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Steve Spurrier Resigns, Dennis Green Fired, Ty Williamham Hired - More BCS

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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If the first few days of the New Year there are many indications 2002 could turn out to be much more than simply a palindromic delight. The seismic rumblings out of Gainesville, Florida yesterday overshadowed the Category Five Hurricane that swept from California to Nebraska on Thursday. The totally unexpected resignation by Steve Spurrier as Gator football coach would easily have overshadowed such an action by the governor of the state, and perhaps even that of the governor's brother. It has been front-page news across Florida for two days now, and local television news has been overrun by this story from the world of sport.

Steve Spurrier is one of the best known and the most loved and hated figures in the State of Florida, a genius or an evil genius. He is the highest paid state employee in the State University System pulling down over \$2M before endorsements. He is one of the most powerful public figures in the State of Florida whose influence is such that he was able to save the President of University of Florida from being fired.

Spurrier is leaving the University to pursue a position in the National Football League. Where that will be is yet to be determined although most "Spurrier watchers" think it will be within the State of Florida where all three NFL teams presently have coaches. One thing seems likely, Spurrier's departure from Gainesville and his desire to join the NFL is likely to set off a chain reaction of musical coaches at both the college and NFL levels over the next week or two.

The other two major coaching moves in the past week have been the firing of Dennis Green by the Minnesota Vikings, and the hiring of Tyrone Willingham by the University of Notre Dame. Green's departure is a bit of a surprise, as it seemed as though after many years of precarious existence in Minnesota Green was on solid ground having signed a long-term contract. The death of Korey Stringer before the start of this season and the implosion of Randy Moss as the season wore on apparently were too much for Vikings management. Or perhaps it was something else as the rumors swirling around Dennis Green have always had disastrous potential.

At Notre Dame, where disaster has become endemic, it may be that things are about to take a positive turn. The hiring of Tyrone Willingham from Stanford as head football coach is important in two respects. First, the fallout from the George O'Leary debacle will now quickly fade away as this highly regarded coach takes the helm under the watchful eye of Touchdown Jesus. Second, Notre Dame has now hired its first African-American coach in any sport, something overdue at the institution led for many years by Fr. Theodore M. Hesburgh a national leader in the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

Meanwhile in New York another notable departure has taken place with the expiration of Rudy Giuliani's term as Mayor of New York City. Surprising many by his assumption of national leadership in the 9/11 Crisis, Giuliani's departure came none too soon. In one of his last acts as mayor Giuliani showed why, announcing that the city had reached an agreement with both the Mets and Yankees for the financing and construction of two new stadiums. The \$1.6 billion cost, believed to be the largest private-public venture in baseball history, would be divided evenly between the city and the two teams. Giuliani claims it would require no new taxes, while the governor did commit to state financing of the needed infrastructure.

Excuse me if I find this an outrage. How can a city that has just gone through what New York has gone through, which had losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars, which has been showered with federal monies to deal with the losses, and which has seen the generosity of Americans pour added millions of private dollars into the city, then announce that it was about to dump \$800M into two baseball stadiums?

Rudy Giuliani has shown that like the late Winston Churchill he is a great leader in crisis, and also like Churchill he is lacking when dealing with the more mundane matters of civic affairs. Unlike the British who voted the portly war leader out of office as soon as the crisis had past, the good citizens of Manhattan only had to watch as the ball dropped on Times Square and Mayor Rudy became history.

Finally a note on the bowl games. It is becoming clear that the BCS Title Game nonsense is helping to set up the bowl

system for a National Championship of college football. By placing all the stress on one bowl, the BCS Championship game, all the others, even the big money games, have lost considerable luster. The Orange Bowl was treated with disdain by at least one its participants who didn't want to be there; the Sugar Bowl had virtually no interest to anyone except alumni of participating schools especially those who could go to New Orleans and party; while the Rose Bowl scuttled its tradition for the false promise of a national championship game.

Soon only one game will matter and all other bowls will go the way of the once renowned Cotton Bowl and the legendary Poulon Weed Eater Bowl. At that point bowl committees seeking to reestablish interest in their games will see the wisdom of a National Championship playoff system showing once again that the real purpose intercollegiate athletics remains financial.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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