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Ron Zook and the Bull Gators

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
Ron Zook and the Bull Gators
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He never had a chance, although he certainly knew what hit him. Ron Zook was fired yesterday by the glorious football machine at the University of Florida, the one in Gainesville, the one with the Gator as the mascot.

Now in his third season as head coach of the esteemed Florida Gators, Ron Zook, made the error of having taken the job in the first place. Before he even arrived on campus there were bands of marauding power brokers and no-life idiots calling for his head. Fireronzook.com was up and running before Ron Zook arrived in The Swamp. Those who ran the site never revealed their names; the coach probably wished he never had revealed his either.

Zook failed in his job before he had arrived because he had two major shortcomings. First, he failed to be Steve Spurrier, the sometime visor-throwing football wonderworker, who is hailed by all of the Gator faithful as a genius. Second, he failed to be a big name coach from a big name school. How could the exalted Gators have hired a defensive coordinator with no big time head coaching experience? Doomed from the start there was no point in Zook even showing up in Gainesville.

The big money boys, the Bull Gators, the elite of the boosters, who run the university and the state, were in shock. Certainly all the great coaches in America wanted the Gator head coaching position, and instead "we got Ron 'Fucking' Zook." Clearly there was some malfunction in the universe. Zook? Are you kidding? Get him out of here! Yesterday!

Fueled by the Bull Gators and cheap "likker" the rank and file Gator fans willingly joined the chorus. They always do and always will. Fireronzook.com is a tribute to the lynch-mob spirit that now directs the flow on such issues in college football, no doubt an advance for civilization over earlier times in some locations.

The final blow came following the Florida Gator loss to lowly Mississippi State in Starkville on Saturday. As I watched the last fateful minutes of this game unfold I wondered how quickly Zook would meet his inevitable fate. It took longer than I thought, because the president of the University of Florida was

out of town. The decision was discussed between the president and the athletic director by telephone on Saturday, and the trigger was pulled at the president's home on Sunday evening. Zook was delivered to the masses on Monday.

It was a pathetic scene really. Ron Zook, a grown man, an adult of the human species, a person of some sensitivity and considerable patience stood before the press and read a statement. He had trouble making it through. He was choked up and blubbering. It was a painful sight and something that no human being ought to be made to endure, even for a half-million dollars. Despite the buyout money on his contract you had to feel sorry for the ex-coach.

For nearly three years he had endured the cries of the rabble for his job. He had watched as the Bull Gators conspired to destroy his football career. Only a few weeks before the end, the children of Bull Gators had ambushed Zook in an incident at a Frat House in which the besieged Gator coach had been drawn into a shouting match with the student non-athletes of Greekdom. Not a wise thing to do, and something that became public knowledge only after the Gators lost to LSU. In this world, timing is everything.

Ron Zook couldn't win the national championship, he wasn't Steve Spurrier, and it was said he failed with some of the best football talent in the nation. If this is true, and it remains to be seen if it is, couldn't the firing of Ron Zook wait until the end of the season? Of course not. Firing him now gives added pleasure to those who can go to the swamp, drink some "likker," and taunt Zook as he continues to coach in this lame duck humiliation mode. Who could ask for more?

When asked by the Florida football players why they were not consulted before the firing, the Athletic Director in one of his extremely rare frank and honest moments told them that this was not their concern. They had been brought to the University of Florida only to play football. And that's the nasty truth of it all.

Thus ends another wonderful moment in the continuing saga of college sport. Why get all bent out of shape over Ron Zook, some may ask. This sort of thing happens all the time. And that indeed is the point. It does happen all the time, and no one cares. This sort of thing is taken as the norm.

So more life-lessons are given by those who control the institutions of higher learning and football knowledge in America. College football is entertainment. College football is about something so unrelated to education that it ought not to be allowed near a college campus. It is a sordid little world in which human beings are routinely humiliated, young men are routinely chewed up, and the cheering never stops.

It is all about values, and the lack thereof. These are the life lessons taught by intercollegiate athletic machines totally devoid of all human spirit.

Someone needs to pull the plug on this charade of sportsmanship and return to a world of students competing in sport for their own personal development rather than for the entertainment and ego expansion of boosters and fans who wallow in a swamp of alcohol fumes and testosterone and have lost all sense of humanity.

This is not about the University of Florida; it is about the values being taught another generation of our future leaders and boosters.

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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