

Miami’s Spoelstra top pick to coach US men’s basketball team at ’28 Olympics

BY TIM REYNOLDS
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

Erik Spoelstra of the Miami Heat has emerged as the choice to become the next coach of the U.S. men’s basketball team for the 2027 World Cup in Qatar and 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, two people with knowledge of the situation said Thursday.

Spoelstra and USA Basketball have yet to completely finalize any agreement, said the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity because no public announcement has been scheduled. Such moves typically follow USA Basketball board of director meetings, and one of those is set for later this month.

Spoelstra would be replacing Steve Kerr, who coached the Americans in the last Olympic cycle and led the team to a gold medal at the Paris Games. The U.S. men have won the last five Olympic gold medals, and Spoelstra was on the staff that won in Paris last summer. He told The Associated Press after the gold-medal game in Paris that he “would be honored” if USA Basketball asked him to take over the program.

Spoelstra would also become the first Heat coach to have the distinction of being the Olympic coach.

The move comes not long after USA Basketball finalized an agreement to make Duke coach Kara Lawson the coach of the women’s national team for the Olympic cycle through the Los Angeles Games.

Spoelstra will be part of a braintrust that includes men’s managing director Grant Hill, national team director Sean Ford and others that assembles the next national team — which could feature considerable turnover from the team that won gold in Paris. Kevin



Rebecca Blackwell / AP

Miami Heat head coach Erik Spoelstra reacts during the second half of a preseason NBA basketball game against the San Antonio Spurs on Oct. 8 in Miami.

Durant, the only four-time gold medalist in men’s Olympic basketball history, hasn’t ruled out playing one more time in 2028. Stephen Curry indicated that the Paris Games would be his one and only Olympic run, and LeBron James will be 43 when the Los Angeles Games are held.

Miami’s Bam Adebayo, Boston’s Jayson Tatum, Dallas’ Anthony Davis and Phoenix’s Devin Booker, all previous gold medalists, would all likely have strong chances to play in 2028 if they’d like to wear the national team jersey again. There also will likely be some first-time selections for the Olympic team, with Orlando’s Paolo Banchero, Detroit’s Cade Cunningham, Oklahoma City’s Chet Holmgren and Dallas rookie Cooper Flagge sure to be among those under consideration.

Spoelstra — whose father, Jon Spoelstra, was an NBA executive with Portland, Denver and New Jersey — was a standout

high school guard in Oregon, then played at the University of Portland, where he was the West Coast Conference’s freshman of the year. After college, he spent two years playing professionally in Germany before the Heat called with an offer to hire the 24-year-old for a job in their video room — a deal that got done about a month before Miami hired Pat Riley to take over in 1995.

Spoelstra is entering his 18th season as coach of the Heat, making him the coach with the longest current tenure in the league after the retirement of San Antonio’s Gregg Popovich. He’s won two NBA titles as head coach, won another as an assistant under Pat Riley in 2006 and was part of USA Basketball’s coaching staffs under Kerr in both the World Cup in 2023 and the Paris Olympics in 2024.

The 54-year-old Spoelstra is 787-572 in his 17 seasons with Miami.

James will miss opening night of his record 23rd NBA season due to sciatica

BY GREG BEACHAM
ASSOCIATED PRESS

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — LeBron James will miss opening night of his record 23rd NBA season due to sciatica that will be re-evaluated in three to four weeks, the Los Angeles Lakers announced Thursday.

The 40-year-old superstar will be sidelined at least until the end of October with sciatica — pain in the nerves running from the buttocks and down the back of the legs — on his right side.

James has yet to participate in a full practice since the Lakers opened training camp last week, and coach JJ Redick said James was “on his own timeline” Thursday after practice. An hour later, the Lakers announced an injury timeline that means James is likely to miss at least their first five or six games, and possibly several more.

The Lakers open the regular season at home Oct. 21 against Golden State. They have eight games in a 13-day span beginning Oct. 24.

James began camp for his unprecedented 23rd NBA season last week with the lower-body nerve injury keeping him off the court. The Lakers held their sixth full practice of camp Thursday without the top scorer in NBA history, who also missed both of their first two preseason games while he worked to get back into competitive condition.

“You’ve got to play the cards you’re dealt,”



Godofredo A. Vásquez / AP

Los Angeles Lakers guard Bronny James Jr. (9) listens to his father and teammate LeBron James, second from right, as they sit on the bench during the first half of an NBA basketball preseason game against the Golden State Warriors on Oct. 5 in San Francisco.

Redick said. “That’s a shame, but that’s just the reality. ... No one has got any time with LeBron. That’s not just (new center Deandre Ayton), but everybody. (James) hasn’t been on the court with the team, but that’s just the reality.”

Redick and the rest of the Lakers expressed excitement last week about the chance to have their first full training camp together with James and Luka Dončić, who scarcely ever got to practice with his new team after joining Los Angeles in the middle of last season.

Instead, the Lakers are installing their offense and building court chemistry during this camp largely without James on the court. They’re also getting limited time so far with Dončić, who is making a deliberate return to

full speed after his participation in EuroBasket during a busy summer.

The Lakers return to the court Sunday at home against Golden State.

Dončić participated in some full practices last week, including scrimmages, but Ayton said Wednesday that he would love to get more practice time with the Lakers’ two biggest stars.

“It’s something I’ve just been waiting on,” Ayton said. “Just got to prepare. JJ and the coaching staff probably have something where they can put stuff together for all of us to really grow chemistry.”

James traveled with the Lakers on their preseason trips to Palm Desert, California, and San Francisco, but he has been performing individual drills and doing his own workouts.

4 coaches new to Big Ten look to get their programs back on track

BY RICH ROVITO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROSEMONT, Ill. — Dusty May led Michigan to a Big Ten Tournament championship and an appearance in the Sweet 16 last season, his first as coach of the Wolverines, a stunning achievement for a program that finished last in the conference the previous season.

Four coaches new to the Big Ten this season — Indiana’s Darian DeVries, Iowa’s Ben McCollum, Buzz Williams at Maryland and Niko Medved at Minnesota — will try to replicate May’s first-year success story.

“It’s kind of fun to see how it’s all going to fit together,” Medved said at Big Ten media day on Thursday. He replaced Ben Johnson at Minnesota after a seven-season run at Colorado State that included three NCAA Tournament appearances.

Wisconsin coach Greg Gard thinks Medved is the right person to get Minnesota back on track.

“He’s worked his way up, and he’s done really well at every place he’s been,” Gard said. “Niko hasn’t changed since the first time I met him years ago. He’s still the same person, despite all the success. That’s the type of person you gravitate to in this profession. I’m sure he’ll do a good job at Minnesota. He’s a really good basketball coach and a good person, too.”

McCollum landed at Iowa to take over for Fran McCaffery. He took Drake to the NCAA Tournament last season and previously won four Division II national titles at Northwest Missouri

State.

“You can have success right away,” McCollum said. “It just depends on the players you coach and the staff that you hire. Hopefully we did those the right way and I’m pretty sure we did.”

Competing in the Big Ten will be a challenge, he said.

DeVries took over at Indiana from Mike Woodson after coaching for one season at West Virginia and a six-year run at Drake that included three NCAA appearances.

“Dusty had a very good first season, but for me it’s more about us,” DeVries said. “Our focus is how do we get better every day. How does this group maximize itself and then have an internal belief in what we can accomplish.”

Buzz Williams arrives at Maryland after several coaching stops, the most recent of which was at Texas A&M, where he finished with three consecutive NCAA Tournament bids. The Aggies lost to May’s Michigan squad in the second round of last season’s tourney.

“I think (May) is a star. Wherever he’s been he’s been ultra successful,” Williams said. “But I try real hard to not compare myself to anybody else or any other program. I’m just trying to put together a roster.”

May will try to build on last season’s success. As for the new coaches, they’re on their own.

“The coaches we’ve hired in this league don’t need my advice,” May said. “These guys are proven winners. They’ve been doing it at an extremely high level. They’ve earned their way here.”

Greenwell, Red Sox outfielder who finished 2nd in ‘88 MVP voting, dies at 62

BY THE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — Mike Greenwell, an outfielder who played 12 seasons with the Boston Red Sox and finished second in the 1988 American League MVP voting, died Thursday, his wife said. He was 62.

The Boston Globe reported in mid-August that Greenwell had medullary thyroid cancer. Tracy Greenwell told WINK, a radio station in Lee County, Florida, that her husband died in Boston.

“With a heavy heart, I lost my best friend today,” Tracy Greenwell wrote on social media. “It was Mike’s time to be an angel. At 10:30 a.m. in Boston’s General Hospital. We are forever grateful for the life he has given us.”

Lee County Manager Bruce Harner also announced Greenwell’s death on the county government’s social media account. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed Greenwell to the county commission in 2022, and he was re-elected to the post in 2024.

“It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Commissioner Mike Greenwell, a lifelong Lee County resident,” the post read. “He was a strong advocate for the people and businesses of Lee County and will be remem-



Charles Krupa / AP
MIKE GREENWELL

bered for seeking meaningful solutions to the challenges his community faced. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and all who were touched by his leadership.”

“The Gator” was better known for his baseball exploits than his political career.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, Greenwell spent most of his childhood in Florida and played baseball and football at North Fort Myers High School.

Greenwell played his entire major league career for Boston, making two All-Star appearances, winning the 1988 Silver Slugger Award and finishing second in that year’s MVP voting to Oakland Athletics outfielder Jose Canseco. Greenwell was inducted into the Red Sox Hall of Fame in 2008.

He made his big league debut in 1985 and appeared in 31 games on the 1986 American League champions, who lost 4-3 to the New York Mets in a World Series filled with heartbreak for the Red Sox.