**Mackovic gets midseason ax**

Coach fired with 2 years left on contract, 10-18 record at UA

By Brett Fera

Arizona head football coach John Mackovic was fired yesterday, athletic director Jim Livengood announced at a press conference after speaking with President Peter Likins and holding separate meetings with Wildcat players and Mackovic.

Mackovic led the UA program to an overall mark of 10-18, failing to take the Wildcats to a bowl game or produce a winning record in his 2 1/2 seasons at the helm. Arizona won just three of 17 Pac-10 conference games during that span.

John Mackovic is a good man and a good football coach, but, for whatever reason, has not been a good fit for the University of Arizona football program," Livengood said.

Wildcat defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz, a 35-year coaching veteran in his first year at the UA after spending the previous six at Texas A&M, will replace Mackovic on an interim basis, according to Livengood.

Mackovic, who replaced longtime head coach Dick Tomey following the 2000 season, was in the third year of a five-year, $4 million contract. The buyout of the remainder of Mackovic’s contract will give him $909,000.

The coach was seen leaving his office on the south side of McKale Center minutes before the press conference was scheduled to start.

Mackovic’s exit came just hours after the program’s fourth straight defeat, a 13-10 overtime loss at the hands of Texas Christian University that sent the team’s record to 1-4 on the season.

“Now my responsibility is to provide the best collegiate experience possible for each of our almost 550 student athletes,” Livengood said. “It’s not — and it never will be — totally about winning. It is about the experience.”

After outlasting a near-mutiny last November, in which players complained to Likins about the way Mackovic was treating them, the third-year head coach’s tumultuous stint in Tucson was no easier.

See MACKOVIC/11

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**PAINTING TIME**

Freshmen get blue on A-Day

By Nathan Tafoya

On Saturday, over 300 freshmen woke up early in the morning, grabbed some mops and buckets, and willingly got messy.

They weren’t cleaning their dorms or auditioning for a new musical; they were painting the “A” on A-Mountain.

The event, called A-Day, is a chance for freshmen to learn about the traditions and history of the university.

The U of A Blue Key National Honorary sponsored the event.

Freshmen arrived at the Old Main fountain at 8:30 a.m. After receiving a crash course in UA history and learning the words to “Bear Down,” they were piled in buses that took them to the mountain.

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“Coming up here is more of a fun activity versus, you know, painting the whole thing and making sure it’s perfect,” Dmeker said. “We don’t really have the resources to correct it. Maybe someday we will.”

The 300 freshmen did not seem to care about the bottom third of the “A” being red or blue.

By Tim Lake & Shelley Shelton

With the mayor of Tucson and several other city officials present to show their support, the Arizona Board of Regents approved a plan for the UA to spend more than $6 million toward a downtown science center.

The $82 million UA Science Center, expected to open Jan. 1, 2008, will include a bridge spanning both sides of the freeway near downtown Tucson. It will be part of the Rio Nuevo downtown revitalization project.

“This is the first step in revitalizing downtown,” said Regent Jack Jevett, after the regents meeting Friday in Tempe. Jevett is from Tucson.

“This is a project that I believe will be extraordinary.

About the appearances of Republican Mayor Bob Wakefield, City Councilman Fred Ronstadt, and other city officials, Jevett said, “They didn’t mail in their support. They’re here, and I think that’s a testament to how important the project is.”

Regent Fred Bosin, also from Tucson, said he supports the move as part of an ongoing trend among universities.

“Embedding the university in the community...