6-29-1961

George P. Dahlberg

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

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MISSOULA—Friday, June 30, a man will leave his office for the last time and the door he shuts on his way out will bring to a close one of Montana State University's most colorful athletic eras.

George P. Dahlberg, better known as "Jiggs," will retire from his post as Director of Athletics at MSU on that day. Although he will continue to teach some classes, his resignation from the Athletic Directors position will bring to an end 28 years of association with intercollegiate athletics at MSU.

Jiggs started his athletic career at MSU in 1921 when he enrolled as a freshman at the University. During his senior year, 1924-25, he captained the Grizzly basketball team that won 9 and lost 10.

One of those wins was against the University of Washington and started a rather unusual "jinx."

The Grizzlies have met the Washington Huskies 28 times since their first series in 1924. Although they usually fought on even terms with the Huskies, Montana has managed to win but three times.

Each of those times a Dahlberg has been involved. Jiggs' team broke the ice in 1925 when they whipped the lads from Washington 33-28 in a game played in what is now the University's Television Center.

In 1924 brother Al Dahlberg led Montana to a 32-29 win in Seattle and in 1941 with Jiggs as head coach Montana sent the Huskies down to defeat 47-41 in Seattle.

The Grizzlies will meet Washington again this coming winter on Dec. 4 and 5 for the first time since 1941.

(more)
Following graduation, Miles City offered Jiggs a job coaching the local high school's football and basketball teams. He took the job, and won the state grid and cage crowns in the four years he spent in Miles City.

In 1929 his "Happy Warriors" went to Chicago for the National High School Tournament after copping the state cage title.

In the fall of 1929 Jiggs left Montana for Hoquiam, Washington.

He wanted to be paid among the top coaches in the state. At that time they were getting $2,800 and Dahlberg received $2,200. He asked for a raise of $400 but didn't get it so Jiggs hopped into the 1925 Model-T he owned and left.

The downtown people of Miles City were a bit indignant about the school board's refusal to raise Dahlberg's salary. They offered to ante-up the $400 but Jiggs refused to accept any additional funds save those offered by the school board.

In his two year stay at Hoquiam, his charges won two basketball championships and lost two football games. Being possessed of itchy feet, Dahlberg found himself in Anaconda in 1931 where he won fifth place in the state cage championships with a sophomore team.

Some of those sophomores continued to play basketball and in 1934 turned up as a "wonder team" that grabbed just about every trophy in sight. Some of the men on that team were Paul Chumrau, Bill Lazetich and Cat Thompson.

Jiggs wasn't in Montana long enough to see his sophomores develop. His itchy feet took him to Pullyalup, Wash., where he remained four years. Learning that if he moved on his brother, then his assistant, would replace him, Jiggs let his feet itch some more and he went to Chehalis, Washington in 1936 and 37.

In the fall of 1937 Montana recalled Dahlberg after 12 years of wanderings among Montana and Washington prep schools. For the magnificent sum of $1,800 Jiggs took the head basketball coach, football line coach and equipment manager. And thus began the longest tenure as basketball coach in Montana's history.
In 16 years at the Montana cage helm Jiggs won 232 ball games and lost 234 playing in the always tough Pacific Coast Conference and later in the Skyline Conference. In 1949-50 Jiggs coached Montana to its finest season in history as the Grizzlies romped to a 27-4 record. Jiggs also guided the only other Montana cage crew to a twenty-plus season when the Tips won 21 and lost 11 in 1947-48.

In 1955 Jiggs resigned to cage duties to devote full time to the Athletic Director's office.

In his years as a player and a coach Jiggs saw Montana's athletic facilities develop from a wooden frame structure that has served as the University's gym, a women's gym and most recently as the Television Center, to the present Men's Gym to the Field House.

Known to be one of the Rocky Mountain's more colorful mentors, Jiggs has had many tales told of him. Other coaches have described him as being "crafty" with a new gimmick ready every game.

Dr. Walter Schwank will replace Dahlberg at MSU's athletic director July 1. Schwank held a similar position at South Dakota State College before being named as Dahlberg's successor.

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