

MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACK: Vandals aren't the only ones disappointed

Troy Warzocha of the Tribune The Lewiston Tribune

It was a fitting end to a season that Vandals far and wide wish they could erase from their collective memories.

A forgettable, yet unforgettable 56-3 thrashing by Nevada on Saturday capped a painful three-month stretch which featured two wins, four losses by seven points or fewer and one of the most consistently underprepared football teams I've ever had the pleasure (or in this case, displeasure) of watching.

In the fourth quarter on Saturday, Idaho was able to sum up its season with a comedy of errors that seemingly only the Vandals could pull off.

With backup Taylor Davis in at quarterback and the Vandals facing a fourth-and-8 down by 46 points, the offense couldn't get the play in and had to take a delay of game penalty.

On fourth-and 13, the Vandals still couldn't get the play in and were forced to call a timeout. Following the timeout, senior wide receiver Landon Weaver - who was still mystified by whatever Idaho called - was pacing up and down the line of scrimmage like a lost child before being flagged for a false start.

Eventually, the Vandals punted on fourth-and-18.

What makes this sequence even more tragically funny is that Idaho had an entire bye week to prepare for the Wolf Pack.

From the first quarter of the season to the final one, the Vandals looked like an FCS team that for some reason was allowed to play in an FBS conference.

Because let's face it, even Idaho's wins (all two of them) were a farce of the highest order.

In the win over Football Championship Subdivision outfit North Dakota, the Vandals actually trailed 14-10 at halftime and only claimed victory because they eventually wore down the smaller team from a lower division.

With the triumph over San Jose State, Idaho again needed to rally. Except this time it was over a young and inexperienced team that traditionally plays the role of conference doormat.

According to Idaho athletic director Rob Spear's pointed postgame radio comments on Saturday, he is meeting with Idaho coach Robb Akey today to "evaluate every point about this football team."

After such a disastrous campaign, the very least Spear can do is evaluate the football team. In fact, what he really should be doing is evaluating the program as a whole.

Right now, there is no doubt that the Idaho football program is at a crossroad.

Akey's personable nature and undeniable passion for the Vandals has provided the program with a spark as well as a bowl win in 2009.

However, this season certainly puts a pretty sizable dent on the coach's resume. So much so that it's safe to say that at this point, any and all goodwill left over from the H-bowl win was flushed away along with the Vandals' 2011 fiasco.

Do I expect Akey to be relieved of his duties? Absolutely not - nor should he be.

Although I do expect changes to be made on the offensive side of the ball.

More specifically, offensive coordinator Steve Axman should think about selling his house in Moscow and riding off into the sunset before he sets the Idaho offense back another 50 years.

As for Akey, 2012 should be his make-or-break season.

With Hawaii, Fresno State and Nevada breaking from the WAC and former FCS schools Texas State and University of Texas-San Antonio joining, the Vandals need to prove that they should be playing FBS football.

Ten minutes to the west, Washington State has already upped the ante.

Given that the Cougs are in a power conference and have larger resources (money) to pull from, the Vandals don't necessarily have to keep up with the Joneses, they just have to show that they can be competitive in what is easily the weakest FBS conference in the country.

"I'm very disappointed in how we ended the season," Akey said following the Vandals' dismal effort in Reno, Nev. "I don't like the won-loss record. This is embarrassing to me."

The fact is, Akey's embarrassment shouldn't be limited to the coach's office. It should include anyone even remotely associated with the football program at the University of Idaho.

And what's most shameful about the Vandals' 2011 season isn't the lack of wins, discipline or preparedness shown time and time again over the course of 12 agonizing weeks, it's the disservice done to the people who spent their hard-earned money on tickets, concessions and apparel in addition to taking three hours out of their Saturday only to watch the Vandals collapse under their own ineptitude week in and week out.

On the bright side, at least when those same fans "Throw the V," they won't need a separate hand motion to show how many games the Vandals won this season.

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