



## ***ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END***

By Kerry Schmidt

December 12, 2010

I wrote my very first column way back in 1996. MY column was “local” in that the greater New Orleans area was pretty much wherein coverage was available.

In 1998, I went national. With the help of Bill Prudhomme, who set up my wonderful personal web site, my national following at one point was over 10, 000.

When it was local, I twice won the “column of the year award” for papers with a size of 25,000 readers.

When I went national in '98, I won a first place award for column of the year in 2001. I later won three other awards ranging from second place to honorable mentions.

My first place, nationally, was when I took all the names of college basketball players and used them to come up with some pretty funny meanings. I did this three separate times, so, my faithful readers may remember them.

I always said that when something no longer became “fun,” ie, where writing them was more of just labor, rather than a labor, of love, that it was time to hang it up.

Thus, after 15 years, this will be my final column. I say this with some certainty, but you never know. I will maintain my personal web site ([www.offthewallsports.info](http://www.offthewallsports.info)) that all of you used to access my columns. I save the last 2 – 21/2 years of columns on the site, so readers can go back and search the “archives files” for said columns in the past couple of years.

And, it is always possible that some day in the future I may get the excitement back, and start up again, but I doubt that that will happen on a weekly basis.



You never know, I may some week just decide to write one, so readers may want to take a quick peek.

I realize, however, that once I stop writing every week, that readers will rapidly fall off. But, as I said, who knows, I may just write “some stuff,” not necessarily a column, but just some random thoughts on a given week, but I really doubt it.

Some columns were very easy to write. I could just sit down and my mind would sail through a column. Often, those ended up being the best.

But other columns took a lot of research (that means work, yuk) to put together.

Regardless, they are no longer much fun. The last couple of weeks I either just threw something together or simply used a doctored column from a couple of years back.

All this week, I tried to convince myself that I should write one, and that by doing so, I would get the excitement back. It did not happen, so.....

I look back at some of the good stuff, or at least exciting stuff. I was a beat writer for the Saints from 1996 through 2004. I had pretty much decided that after the '04 season I would hang it up, as it was no longer fun. And then, Katrina definitely made my decision quite simple.

During those years, I had a goodly number of interesting columns. One time, after a game that the Saints had lost to the Jets – they blew it at the end, I asked then coach Jim Haslett if that game “Was a step backwards.”

Well, he did not particularly care for that question. In fact, he flew into a fit of rage, screaming at me as to “what the bleep question was that,” and yelling that I needed to be thrown out of there, etc and so on.

I had a plane to catch to California very early the next morning, and when I got to my hotel in Malibu, CA, there were seven



messages for me. Two were from the Saints, and the rest were from other writers who wanted to talk to me re this.

Haslett was trying to apologize for his comments, as were the Saints in general.

For several weeks thereafter, I was kidded by other scribes, often calling me "...step backwards," etc.

Haslett could get riled up pretty easily, so there were often some "carefully" asked questions.

Haslett apparently had an affair (it was in the Times Picayune) with a Saintsation cheer leader, and he often went to some of the players parties. He pretty much lost control of the team by his final year.

Prior to Haslett, Mike Ditka was the coach. He was extremely intimidating. He did not so much as talk, but rather he growled. He had that look in his eyes that he was not happy – as was often the case with the team. Everyone was pretty careful with him, but he would open up and answer with some detailed stuff.

One year when they started 0-4, he was pretty salty, so he had his wife in the press room with the beat writers, and I could see that he was about to get riled up, but then he would glance over at this wife, and calm down. The Saints went on a 4 game win streak, so that lightened him up. Overall, Ditka was pretty amiable.

My first year was Mora, and he quit mid way through the season, so I did not really get to know him much.

Certainly one of the wildest times was when Ditka spent his entire draft – all eight picks – for Ricky Williams.

And Williams was really, back then, a weird dude.

He would sit on the floor of the locker room, his helmet on and his dark visor over his face, head down, and he would barely mumble. Turned out he was just very nervous dealing with the press, but it was strange. Also, apparently he had a good relationship with "Mary Jane," aka marijuana for several years, which may have added to his virtual no interviews impact.



As I sit here writing this, I thought I would have hundreds of things I would comment on, but my mind just seems blank.

One thing I thought I would be able to do, again, this year was get all riled up on the BCS Bowl mess, but the folks got bailed out when Boise State lost a game. Yes, I know TCU is 12-0, but they truly did not play a schedule that had any real serious competition. And thus, we will get what looks like a fantastic game with Auburn and Oregon.

Auburn averages 42.7 points a game and 497 yards per game. And their Heisman Trophy winning QB, Cam Newton, at 6'5" and 250 pounds, he averages 107 running yards per game and 266 passing. Oregon averages 50.2 points a game and runs up 526 yards per game.

As South Carolina coach, Steve Spurrier said, "You could see a 60-55 game."

So, we certainly should see a great National Championship game. And with Oregon playing the no huddle game, well, you will have to wait for commercials to get up and get a beer. Or ask your wife, but you best be careful there.

Well, there are a great number of things I could summarize on over the years, but it would result in a very long, and perhaps boring column.

I will keep this simple. I truly want to thank all my readers over the years, and all of you who emailed me on occasions, even when some of them were negative, even caustic at times.

I have always felt that negative/caustic comments, at times, were best, because people cared enough to comment even on a negative vein.

So, I bid all of you farewell. Again, thank you for all your times that you read the column and commented thereon.

Please feel free to access my web site and check some of the past columns. And yes, I may well write a new one every so often, so go ahead and take a peek.



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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Again, THANK YOU. All good things come to an end, and my interest in writing more columns has become work, not fun.

God Bless.

And yes, Henry, I will continue to imbibe in my single malt!