick Adelman retired at the end of the regular season, he did so in part to try to help the Timberwolves move forward with a plan to show Love, a three-time All-Star who can opt out of his contract next summer, that there was a long-term plan in place for success.

But Love's tenuous situation didn't help the search process, with trade rumors serving as a caution sign for several high-profile candidates.

Saunders was in the market for a coach with extensive head coaching experience, either in the NBA or at a major college program, one that could command the respect of a young locker room and also handle the media scrutiny that comes with the questions surrounding Love. Names like Tom Izzo, Billy Donovan and Fred Hoiberg came and went without any traction.

The Wolves hosted Memphis coach Dave Joergel for an interview

two weekends ago, but Grizzlies owner Robert Pera sweetened his contract to keep him around. Sam Mitchell, Lionel Hollins, Scott Skiles and several others received consideration as well.

Unable to find what they felt was the right fit for a delicate job, Saunders and owner Glen Taylor met this week to reassess the situation, according to two people with knowledge of the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the team was not publicly discussing the search process. Taylor said when he brought Saunders back as team president that he would not put him back on the bench. He fired Saunders as coach once before, in 2005 when Latrell Sprewell and Sam Cassell, unhappy with their contracts, submarined the follow-up to the

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## James Reaches 1K Playoff Assists

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — LeBron James is the 11th player in NBA history with 1,000 postseason assists.

James hit the milestone with his first assist of the NBA Finals, setting up Dwyane Wade for a score with 5:05 left in the first quarter in the Miami Heat's game against the San Antonio Spurs on Thursday night.

James is only the third player in NBA playoff history with at least 4,000 points and 1,000 assists, joining Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant. He's also the second forward to reach the postseason milestone, with Larry Bird the other.

## Girls Softball

# Fury Red Records Sweep

In a battle of U-10 girls' softball teams in Yankton, Fury Red swept Fury White in a doubleheader played Thursday at the Summit Center fields.

Fury Red won by scores of 18-8 and 13-7.

In game one, Molly Savey was the winning pitcher with strikeouts.

Kate Beeman singled and scored three runs, while

Savey singled twice and also scored three times.

In game two, Beeman was the winning pitcher with four strikeouts.

Ellie Karolevitz singled twice and drove in a run, while Annika Gordon doubled and scored twice. Brooklyn Townsend chipped in with a single.

Yankton Fury Red improved to 6-2 on the season.



JORDYNNE HART/P&D

Yankton Xtreme pitcher Holly Mines delivers to home plate during Thursday's softball doubleheader against Dakota Valley at Riverside Park. Results of the games were not reported.



JORDYNNE HART/P&D

ABOVE: Emma Yost of Yankton Fury White delivers to home plate during Thursday night's softball doubleheader against Yankton Fury Red at the Summit fields.

## Fischbach Inducted Into SDATA Hall Of Fame

SIoux FALLS — University of South Dakota Head Athletic Trainer Bruce Fischbach was inducted into the South Dakota Athletic Trainers' Association (SDATA) Hall of Fame in a ceremony held Tuesday at Beef 'O' Brady's in Sioux Falls.

Fischbach has tirelessly served the healthcare needs of thousands of student-athletes at USD since 1987.

He earned his bachelor's degree from University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1984 and his master's degree from United States Sports Academy in 1991.

Outside of USD, Fischbach has spent time working with Special Olympics, minor league baseball, local youth athletics and athletes in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA). Bruce has contributed considerably to the NWBA as a tournament director, conference commissioner and member of its board of directors. He has also served the Make-A-Wish Foundation as a wish granter and regional ambassador.

Fischbach has mentored and continues to provide guidance to many athletic trainers who began their careers as student and graduate assistant athletic trainers at USD. He directed the USD sports medicine program to its first College Athletic Management "Award of Excellence for Athletic Training Management".

Fischbach has served as president, vice president and secretary/treasurer for the SDATA and has been on the Mid America Athletic Trainers' Association's board of directors. Over the years, he has continually advocated for the athletic training profession.

Fellow inductees honored Tuesday included Dr. Jack Billion, Jim Emmerich, Rob Williams, James Booher, Keith Fitzpatrick and Kathy Courtney



Fischbach

## Hall Of Famer Mike Schmidt's ABCs On All Those Ks

BY MIKE SCHMIDT  
For The Associated Press

There's been some talk lately about the rising rate of strikeouts making baseball boring for fans.

I saw where one in every five batters is striking out, a ratio that has spiked over the last three decades. The last game without a K was 1985.

There are many schools of thought as to why. For me, as a passionate former player, it is a serious concern because it gets to the heart and soul of the game.

I don't like that today's hitters have been allowed to adopt a carefree attitude toward the strikeout. General managers, managers and coaches have been pulled into this mess because it's difficult to find a path to accountability.

Look to Atlanta, where the Upton brothers are among the major league leaders in strikeouts. Both brought in from other teams, signed to guaranteed, rich deals. At least Justin is productive offensively, so the strikeouts are tolerated. Brother B.J. is another story.

Hitters take the easy way out when asked about striking out. "An out is an out," they say. Almost to the man, this is the mantra, and those in charge accept it and are paying a high price for it.

There was a time when every hitter in a big league lineup knew how to play the game. This included a concerted effort to put the ball in play with two strikes, especially when an at-bat demanded contact.

They learned that in the mi-

nors, before they got to the big leagues, and could easily be sent back there. Sure, there will always be home run hitters who strike out more often. But back in the day we hated it, at least I did, and tried our best to learn to be better with two strikes.

There are very few, if any, hitters today known for being complete in all facets of hitting. Each has his style, few have the entire package and none are tough to strike out.

With men on first and second and no outs, today's managers just put up with the big swing with two strikes, understanding advancing runners by choking up and putting the ball in play is not in the game plan.

Why not have a plan for two-strike contact in your arsenal? A plan knowing more contact would make you a better hitter, and help the team win. I averaged around 130 Ks per year, one every five at-bats. That's today's average. Remember, I was hitting 35 home runs, driving in 100 runs and scoring 100.

I hated every strikeout. I felt I had been beaten by the guy on the mound, that it was me and not him that caused the K. Sure, every so often you must give the pitcher credit for setting up and making a nasty pitch with two strikes. But even in those at-bats the hitter missed or took a good pitch to

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Schmidt

## Baseball: Crofton Blanks Tabor In 2-Hit Shutout

CROFTON, Neb. — Seth Erdmann and Rand Thygeson combined on a 2-hitter to lead the Crofton Bluejays past Tabor 2-0 in South Central League amateur action Thursday night in Crofton.

Erdmann struck out 11 batters in seven shutout innings, allowing just two hits, while Thygeson pitched two hitless innings.

Nate Kloucek took the loss for Tabor.

Crofton (5-0) hosts Menno on Sunday, while Tabor (3-2) visits Scotland on Sunday.

TABOR (3-2).....000 000 000 — 0 2 3  
CROFTON (5-0).....000 100 10X — 2 4 1  
Seth Erdmann, Rand Thygeson (8) and Carl Schiffer, Nate Kloucek, Doug Yanecek (6) and Wes Kloucek

### Wednesday Vermillion Red Sox 7, Wynot 1

WYNOT, Neb. — The Vermillion Red Sox got a strong pitching performance from Kendall Hazel in a 7-1 victory

over Wynot on Wednesday night.

Hazel allowed one earned run on seven hits for the Red Sox.

Scott Morrison took the loss for the Expos.

### American Legion Tabor 16, Scotland 0

SCOTLAND — Tabor pounded out 16 hits, three each Duncan Stoebner and Scott Wieseler, in a 16-0 blanking of Scotland in American Legion action Thursday night.

Stoebner singled twice and doubled, while Wieseler singled three times. Austin Kaul doubled twice, and Cole Uecker tripled and doubled.

Tanner Iwan and J.R. Wagner both singled twice for Scotland.

Tabor hosts Burke on Sunday at 2 p.m.



JORDYNNE HART/P&D

Jared Miller of the Yankton Tappers looks at a strike during Thursday night's South Central League amateur baseball game against the Irene Cardinals at Riverside Field.