

# Eddie Sutton says he won't rush into another job

Has already been approached by three schools

Despite contacts from three schools within 48 hours of his resignation as Kentucky's basketball coach, Eddie Sutton isn't going to rush to take another job.

"There will always be jobs," said Sutton last week. "I



Larry Vaught

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can take off a year and there will still be jobs.

"If the right opportunity came along I'm not saying I wouldn't be back in coaching next year. Right now, though, I plan to do the things I've not done for 30 years while I was coaching."

Sutton, who was a popular figure at Rupp Arena last week during the NCAA tournament Southeast Region, said three schools contacted him within two days after he announced he was stepping down at UK after four years.

"They were all good schools, too," said Sutton, who would not identify the offers. "My wife wants to see me at home and I won't be bored if I stay out of coaching a year."

The job offers did bolster his confidence because he was worried about his image across the country. He didn't know if the NCAA probe and turmoil at Kentucky had tarnished his image or not.

"I wasn't sure how people across the country would react to me," said Sutton. "The first call came Monday. That was amazing."

"The people who know Eddie Sutton know he came here and did the best job he could do and did it in a classy and honest manner. The people in Kentucky feel that way and all my good friends in coaching know that."

"There is a demand for Eddie Sutton. I told all three schools that contacted me that I wasn't interested now but that I would be back in college coaching. My heart is still in college basketball."

He wouldn't rule out coaching another Southeastern Conference team. Tennessee coach Don DeVoe resigned under pressure and Sonny Smith left Auburn for Virginia Commonwealth last week. Plus Vanderbilt coach C.M. Newton has quit to run the UK athletic department.

Or he wouldn't mind the challenge of rebuilding a program.

"Very few jobs open where you don't have to do some rebuilding," said Sutton, who went 32-4 his first year at UK after leaving Arkansas.

"I'm sure I have the potential to take a program that is down and out and rebuild it. I don't have one foot in the grave yet."

Both Sutton and North Carolina coach Dean Smith, who has 667 wins, are upset over the number of coaches who have lost jobs this year. Twenty-seven Division I coaches had resigned or been fired by last week.

"There are more jobs open than anyone has ever seen," said Sutton. "It distresses me where coaches are asked to step down after running quality programs."

Smith, who had his team in the final 16 of the NCAA tournament for the ninth straight year, feels the changes this year have sent the wrong message across the country.

He remembers when Don Donoher's Dayton team beat his Tar Heels in the 1967 Final Four. He's been fired.

"He was well respected by everyone and yet he was relieved of his job," said Smith, who was in Lexington for the Southeast Region.

Last year Smith wrote Doug Dickey, Tennessee's athletic director, and applauded his courage for extending DeVoe's contract. This year DeVoe took the Vols to the NCAA tournament but resigned under pressure.



Although he says he was contacted by three schools within 48 hours of his resignation, former UK coach Eddie Sutton says he won't rush into another job. "There will always be jobs," said Sutton, who also added that he wouldn't rule out coaching next season if the right position came along.

Illinois State coach Bob Donewald was also sacked when the season ended. He had a winning record, his players graduated and his program was never tainted by any scandal.

Eastern did the same to Max Good. All he did was keep his players out of trouble and improve the team's academic standing. But he didn't win enough for EKU officials.

"The message we are sending is a sad commentary on our system," said Smith. "I've always been for tenure. We could give up some perks. We are all overpaid."

"It's so very hard to get another job once you are fired. Athletic directors don't have the courage to take a chance on a coach who has been fired. They worry about pleasing the alumni."

Smith praised the decision former UK president Otis Singletary and former athletic director Cliff Hagan made when they brought Jerry Claiborne to UK from Maryland. He had been fired at Virginia Tech before going to Maryland.

"That wouldn't happen in college basketball," said Smith. "It's a terrible thing and it's not fair. College presidents need to step in and do something for guys who run quality programs and do it the right way."

He used former Michigan coach Bill Freider as an example of the injustices in college basketball. Freider agreed to take the job at Arizona State just before his team was to start NCAA tourney play. Michigan sent him packing and promoted assistant Steve Fisher to interim head coach.

"I'm sure many professors at Michigan have made decisions to leave and been allowed to teach until the end of the term," said Smith. "I thought Freider should have been allowed to coach and I know he wanted to."

"Maybe coaches are smart to move every three or four years. That makes it more difficult to fire them."

Sutton never thought he would have that fear at Kentucky when he left Arkansas. However, despite three superb seasons to start his UK career his contract was never extended. And that was before the NCAA probe even started.

"I had never faced any real adversity before," said Sutton, who attracted as many media members as the Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Virginia coaches. "Now I have but I have a chance to step back and put it all in perspective."

When he does, he'll see he was in a no-win situation at UK this year but that he's got company across the

country.

College presidents insist they want integrity. What they don't say is that wins, ticket revenue and TV money are also important, and that no matter how clean the program is unless it is a winner the coach won't last.

No wonder Smith thinks college basketball has become a sad commentary on our society.

□ **ANOTHER COACH WITH UK connections** also resigned last week. Former Lady Kat Lea Wise stepped down after five years at Centre College in Danville.

She had a career mark of 98-36 and her team finished third in the nation this year when it finished 23-8.

The 27-year-old Wise is getting married in June and will be living in Mt. Sterling. She felt the 130-mile daily round trip to Danville and back would just be too demanding for her to continue coaching.

Wise established herself as one of the brightest Division III coaches in the country. She built the Centre program into a national contender and would love to continue coaching.

She was a candidate for the UK women's job before Kentucky hired Sharon Fanning. If UK decides to make another change in the next two years it would do well to turn to Wise.

She's proven she can coach. She's a tremendous promoter. She deals well with the media. Most importantly, she knows the meaning of student-athlete after five years at Centre.

□ **ALL THE PROBLEMS UK has had this year** didn't keep it from helping put on a fantastic Southeast Regional Tournament.

Chris Cameron, UK's sports information director, and his staff left no detail to chance. Cameron couldn't have faced a more difficult first year at UK but even Sutton's resignation just before the Southeast Region didn't stop him from being fully prepared for the tourney.

The city of Lexington also deserves a pat on the back. No place does a better job hosting a tournament than Lexington.

"You don't find better hospitality than here," said Smith. "They treat you as special guests and you can always feel true hospitality when you are in Lexington."

No place in the country fills the media's needs better than Rupp Arena, either.

UK, Lexington and Rupp Arena officials combined to put on another terrific tournament and should be proud of the job they did.