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by Mel Greenberg

INSIDE SCOOP™...Absent Information, Rumors Spread

At this hour the news is there's nothing to report in terms of the name of the new president of the WNBA.

When Val Ackerman resigned in October, effective Feb. 1, the hope was that her successor would already be known.

NBA president David Stern will make the hire, most probably with Ackerman's blessing.

That move as much as anything is an indication the women's pro basketball league will be able to continue as long as Stern is master of the NBA.

Whomever has been involved in the interview process, that information has been on a 'you really don't need to know basis,' through many levels of the WNBA.

Even officials at ESPN, the league's broadcasting partner, have been in the dark on this one.

Of course, the situation could change rapidly, and if such a move

occurs, we'll be back again quickly on this.

Meanwhile, a new coach has yet to be named for the Los Angeles Sparks after management cleaned house following the team's early exit in the first round of the playoffs.

Karleen Thompson, who had done a fine job in an interim role leading the Sparks to the best regular season record in the WNBA after Michael Cooper left for the NBA's Denver Nuggets, has taken a job as an assistant to Houston coach Van Chancellor.

The rumor mill has been idle on this one, also.

Dan Hughes, the likeable coach of the Cleveland Rockers before the team folded a year ago, has been hired as the new coach of the San Antonio Silver Stars.

"Every day I wake up, there's an extra hop in my step because I have a team," Hughes beamed recently. "I know we have a lot of work to do, but I'm happy."

The Silver Stars finished with the worst record in the league.

Look for the transaction wire to heat up as Feb. 1 is the magic date teams can begin signing restricted and unrestricted free agents.

Best rumor has an unhappy center Yolanda Griffith leaving the Western Conference playoff runner-up Sacramento Monarchs.

On the college front, there have been two women's stories of note that have been making headlines.

Temple coach Dawn Staley, who made plenty of news over the summer in her role as a captain of the gold-medal winning Olympic squad, has her college team nationally-ranked for the first time in school history.

Staley's Owls are also on a school-record 14-game win streak and just blitzed through the toughest part of their schedule in the Atlantic Ten with victories at Richmond and at home over George Washington and Xavier.

Villanova coach Harry Perretta, who had a chance to gain his 500th win until Syracuse put a temporary halt to the milestone, now has another shot in the Wildcats' next game at Pittsburgh.

Perretta became a national figure two years ago when his Wildcats upset Connecticut in the Big East championship to end the Huskies NCAA-record 70-game win streak

The national scene is the wildest it's ever been with much about this season's NCAA tournament more out of focus than it normally is at this time of year.

"I thought I had my arms wrapped around four of them (No. 1 seeds)," Lynn Parks, the head of the tournament committee, said recently. "But then I had to drop that idea.

"We're going to probably have more upsets than ever when the tournament begins." [RS]



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