

One win and a lot of suspect decision-making

Monday Morning Quarterback: Vandals

Theo Lawson/Lewiston Tribune

Hoping to collect an ever-elusive second win that has dodged Idaho coaches for three consecutive seasons, Paul Petrino walked out of Appalachian State's Kidd-Brewer Stadium early Saturday evening with nothing but a measly participation prize.

It was the same old, "Thanks for playing, come again," line he's heard more times than he'd care to share in two seasons as Idaho's coach.

The way this thing is shaping up, Petrino could be hearing it plenty more in the coming years.

Saturday at "The Rock" Idaho was hit with a stone-cold glimpse of the future before the Mountaineers put the finishing touches on a 45-28 win that would send the Vandals to their third straight one-win season - a mark that has to be unrivaled in the Football Bowl Subdivision. If it isn't, Idaho's five wins in four years must.

But the program won't brag about such lows, though at points this season, Petrino and Co. seemed inept at avoiding them. Loss No. 10 was just another reminder that in spite of all the notions of progress, these Vandals are only progressing deeper into college football's cabinet of irrelevance.

It was a refresher: Things just might get worse before they get better.

One area that seems a sure bet to drop off is Idaho's depth, possibly its productivity, behind center. That was the center of discussion during the Vandals' bye week, when the rumor mill really began swirling about the possibility of a Chad Chalich transfer to Montana.

Now, it's almost inevitable. Rather than defying the rumors when asked about it last week, Paul Petrino fired back with this answer: "That's something I really don't want to talk about until the season's over."

And Chalich didn't see a lick of the field on Saturday - a nicked up hip and groin the listed reasons for his absence. Surely, he's seen his last snaps in the silver and gold and it's hard to blame him for wanting to part ways and venture off into Missoula's greener pastures.

Petrino was loyal to Matt Linehan, and in hindsight, almost to a fault. The redshirt freshman tossed for some gaudy numbers early on, but Petrino's allegiance to Linehan backfired on him during the second half of the season. The Vandals were 0-6 before Chalich got any significant snaps with the offense and Linehan had already compiled a touchdown-to-interception ratio of 11:9. Idaho's starting QB tacked on just two more touchdowns, but seven more picks after that point.

The coach's decision-making was called into question again this past weekend, when Petrino left Richard Montgomery, one of Idaho's spark plugs on offense, home in Moscow.

"Coach's decision," radio play-by-play commentator Tom Morris noted.

Petrino gave the same treatment to tailbacks Jerrel Brown and Kris Olugbode earlier in the season - neither players ailed by injury at that point.

Suspicious decision-making to say the least for a coach whose time at UI is quickly becoming suspect.

"I think we made strides, you know last year we kind of got killed by everybody," Petrino said during his postgame radio interview. "This year we got to where we competed against everybody."

Well, with a couple of exceptions.

"We were in every game in the second half and now next year we need to take that next step where we beat people."

In fact, football at Idaho has probably never needed it so bad.

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