

# OUR VIEW:

## UI Vandals can't erase last decade overnight

**Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

Subtract the 2009 season and the University of Idaho football program has had little to celebrate the last decade or so.

And now Idaho appears to have hit bottom, with no home for the 2013 season.

The once proud program - which was a perennial playoff team at the Division I-AA level in the 1980s and early '90s - has bumbled along since joining the ranks of the Football Bowl Subdivision, struggling to find fan support with just one winning season since 2001 and five 10-plus loss years, all while falling 12 straight times to one-time rival Boise State (the average score of those contests was 51-18).

The years of one and two win seasons scattered throughout the last decade and the neglect of its facilities has put Idaho in an unenviable situation.

Its home since 2005, the Western Athletic Conference, has crumbled under the weight of a shifting college football landscape. The Vandals have been spurned by other FBS conferences, namely the Mountain West Conference, which doesn't find Idaho attractive given its history of losing and its sub-par facilities. They include the FBS's smallest football stadium - one the Vandals can't fill.

Idaho's options are limited, with the most attractive being rejoining the Big Sky Conference at the Football Championship Subdivision level or heading into next season as an independent and hoping the college football scene settles and a home opens up. The administration has chosen the latter. Athletic Director Rob Spear assured the Faculty Senate last week the Vandals can succeed as an independent, at least temporarily. The reason for holding on is simple - it's all about the money. Spear said conferences similar to the WAC are probably going to see their BCS revenues increase from about \$2.5 million to \$12 million to \$15 million. That will be divvied up among member schools. However, playing as an FCS team or as an independent team, Idaho will miss out on that money.

Idaho can finish out next season as an independent, but Spear is clinging to a dying dream and delaying the inevitable, as the bungling of the last decade can't be remedied overnight. Idaho is lucky to have a fallback option as nice as the Big Sky Conference - maybe there the Vandals can regain some glory.