



Athletic Director Dave Hart stands in front of the Wall of Fame, paintings of Tiger football all-stars, at the entrance to athletic department offices in Hearnes.

DAVE HART

Five Years Later

By JAMES K. GENTRY

ALMOST FIVE YEARS have passed since Dave Hart was hired as Mizzou's athletic director to, as he puts it, "make money and keep the program clean."

In 1983-84 the budget for the athletic operation will be almost \$8.3 million, some \$2.8 million more than it was when Hart arrived from Louisville on June 1, 1978. Generating virtually all of its operating revenues, the program has been in the black every year and — perhaps more important — the University has stayed out of trouble with the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

"Dave has done a superb job under most trying circumstances," says law professor Henry Lowe, Missouri's Big Eight Conference faculty representative and a member of the committee that screened candidates for the A.D.'s position. "He's had to meet a budget and raise money in a very difficult time. And he's kept our

ers vs. detractors], maybe 85-15. I think you have to give him credit. He's fulfilled the charge he was given."

Other alumni leaders put the anti-Hart percentage higher. But considering the magnitude of the assignment, Hart must be doing something right. Only 60 percent of Division I schools with football programs break even or make a profit, according to a recent survey by the NCAA. One school posted a \$2.3 million deficit. Mizzou athletics, which have been in the black since 1967, operate at roughly the break-even point, although John Rawlings, assistant athletic director for business affairs, cautions against comparing budgets across schools because of different conditions and accounting assumptions.

Yet, in spite of the financial achievements, Hart points first to a number of non-business achievements in looking back over his years at Mizzou.

"I think the most important thing we've done is in the area of academic counseling," he says, looking over his notes on a yellow legal pad. Wearing a gray plaid suit with vest and a dark blue tie, Hart looks like a businessman. Only the black-tassel loafers intrude where wingtips might seem more appropriate. His office is nicely appointed and functional, but not ostentatious. Over the striped sofa hangs a picture of a tigress and her kitten. The curtains are open and Memorial Stadium looms through a light snow.

"We're seeing improvement in the overall GPA of athletes, in the graduation rate and in athletes making satisfactory progress toward a degree. We have four

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name unblemished. His admirers far outnumber his detractors."

Detractors remain, however. "There's still resentment on the part of those who, I think, don't want to face reality," says Ed Travis, president of the St. Louis Quarterback Club and chairman of the Alumni Association's Athletic Committee. "He was the dirty guy who came in and changed things. I'd say it's 80-20 [support-

full-time people in the counseling area. [Most schools have one.] We have no qualms about the money we spend in this area because it is so important. We hope this improves the athletic department's image across the Campus. We want them to see we're sincere."

Faculty members have noticed. "It's my impression that the place has really shaped up," says Richard Robinson, a professor in the College of Education who has taught a number of Tiger athletes. "It seems well organized. They've developed a good rapport with the faculty. And the students really know their responsibilities. For example, I had a football player recently who always came by before road games and told me where he was going and

and 22 carried basketball; this year more than 70 carried football and 50 carried basketball. In the same period Mizzou basketball has gone from one or two television appearances to 12 last year and 14 this year, including two national games (a third national game was wiped out by the revised NFL playoff schedule). A unique five-year, \$6.2 million deal with Missouri Network of Jefferson City gave Mizzou more than \$1 million in cash and \$5 million worth of promotion and advertising.

Increased revenues — Fundraising efforts generated more than \$1.1 million in the 1981-82 fiscal year ending June 30; in 1977-78 fundraising yielded \$524,000. Some of the revenue is a result of the controversial preferred seating programs for football and basketball. But the efforts also focus on individual contributions. Missouri Athletic Scholarship Associates (MASA), with more than 3,000 members, is the vehicle through which much of the fundraising occurs.

Although the controversy that surrounded the priority ticket plan has subsided, Hart clearly was affected by the personal attacks that went with it.

"I was hurt deeply at times by it," he says, running his left hand through his thick, dark hair. "Some people didn't even try to understand."

That's when Hart's name started appearing regularly on other colleges' most-wanted list. "If things hadn't been so bad," Hart admits, "I probably wouldn't have thought of any of them."

But he did, and the attention salvaged his bruised ego. He also found strength in his wife of 35 years, Patti, who died Dec. 8 of complications from a stroke. "She's who I leaned on," Hart confides, his voice tensing as he looks away. "She understood athletics, and she went to many of these functions with me. It takes a certain brand of woman to be in this business. She was a real asset."

So now, with his four children away from home and his wife gone, Hart has plunged into his work with a new intensity. And plenty of challenges remain. Foremost, according to Hart, is the relationship between athletics and the overall university community. "I don't want to see intercollegiate athletics as the tail wagging the dog, but in a proper perspective as an educational experience for those who participate. Only 1 percent of athletes go professional. So we've got to provide the best education we can."

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Hart moves on, next citing the system whereby his office monitors "outside interest groups." The monitoring system — which sets up a series of checks on recruiting activities by coaches, quarterback clubs, alumni groups, and other Tiger supporters — has received nationwide attention. "It's one of the most unique systems we know of," says David Caywood, director of public relations for the NCAA. "It seems to be working very well at Mizzou. The *NCAA News* carried a couple of stories on it recently, so you'll probably see the system spread."

The list of accomplishments during the past five years goes on:

Facility improvements — The Dutton Brookfield training facility at the football practice field was renovated and furnished with a \$1.2 million fundraising effort; 10,500 permanent seats were added at the football stadium at a cost of more than \$1 million; new football and basketball scoreboards valued at more than \$200,000 each and paid for by advertisers were installed; all four stadium restrooms will be renovated before the start of the 1983 season at a cost that may reach \$150,000; a new basketball floor costing \$50,000 was purchased; and a sprinkler system for the football practice field was installed.

Improved broadcast package — Four years ago 50 stations carried Tiger football

Hart welcomes the stricter academic regulations enacted at the last NCAA convention. The new rules, which go into

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effect in 1986, require that to be eligible to participate as freshmen, athletes must have certain scores on standardized entrance tests and have a C average in a core high school curriculum. "There are too many guys in college who don't belong," says Hart. "Many times it's because of the curriculum they took."

The department's financial future also concerns Hart. "I honestly wonder how far down the road we can stay in the black. Now they [UMC administration] are talking about 'costing back.' That could be a big expense." That system would require the department to pay institutional support costs, such as legal, purchasing, check writing, mail delivery, etc. The 1984-85 budget estimates that cost at \$356,000.

The financial condition of the athletic department is interwoven with the fortunes of the Tiger football team. Coming off a disappointing 5-4-2 season and the

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failure to make it to a bowl game for the first time in five years, Football Coach Warren Powers will be under close scrutiny by the fans and Hart. Powers is entering the last year of a three-year contract paying \$49,150 annually.

"The football coach here knows the pressure is on him because football has to produce enough revenue to support everything else. Football is the hand that feeds us. If basketball makes a couple of hundred thousand [dollars], that's great.

"I don't have a bottom line for Powers in '83. You can do a great job and just win seven or eight games. There are so many intangibles. If a coach is the right kind of social and moral person and is taking care of the players, what more can you want?"

But the numbers game mean Powers, who recently reorganized his coaching staff, must produce. "We've got to get football's appeal back to where it was in '79 or so. Even with the ticket policy that year, it was our best year," Hart says. Attendance that year averaged 69,867 a game; the '82 Tigers averaged 52,097.

Keeping athletics clean also concerns Hart. "These recent scandals have made us guilty by association, and I don't like it. More schools are clean than dirty. I want to see the NCAA enforce the rules on cheating. They should punish the coaches and athletes who do illegal things."

Hart also wants to see more athletes graduate. A \$20,000 pool has been created to help Mizzou athletes who no longer are on scholarship, but who are a semester or so short of graduating.

Another challenge awaiting is a review of the priority ticket policy before the 1984 football season. "The original policy was for three years. It has to be reviewed and may be modified," Hart says, adding that no changes have been proposed yet.

Material goals include installing a synthetic turf football practice field. Missouri is the only Big Eight school with natural turf playing and practice fields. Coaches frequently complain this puts them at a disadvantage when playing on the road. And Hart wants to install a new track and improve the baseball grandstands, too.

In addition to his Campus assignments, Hart still finds time to be active on the national scene. He is a member of the National Association of Collegiate athletic directors executive committee, a member of the U.S. Sports Academy advisory board, a member of the Big Eight television committee and a member of the Division I NCAA basketball selection committee that determines who participates in the NCAA postseason tournament. "He's a quality representative of the school and a fine administrator," says Caywood, who works closely with Hart in NCAA activities. "When jobs open, he still gets a lot of contacts."

With the biggest challenges behind him and his wife gone, it seems logical to wonder if Hart will continue to oversee Tiger athletics. "Today, my goal is to retire here," he says. "I've sort of got a reputation for turning jobs down now, plus I'm getting a bit old. And I realized in my recent crisis that I have a lot of friends here." □