

# Tubby Smith Fired By Minnesota After 6 Seasons

BY JON KRAWCZYNSKI  
 AP Basketball Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Tubby Smith was hailed as a rescuer when he came to Minnesota from Kentucky in 2007, a championship-certified coach who would restore a once-proud program to respectability after it was brought down by scandal.

Smith accomplished much of what he was brought in to do, bringing the Golden Gophers back to the NCAA tournament three times, keeping Minnesota free of NCAA violations for six years and bringing some energy back to Williams Arena.

When new athletic director Norwood Teague saw the progress stagnate, he decided it was time for a different voice to continue to take the next step. Smith was fired on Monday, one day after the Gophers lost to Florida in the NCAA tournament.

"I feel it's time for a fresh approach for our basketball program, for our student athletes and the program in general," Teague said.

"We felt now following a season where there were high expectations for this

coaching staff that it was time to make a change for the benefit of our student athletes and as we build for the future."

Smith was 124-81 (.610) in six seasons at Minnesota, winning 20 games five times and bringing the first NCAA tournament victory since 1997 when the 11th-seeded Gophers beat UCLA last week.

But he went just 46-62 in Big Ten play and never finished higher than sixth in the conference.

Smith was welcomed with wild enthusiasm when he arrived to replace the over-matched Dan Monson, who was unable to raise the program from the abyss created by an academic fraud scandal that ended up wiping out the team's Final Four appearance in 1997.

Smith won 20 games his first season and took the team to the NCAA tournament the following year, restoring some sense of pride to a team that at one time was the most popular draw in the Twin Cities.

But the success seemed to level off after that. The Gophers made the tournament again in 2010, missed it in 2011 and settled for an NIT bid last year as fans

started to grow impatient.

"I want to thank the University of Minnesota and the people of Minnesota for giving me the opportunity to lead the Golden Gopher basketball program for six years," Smith said in a statement provided by the school. "Our staff did things the right way and will leave knowing that the program is in far better shape than when we arrived."

This year's team started off 15-1 and rose as high as No. 8, with wins over Michigan State, Illinois and Memphis during that run.

But they quickly came back down to earth, losing seven of 10 games in Big Ten play and squeaking into the tournament as a No. 11 seed thanks in large part to a late-season win over then-No. 1 Indiana at home.

The Gophers handled UCLA in the second round of the tournament only to be thumped by Florida in the next round. A common refrain from fans was that the players, and the team, didn't improve as the season went on. The Gophers never finished with a Big Ten record above .500 and finished in seventh place or worse

four times in his six seasons.

Undaunted, Smith always pointed to his reputation for running a clean program and the empty cupboard he inherited when he arrived.

"I don't apologize or I don't defend anything," Smith said last week. "We do the best we can. We do a good job. That's why we're NCAA bound."

Word of Smith's firing leaked Monday morning, but the coach didn't find out about the decision personally until meeting with Teague in the afternoon. That didn't sit well with Smith's agent, Ricky Leftt.

"Coach, certainly with all that he's contributed to the program and the university and to the city, I think was deserving of better," Leftt said. "It's definitely, definitely, definitely disappointing."

When Smith left Kentucky, he was promised by the previous Minnesota administration a new practice facility and improvements to historic, but outdated, Williams Arena. Those improvements never came, but Smith remained hopeful.

"To be able to compete, you have to have the resources available there," Leftt said. "It's not a level playing field."

The decision to part with a big-name coach after a rare tournament victory for the program is a bold one for Teague, who is in his second year on the job. It requires a cash-strapped athletic department to raise \$2.5 million for Smith's buyout, in addition to the funds Teague is trying to generate to upgrade the facilities.

"Any time you spend money for buyouts it bothers me as well, just like it bothers citizens of Minnesota," Teague said. "I hope fans will look at this one as an investment, rather than an expenditure."

With a bevy of highly touted recruits in the state, Teague is acting quickly practically to give a replacement time to forge relationships with players including Apple Valley point guard Tyus Jones, one of the most sought-after juniors in the country.

Teague and his top assistant, Mike Ellis, are considered to be plugged in to the college basketball world and have a list of candidates to replace Smith at the ready.

"You always have a short list. ... Some are realistic, some are unrealistic but I have a list in mind," Teague said, declining to name any specific candidates. "We'll work that and we'll get a terrific coach."

# YHS Athletes 'Get After It'

## Veterans Shine For Yankton, Area Teams In Class A Portion Of Dan Lennon

BY JEREMY HOECK  
 jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

VERMILLION — Whitlee Larson didn't really care who was next to, behind or in front of her.

Instead, the Yankton High School senior runner was just happy to be back at full strength following a rather serious injury.

If it meant she was facing some of the best competition from neighboring states at Monday's Class A portion of the Dan Lennon Invitational at the DakotaDome, Larson was game.

"Obviously there were some really good runners, but you just have to stay positive," said Larson, who sports a scar on her left leg from a surgical procedure called a fasciotomy she underwent last fall during cross country season.

"Rankings really mean nothing here, you just have to get after it."

Larson's surgery, which included the cutting of the fascia to relieve tension from loss of circulation, lasted only 45 minutes and helped treat her compartment syndrome.

After what she called a "fast-healing process," however, Larson is back running pain-free. It was obvious in her fourth-place finish in the girls' 1600-meter run, in which she was bested by only one other Class AA runner — Emily Berzonsky of Brookings.

"It was tough to go through, but it's definitely something that makes you stronger," Larson said of her comeback.

Such competition as faced with on Monday with nearly 2,200 athletes from South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota and Iowa gave athletes an early-season test.

Nebraska athletes led the way on the girls' side with six event victories, while South Dakota paced the boys' division with 12 wins.

Evidence of the multi-state feel, each of the MVP honorees were from separate states — Matt Vandenberg of Brandon Valley and Jeralyn Poe of Lincoln (Neb.) North Star.

And to the athletes, seeing four states present was a welcome sight.



ABOVE: Jessica Wirth, center, of Yankton crosses the finish line during the girls' 60-meter dash at Monday's Dan Lennon Class A Invitational, at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

BELOW: Colton Mahler, right, of Dakota Valley leads the Vermillion duo of Colin Olson, center, and J.T. Sorensen during their heat of the boys' 400-meter dash. The 2-day meet, with Class B action today (Tuesday), is being held at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

"It's good to see competition you wouldn't really see anywhere else," said Dakota Valley senior Colton Mahler, who took second in the boys' 400-meter dash. "Honestly, it's better than state."

Why? "It gives you more of a challenge because of who's here," he added. "You get to see how good you are."

That was the goal this early in the season for Yankton senior Kelsey Fitzgerald, who returns as one of South Dakota's top high jumpers.

The Nebraska-Kearney basketball recruit cleared 5-foot-4 in the event, but finished second behind Jaci Brahmer of Pierce, Neb.

"In the beginning like this, 5-4 is pretty good; not a bad start," said Fitzgerald, whose personal best is 5-6. "Hopefully that means I just keep getting better by state."

Fitzgerald, who also took ninth place in the triple jump, said the Dan Lennon meet is a nice measuring stick.

"It's nice to see all this other talent, so you can compare yourself," she said.

Senior Jessica Wirth, who also agreed that a multi-state meet is helpful, helped the Gazelles' sprinters to a nice day.

Wirth finished fourth in the 60-meter dash and anchored the Gazelles to fourth in the 800-meter relay. She also later ran a leg in the seventh-place 1600-meter relay, which also saw an improvement on Monday — despite the tough competition.

"There's really good diversity here," Wirth said. "Later in the year, you start to see the same people over and over again."

Who he lined up against wasn't necessarily the focus for Yankton junior Brice Cowman. Instead, he said he was more concerned with his own expectations.

"I'm comfortable with where I'm at, but I haven't reached my goals yet," said Cowman, who

LENNON | PAGE 8



# NCAA Women: Lady Vols Outgun Creighton To Advance To Sweet 16

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Kamiko Williams scored 15 points and Tennessee pulled away in the second half to beat Creighton 68-52 on Monday night, advancing to the Oklahoma Regional semifinals of the NCAA tournament.

The second-seeded Lady Vols (26-7), who improved to 52-0 in NCAA tournament games on their home floor, will play Oklahoma on Sunday.

Tennessee is the only program to play in all 32 women's NCAA tournaments. The lone time the Lady Vols lost in the first or second round came when they fell 71-55 to Bowling Green in a 2009 opening-round game.

Alexis Akin-Otiko scored 12 points for No. 10 seed Creighton (25-8), which was denied its first appearance in a regional semifinal.

Tennessee led 35-31 early in the second half before a 13-0 run broke the game open. Creighton couldn't cut the margin below nine points the rest of the way.

The Lady Vols won by silenc-

ing Creighton's 3-point attack.

Creighton came in ranked second nationally with just over nine 3-pointers per game, but Tennessee outscored the Bluejays from beyond the arc. The Lady Vols were 6 of 10 from 3-point range, while the Bluejays went 4 of 22.

Ariel Massengale, Meighan Simmons and Taber Spani each went 2 of 3 from long range. Massengale scored 11 points for Tennessee, while Simmons and Spani each added 10.

Tennessee improved its all-time NCAA tournament record to 114-23, a mark that includes eight national titles and 18 Final Four appearances. Creighton is 3-5 in NCAA tournament games.

But neither Tennessee's partisan crowd nor the Lady Vols' rich postseason history intimidated Creighton in the early going.

Creighton briefly led 16-15 midway through a first half that also featured five ties, the last coming after Creighton center Alyssa Kamphaus made it 24-24 on a

layup with 3:38 left. Tennessee led 35-29 at halftime.

Kamphaus, a 6-foot-3 junior, is Creighton's only player over 6 feet — Tennessee has six players taller than that — but the Bluejays finished the first half with just as many rebounds (16) as Tennessee and actually outrebounded the Lady Vols 9-7 on the offensive glass.

But the Bluejays couldn't maintain that momentum and missed 11 of their first 12 shots in the second half.

After McKenzie Fujian's basket cut Tennessee's lead to 35-31 with 17:35 remaining, Tennessee turned up its defensive intensity and broke the game open.

Spani started the run with a 3-pointer and followed with a steal. Bashaara Graves delivered a basket in the paint. Williams then made a steal and passed to Simmons, who threw it back to Simmons for a fast-break layup. Massengale and Simmons capped the 13-0 spurt by sinking consecutive 3-pointers.

Tennessee eventually led by as many as 19. Creighton got back into the game with a 7-0 run, cutting the deficit to 59-50 on a pair of Ally Jensen free throws with 4:42 left, but that's as close as the Bluejays got the rest of the way.

OKLAHOMA 85, UCL 72: COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Aaryn Ellenberg scored 27 points and Joanna McFarland handled things inside with 20 points and 16 rebounds to lead Oklahoma past UCLA, earning a trip back to the Sooners' home state for the regional semifinals.

Sixth-seeded Oklahoma (24-10) will face No. 2 seed Tennessee (26-7) in Oklahoma City on Sunday.

Sharane Campbell added 19 points and Nicole Griffin had 10 for the Sooners, who never trailed after a 15-3 first-half spurt.

Atonye Nyingigifa had 18 points, Markel Walker 14, Jasmine Dixon 13 and Alyssia Brewer and Thea Lemberger 10 apiece for third-seeded UCLA (26-8), which fell to 11-12 in NCAA tournament play.

CONNECTICUT 77, VANDERBILT 44: STORRS, Conn. (AP) — Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis scored 22 points and top-seeded Connecticut advanced to the regional semifinals of the women's NCAA tournament for the 20th consecutive season with a 77-44 win over Vanderbilt on Monday night.

Freshman Breanna Stewart added 14 points and Stefanie Dolson had 12 points and nine rebounds for the Huskies (31-4), who are seeking their sixth straight Final Four and eighth national championship.

Tiffany Clarke scored 16 for No. 8 seed Vandy (21-12), which lost three of its last six games.

The Huskies led by 13 at halftime and opened the second half on a 17-0 run to put the game out of reach. UConn held Vanderbilt without a field goal for more than 7 minutes after intermission, and the Commodores missed 11 consecutive shots.

UConn will play Maryland in the round of 16 of the Bridgeport Regional on Saturday.

MARYLAND 74, MICHIGAN STATE 49: COLLEGE PARK, Md. (AP) — Alyssa Thomas scored 28 points and Maryland defeated Michigan State to advance to the round of 16 in the NCAA women's tournament for a second straight year.

The fourth-seeded Terrapins (26-7) will face top seed Connecticut in the semifinals. Maryland reached the round of eight a year ago.

Thomas, a two-time Atlantic Coast Conference player of the year, had 18 at halftime to provide the Terrapins with an 11-point cushion. Her layup with 15 minutes left gave her 25 points and put Maryland up 46-30.

Annalise Pickrel and Becca Mills each scored 12 for No. 5 seed Michigan State (25-9).

## Dayton: I Didn't Know Source Of E-Pulltab Estimate

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Gov. Mark Dayton said Monday that Minnesota's Gambling Control Board should have revealed from the start that it consulted the gambling industry when compiling its projections for how much the state would make from expanding electronic gaming to help pay for the new Minnesota Vikings stadium.

The amount raised so far has fallen far short of the original projections. Dayton told The Associated Press that he wasn't aware of the input from an industry that stood to profit from the new games, until the Star Tribune reported it on Sunday.

"I think it should have been disclosed," Dayton said. "I think obviously in hindsight, given the serious overestimation that occurred, that those sources should have been disclosed very publicly in the very beginning and people could have exercised the caution that probably was due given those sources."

Gambling Control Board director Tom Barrett said it was never his intent to hide that the companies were consulted. He acknowledged he showed several vendors the projections, but he said the companies didn't drive the estimates.

"They didn't create this," Barrett said. "They were asked, do you see any problems with the methodology? And in defense of what was before the board and how we approached it, I still stand behind the methodology."

Last year, lawmakers authorized Minnesota charities that run gambling games in bars and clubs to begin offering electronic versions of pull-tab and bingo games. The additional tax revenue goes toward paying the roughly \$350 million the state has pledged toward the construction of the Vikings' new, \$975 million stadium planned for downtown Minneapolis.

Originally, the state projected those new games would generate \$35 million in taxes by the end of 2013. That projection was downgraded to \$17 million in November and then reduced to just \$1.7 million last month. Barrett said the process of approving the games for use has gone slower than expected, and that charities have lacked the resources to promote the games. Boosters of the games are still hopeful they will grow in popularity and eventually get closer to the original projections.

Barrett said preparing the projections was difficult because no other state had authorized the widespread use of the electronic pull-tab and bingo games. Barrett said he drew from a myriad of sources when preparing the estimates, including models used by the Minnesota State Lottery to estimate sales of various games of chance, and said he didn't bounce the numbers off of gambling vendors until after they were prepared.

Some industry officials even suggested the estimates were too conservative, Barrett said.

Still, some Minnesota lawmakers and charitable game operators were critical of the initial projections when they were released.

Dayton said he saw no problem with running the revenue estimates past vendors, only suggesting the gambling board should have made it more widely known when the stadium bill was before state lawmakers. Dayton also said it's too early to revisit the stadium financing plan, as some lawmakers have suggested, saying the games could still grow in popularity.