



Pinocchio says, “Show Me The Money.”

Kerry Schmidt 01-07-2007

This column will be shorter than normal, as I had some complications from my knee replacement surgery, and the pain and weakness is a major bummer. But at least this gets me a little time off from the torture that they call physical therapy. Plus I have been told I likely will have to have an added “minor” - my idea of minor surgery is when it’s on someone else – to go in and clean out the dried blood from when I ruptured some vessels during that lovely therapy.

Looking on the good side, I have plenty of percacet, which not only numbs some of the pain, if you take enough you don’t give a damn about the rest.

Pinocchio. AKA Nick Saban.

In case you don’t know this nomadic football coach, he is the Larry Brown of the gridiron. He has changed jobs about as often as politicians cheat.

After leading LSU to the National Championship in 2003, and immediately thereafter telling everyone that he had “absolutely no interest what-so-ever in going to the NFL, he boarded Flipper One and took over the Dolphins.

As his second NFL season – he was on a five-year contract - wound down, rumors abounded that he would take the head coaching job at Alabama.

On 13 different occasions, he adamantly denied any interest in the ‘Bama position.

The best one: December 9, 2006. “I am looking all of you in the eyes and am telling you, I am not going to Alabama, so why do you keep asking me?”

December 11, 2006. “I’m not talking about that. I have no intentions of going anywhere.”

December 21. “I guess I have to say it again. I’m not going to be the Alabama coach.

December 27. “I’m making a rule to never comment on something like that again, because every time you comment on it, it just makes for another story. So I’m not going to comment on it five years from now and I’m not going to comment on it nest week.”

January 1, 2007. “I thought we had a new rule concerning all that stuff. I said I wouldn’t be commenting on that. Not next week, not next year, not five years from now. My focus is on the Miami Dolphins. That’s the job I have and that’s the job that I’m committed to doing well.”

On January 7, 2007, Saban, saying, “I love it here (Alabama). My heart is here. This is obviously one of the best places in the country.”

Note: His only previous visits to Tuscaloosa were when LSU played there, but I guess he must have fallen in love very quickly.

A \$32 million contract can make one fall in love very quickly. And, all of it is guaranteed, which means he can bolt to another coaching position as soon as he finds a place he “loves more.”

Now obviously coaches change jobs about as often as a baby gets new diapers.

But I cannot remember anytime when a coach so adamantly lied so many times about what he knew he was going to do.

Therein makes his reputation about as commendable as a pile of dog poop.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

I mean, why spend over two weeks lying to the press, and even castigating the press for continuing to ask him about it?

He was a God down here in Louisiana, then bombed out in Miami (15-17, no playoffs in his two seasons in Miami.) In reality, the Dolphins' Saban abandoned a team in total disarray. Good job, Nick.

But it is his lying mannerisms that have left a giant black mark and so harshly sullied his reputation.

When he was here in Louisiana, I had the utmost respect for the way he handled things, including success. That past is now in the dumpster.

He has said he is an avid reader of history and famous individuals. His idol must have been Richard Nixon. ("I am not a crook.") Saban. "I am not leaving Miami."

Thus, Saban loaded up his Brink's truck and was Bama bound.

Needless to say, the press tore him a new a..hole.

On ESPN's "Pardon the Interruption" show, Miami Herald columnist Dan LeBatard called him a "liar, a quitter and a fraud." The day before, he said his nickname was Nick Satan.

On ESPN's "Around the Horn," the Chicago Sun-Times' Jay Mariotti said, "We're going to remember him as a guy who failed in the NFL and ran back to college for the money." So Again, it was not really the fact that he bolted to another job, but the fact that he lied so long and loud that made him his worst enemy.

No matter how well he does at Alabama, or at the other jobs he likely will take, he will be perhaps most remembered for his Pinocchio act.

Let's see what happens in, say two to three years if Saban has not won a championship. Just as the Dolphins are still looking for the next Don Shula, Alabama is still looking for the next Bear Bryant.

On a happier note, I only watched about a half dozen of the zillion bowl games, but I made it a point to watch the Boise State/Oklahoma Fiesta Bowl.

Boise State is from the Western Athletic Conference, not one of the BCS conferences. Despite the fact they finished the regular season at 12-0, the bastards that run the BS debacle were still trying to keep them out of one of the five BCS Bowls. But in the face of federal legislation and lawsuits, they relented, and let them in.

I can assure you that they were drooling over the likelihood that 7-time National Champion Oklahoma would crush the little guys from Idaho.

Well, not only did the Broncos overcome an 18-point deficit in the closing minutes of the game to win, but they did so with great excitement and some of the oldest and trickiest plays in football, both of which had not really been seen in 30 years.

In fact, the two teams combined to score 22 points in the final 86 seconds of regulation, then added 15 more in overtimes.

I have been watching the bowl games for over 40 years, and honestly cannot remember a more exciting and rewarding game. David's trickery slayed Goliath.

The Broncos used the old "hook and ladder" pass, run and lateral for a 50 yard game tying TD with seven seconds left.

But the best part was just getting started.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

After Oklahoma scored a TD in overtime, Boise tied the game with five seconds left on an option pass from the wide receiver to a running back.

Rather than kick the PAT, Boise pulled out one final, fantastic bit of trickery. QB Jared Zabransky faded back to pass, pump faked the throw to three wide receivers on the right flank, then, in a backyard play dating 50 years – the old Statue of Liberty play, handed the ball behind his back to RB Ian Johnson, who ran untouched in the opposite direction for the 2-point conversion and the victory,.

Unbelievable!

But then, Johnson put the real Cinderella finish to the Cinderella game.

He kept right on running over to the sidelines, got down on his knees and asked girlfriend/cheerleader Chrissy Popadics to marry him. She said yes.

That ending, I can assure you, will never, ever be duplicated, let alone topped.

I would love to have been a fly on the wall wherever the old farts that tried to keep Boise out of this BCS game were and seen their reactions. I'm quite sure they were the only people on earth that were upset with the game.

Couldn't happen to a more deserving bunch.

Afterwards, of course, the questions arose on the playoff game and could Boise beat the winner of the Ohio State/Florida BCS game.

Personally, I do not think they could, but I sure as hell would have loved to see them get a chance.

All the problems and faults that have come up virtually every year about this failed system, were really brought front and center with this one miracle game.

If any further good comes from this, it will be that another nail will be put into the coffin of the existing system, one that is truly very faulting and inaccurate.

Yea, Ohio State and Florida will play for the official championship, but the game will be so dull compared to the Boise State highlight that I may well fall asleep during the game, if I even bother to turn it on.

Just a final "I told you so" note. A couple of months ago, you may remember that Dallas QB Tony Romo was being anointed the second coming of Troy Aikman. It lasted five games. He completed 71.2% of his passes, had 10 TD's with only two interceptions, his 115.5 QB rating led the league and he was voted to the pro bowl.

I did not buy into it, saying wait a year or two. Well, it only took those five weeks. Since then, he has completed just under 60% of his passes, thrown six TD's with eight interceptions and fumbled six times. The Cowboys went 2-3, and lost three of their last four games, including the last three at home, all of those by big margins.

Enough. Time to load up on some percasetts, and maybe wash them down with a wee dram of single malt. Being injured does have some benefits.