

THE BATTALION
SPORTS

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JIMBO FIRED

A&M athletics buys out Fisher's contract, begins search for new football head coach

By Hunter Mitchell
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On Sunday, Nov. 12, Texas A&M Athletic Director Ross Bjork addressed the media after the announcement that Jimbo Fisher had been relieved of his duties early Sunday morning. Mark Robinson, associate director of football operations, was also let go.

"We are not in the championship conversation and something was not quite right about our direction and the plan," Bjork said.

Bjork said he came to the conclusion after last Saturday's loss to Ole Miss, and recommended to Interim President Mark Welsh III that a change had to be made the following Sunday night.

"Athletic Director Ross Bjork has my full support as he begins a national search for a new head coach," Welsh wrote in a statement. "I am confident he will find a great coach and leader with a commitment to the values that drive Texas A&M."

With the resources available to them, A&M football was not reaching its full potential, Bjork said, and despite a blowout victory against Mississippi State the night prior, A&M Athletics had to move quickly with the early signing period approaching next month.

"You're either moving forward, or you're stuck," Bjork said. "We were stuck ... You know how you're driving down the highway and it's a four-lane road ... I like 75-80 [MPH]. Somebody's in the left lane, and they're going

55 and they won't move over. We were that car going 55. Something had to give."

Defensive line coach Elijah Robinson will fill in as interim head coach for the remainder of the season. Bjork said part of the timing for the firing was so Robinson could get used to the role against an easier opponent in Abilene Christian as opposed to LSU or A&M's future bowl matchup.

"Elijah is all about the players," Bjork said. "The reaction was awesome today when he spoke to the team. I wanted somebody that players would gravitate towards. It's going to be a lot coming their way. We know what that means. I've already seen a lot of positivity about his leadership."

Fisher's termination will cost a \$76.8 million buyout; Bjork said Texas A&M Athletics and the 12th Man Foundation will solely pay the full amount.

"We will use unrestricted contributions within the 12th Man Foundation for the first one-time payments," Bjork said. "The athletic department will fund the annual payments for the remaining portion by growing our revenues and adjusting our annual operating budget accordingly."

Bjork said that he will hire a football advisory group to help in the search for a new head coach, as well as gather information from former players and industry experts.

"Here's the profile of what we will work from," Bjork said. "A coach that has a program identity, great interpersonal skills, track record of player development, commitment to academics, a recruiting machine, supreme organizational skills, culture of discipline, passion for the game, proven winner, strong leadership skills, involved in the community, of course knowledge of X's and O's and someone that understands and also can capitalize in today's modern-day athletics."

Ishika Samant — THE BATTALION
Former head coach Jimbo Fisher questions a referee's call during Texas A&M's game against Alabama on Saturday, Oct. 8, 2022 at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

New coach, same kick time

A&M hosts ACU in final home game of season at 11 a.m. with interim coach Elijah Robinson

By Cade Harris
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This Saturday, as the Aggie Intro plays and the fireworks shoot off, it won't be Jimbo Fisher who runs Texas A&M out of the tunnel. Rather, it will be interim head coach Elijah Robinson and the Aggies who are set for their first game without Fisher in six years.

The news came Sunday morning that the Maroon and White were moving on from Fisher after the Aggies annihilated Mississippi State 51-10 in front of over 103,000 at Kyle Field.

Coming into College Station on Saturday is Abilene Christian, who will be playing its final game of the season with a 5-5 record. Talent-wise, the gap is large between the Aggies and Wildcats, with ACU playing in the FCS ranks. The result on the field is predictable, however the way that result is reached is in question.

With Robinson at the helm, things are likely to change with the Aggies' play on the field. It is uncertain how much Fisher let offensive coordinator Bobby Petrino call plays on his own, but that could be answered if the offense looks different than it has all season.

The offense already looked new and im-



Sophomore QB Jaylen Henderson (16) runs through a tackle in Texas A&M's game against Mississippi State on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023 at Kyle Field.

proved last weekend against the Bulldogs, as the Maroon and White were forced to make a switch at quarterback with redshirt sophomore Max Johnson being unavailable. Fresno State transfer sophomore quarterback Jaylen Henderson got his first start for the Aggies against MSU.

However, if someone did not know Henderson was in his first start, they might have thought he was a veteran given his quick decisions on throwing the ball and fast pace on the field. Henderson accounted for four touchdowns in the game, splitting them evenly between passing and rushing scores.

This week, it is still uncertain who will be the starter at quarterback for the Aggies.

"Coach Petrino has a great resume, and I trust and believe in him and everything he decides to do moving forward with the offense whether Max [Johnson] is available or not or Jaylen [Henderson] is available or not," Robinson said. "I trust him to do the right thing for these players and for this program to make sure that we are in the best situation to win."

When given a new leader, preparation for the games are likely to be different as well. Robinson alluded to that, while emphasizing that the players are of the most importance.

"We're going to do things that's going to allow those guys to have fun, play with juice and energy and understand that it's going to be okay," Robinson said. "Whatever that is, as a staff we're going to come together to make sure that we make the adjustments that need to happen for those guys to enjoy this next few weeks and to play as well as possible."

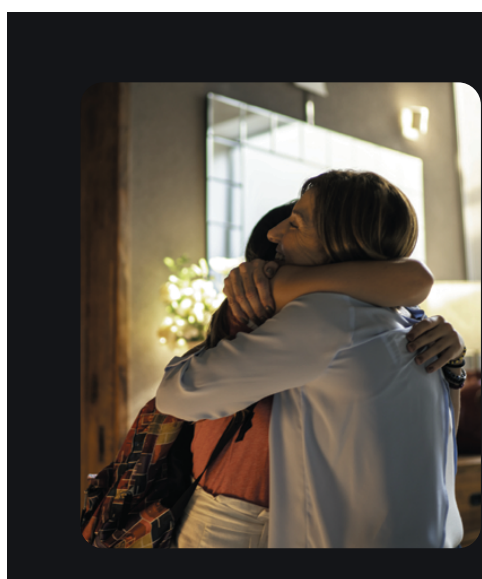
Some Aggie fans may worry that the buy-in from the players will not be as strong now that their head coach is no longer with them. Given the brotherhood the players have with one another, Robinson suggested that wasn't something he's worried about.

"We have a unique group of guys, and we have a great leadership crew," Robinson said.

"Those guys will get them riled up, they'll get them ready to go, and we'll prepare the same then we'll be ready to go on Saturday."

As far as the Wildcats are concerned, it's uncertain how their players will stack up

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