# Ranger College's Billy Gillispie reflects on coaching career, serious health issues

RANGER, Texas -- At the age of 58, Billy Gillispie has been a part of the good and the bad of coaching college basketball.

"Sometimes you get judged wrongly," the Ranger Junior College athletic director said. "Just because you did something wrong, it doesn't have to define who you are."

During his career, Gillispie has been arrested for a DUI (2009) and accused of mistreating players (2012).

But he chooses to not let those instances define him, as the former Kentucky, Texas A&M and Texas Tech coach enjoys his role leading athletics at his alma mater.

"I love most of the things that have happened in my life, but I understand the shortcomings that I have had and still have," Gillispie said. "But I work on those things to be better all the time."

What he's dealing with now is a bit different. Gillispie, 58, has continued to work as Ranger College's athletic director, but he no longer serves as head basketball coach due to rising health concerns.

In 2016, after having dealt with high blood pressure his adult life, Gillispie was diagnosed with kidney failure. He currently waits for a kidney transplant, all while the three basketball teams Gillispie coached from 2004 to 2012 -- Texas A&M, Kentucky and Texas Tech -- are in the NCAA Tournament's Sweet 16.

"It's great. I mean, I'm really happy for all of them. They all have a really good shot at advancing to the Final Four if you ask me," Gillispie said. "Some places you left with them feeling better about you than others, but I've got so many great friends that I've maintained over the years at all three of those places that I'm happy for their schools and their fans and players and coaches."

But while coaching has taken a backseat due to his health, Gillispie's coaching journey still serves as a reminder for current Ranger players -- of what could be.

"All the players here want to be where some of the guys I've coached got to -- you know at the highest level," Gillispie said. "But we talk about some of the habits they had and we always brag about the former players and say hey, here's a road map -- you just have to follow it and then get a little bit lucky."

Gillispie's "angel" as he calls her, Ericka Downey, will find out next week if she can officially be the donor of a kidney to a man she's never met.