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## Bobby Petrino gets going

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
Bobby Petrino gets going  
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He has been found. Call off the search. We now have the new poster boy for College Football.

"When the Going Gets Tough, Bobby Petrino Gets Going."

These words should be posted in every football locker room in the nation.

No doubt someone in the not too distant future will exceed Bobby Petrino's marvelous record for "loyalty," "devotion to team," "dedication to the common cause," "family," and all those other ridiculous cliches that football coaches pass off as motivational wisdom to the gullible and simple souls in their charge.

The Champion of Hypocrisy and Greed, the Charlatan of the Gridiron, and the One Who Never Quits Quitting, all seem appropriate titles for the new King of Coaches. Last year it was Nick Saban, this year it is Bobby Petrino.

Who will take us lower next year? We don't know his name yet, but we do know he is out there waiting to make his mark in the theater of the absurd that is college football.

The Atlanta Falcon players who showed up to work only to find that their coach had left them described Petrino as "classless," "a cancer," "a quitter," and lesser terms of endearment. He didn't say goodbye, but according to Warrick Dunn he did leave a note in each player's locker. All the notes were signed. With a signature stamp. No candy canes attached. Grady Jackson called him a "coward, with a yellow stripe down his back." The unprintable comments were, no doubt, even more endearing. Petrino preached "family" and "loyalty" to his NFL players, and no doubt he will preach the same disingenuous nonsense in Arkansas.

None of this should surprise anyone, especially Falcon owner Arthur Blank and GM Rich McKay. Over the past five years Bobby Petrino left his mark all over the football world with five clandestine interviews for various coaching jobs. He denied having any of these interviews, and when he didn't get the jobs at Auburn, or Notre Dame, or Florida, or Mississippi, or LSU, he

loudly proclaimed his undying loyalty to Louisville. He would never leave Louisville. His children would all graduate from Louisville high schools. The Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy were close personal friends. Yada, Yada, Yada.

Then a year ago he had yet another clandestine meeting. This one was with Arthur Blank and Rich McKay. They were willing to be a party to Petrino's deception of Louisville and hired him to a five year \$24M contract. Why they should be surprised, shocked, disappointed, or feel betrayed by Petrino's latest deception is difficult to understand.

Perhaps the feelings came from the fact that the Atlanta Falcons had told the University of Arkansas that they would not grant permission for the university to discuss a job with them. So much for the ethics of higher education.

Perhaps it was because Petrino had assured Blank on Monday that he was going nowhere when Blank asked him about the Arkansas rumors. Blank then went on ESPN Monday night during the Falcons game and told the nation that Petrino was his coach and would remain his coach. In less than twenty-four hours Blank was eating his words, as well as the dust left by Petrino's mad dash to Arkansas.

Petrino got a five-year deal with Arkansas for \$2.85M per year. That along with the \$3.5M in deferred compensation for the coach they fired will increase Arkansas' overhead a bit. Then of course there will be the increased salary that will come in a year or two when Petrino finds another coaching job that will move him closer to the numbers he left behind in Atlanta, and the Hogs have to go out and hire another football coach.

This bit of financial news out of the American university athletic system can be added to the news that there are now fifty college football coaches making over \$1M per year. Ten years ago there were only two coaches making over \$1M, and both of them in Florida, where of course the university systems are funded at one of the lowest rates in the nation. There are now four coaches making over \$3M per year and eight more gathering up over \$2M per year. In nearly all of these cases the football coaches are paid more than the university president. That precedent is an old one going back to the hiring of Amos Alonzo Stagg to coach football at the University of Chicago in the 1890s.

The cost spiral is also being driven by many other factors. An increase in the number of assistant coaches and their surging salaries has put pressure on athletic budgets, as have the demands for better training facilities, better travel accommodations, and a raft of other amenities.

Beyond the coaching realm another cost has surfaced in the past year which is likely to increase in the near term. Fresno State University has paid out nearly \$28.5M in sex discrimination cases that it has lost over the past five months. Last week the University of Colorado settled out of court for \$2.5M on two cases involving rape by football players and recruits of two female students. In both of these cases, legal costs are likely to have been substantial. There will be more news of this type over the next few months and years as a number of cases involving Title IX are making their way through the legal system.

The pressure to find new revenue streams will mount, as football coaches drown in money. The streams will become burning rivers before the edifice collapses in upon itself. In the words of Randy Newman: "Burn on Big River Burn on."

Meanwhile let us pay tribute to Bobby Petrino who this week gave us several million reasons to recognize his greatness, and the preeminence of college football in America.

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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