

Vitale strolls on memory lane

BY JOANNE C. GERSTNER
The Detroit News

Detroit — It was a perfect early spring day for a walk and to reminisce.

Former University of Detroit coach Dick Vitale was back on the school's McNichols campus Thursday afternoon, remembering a time when he was a young head coach.

He had some of his — and the school's — greatest success during his run from 1973-1977, setting in motion his ill-fated run with the Pistons, and then his jump to ESPN in 1979.

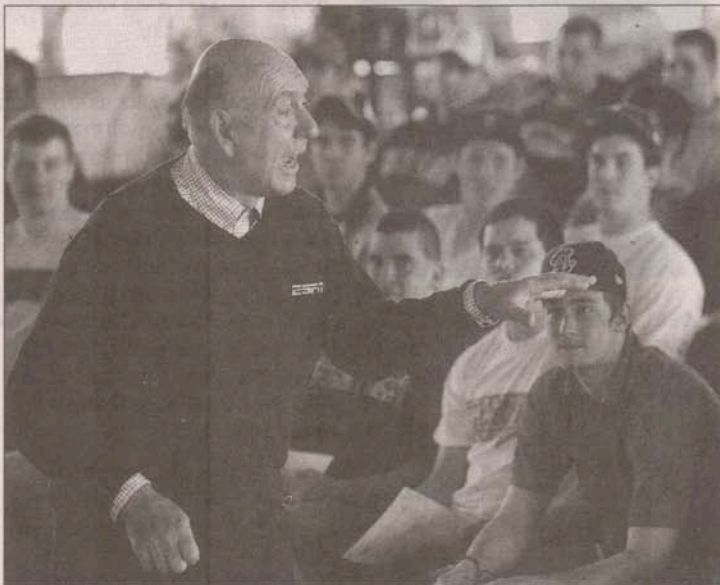
The Titans, led by John Long and Terry Tyler, made it to the Sweet 16 before losing to Michigan.

It was an amazing time. But this day was more about one thing: Vitale's strong love for the Titans.

"Oh wow, wow, I haven't seen any of this in 10 years," Vitale said, as he walked out of the Detroit Mercy student center. "Look at this, look at all of this. So special to me. This place is amazing. I knew I had to come back here during this trip. I had to be here. This is a place of so many memories.

"It's been almost 40 years. Like another life. My life is going by so fast."

Vitale, 69, is in town for his ESPN duties, doing multiple shows on the Final Four. But he also wanted to see U-D — as he calls it because he's not from the



Photos by Todd McInturf/The Detroit News

ESPN analyst and former University of Detroit coach Dick Vitale talks to Titans student athletes during his tour on the campus Thursday.

newer Detroit Mercy era — again.

He gave a speech in the student union, telling about 500 students about his life and imploring them to strive for their dreams. He detailed how he went from being a sixth-grade teacher to a college coach to an NBA coach to an ESPN star all within six years.

"You can be somebody, you have a great chance here at a great Jesuit school," Vitale said, as he paced back and forth in front of the students. "Feel it. Believe it. Dream it. Make it real."

Detroit Mercy basketball coach Ray McCallum was on hand, bringing his son, Ray Jr., to

meet Vitale. Much of the crowd was made up of Titans athletes, who weren't born when Vitale coached at the school.

Still, Vitale's legacy remains alive.

"He is Mr. Titan Basketball, Dick Vitale is still with us in every way, every day," McCallum said. "We still use him in our recruiting pitches. Come here, be part of Titan basketball, be part of the lega-

About Dick Vitale

Age: 69

Family: Wife Lorriane, two grown daughters

Detroit career: Coach of (then) University of Detroit 1973-77; U-D athletic director (1977); coach, Detroit Pistons (1978-79)

Did you know: Vitale was one of ESPN's first hires. He has been with the network since 1979.

More online: See a video on Dick Vitale at detnews.com/finalfour.



cy that Dick Vitale helped build."

Vitale remains passionate about the Titans, feeling they can rebuild under McCallum and become an NCAA Tournament team.

"He's going to do it here, I know it because I have known him for a long time," Vitale said. "It would be just awesome to see U-D back in it. Detroit has such passion, such hard, such hard-working people, they want to see U-D do well again and they will come out and support this. I have no doubt. I'm cheering for Ray and the Titans all the time."

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