

Tennessee coach summitt steps down



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Less than one year after having been diagnosed with early Alzheimer's disease, Tennessee's women's basketball coach Pat Summitt stepped down, putting an end to her impressive career of 38 years building up one of the legendary programs in the NCAA. A statement was released by Tennessee on Wednesday, revealing Summitt's decision and the promotion of Holly Warlick, her time-tested assistant, as head coach. The 59-year-old Summitt, who led the program to eight national championships, said that it was her own decision and that she gave her full support to Warlick.

Warlick had played for Summitt before becoming her assistant for 27 years. With the decision, Tennessee gave Summitt the title "head coach emeritus." Summitt made a statement, saying that she had loved being head coach at Tennessee over the last 38 years, but that she realized it was time to move on and "step into a new role." She said that she wanted to help make sure the program would go forward in stability. She added the emphasis that she fully intended to keep working as head coach emeritus, serving as a mentor and life skills coach to the players. She added that she would continue to serve an active spokesperson role in the battle against Alzheimer's, with her Pat Summitt Foundation Fund.

Dave Hart, Tennessee Athletic Director, said that Summitt's influence on the sport was impossible to exaggerate. He described Summitt as an icon who was an "inspiration to everyone" but who did not see herself that way, adding that her legacy was "everlasting" and "well defined." "There will never be another Pat Summitt," he said, adding that he was looking forward to keep working with her given her new role. The struggle that Summitt had with the onset of Alzheimer's became the focus of the Volunteers' season,

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especially as they made their way to the NCAA tournament and became one win short of making it to the Final Four.

In some way, the lack was understandable given how Summitt had announced the diagnosis last August 23. During that time, Summitt announced that she intended to keep coaching, intending to show the people that it was not impossible to function normally even with the disease.

Unfortunately, within a short period of time, it became clear that her ability to continue to lead the team was greatly compromised. Much of her duties had been delegated to assistants Warlick, Dean Lockwood, and Mickie DeMoss. News media interviews were handled by Warlick as the associate head coach. During the games, Summitt ended up being the one to give instructions to individual players, whereas coaching the team on an overall scale became Warlick's role.

When interviewed by media, Summitt admitted that she felt Warlick had been doing the bulk of the work and deserved to be head coach, adding the assurance that she was fully supportive of it. When the team snagged the victory at the Southeastern Conference tournament, they dedicated it to Summitt, and promised to win a ninth in the national championships. Center Vicki Baugh even said that they were playing for everyone who had Alzheimer's. The end of Summitt's career holds a 1,098-208 record, with 8 national championships, 16 conference titles, 18 Final Fours, and 16 championships in the SEC tournament. In fact, she holds the record for winning more games compared to any other coach in the history of NCAA basketball.