

Is it wrong to be the best at what you do every year?

By Timothy Linscott

Managing Editor

I have not really touched on the Nebraska head football coach Bo Pelini situation, but now is as good a time as any.

There have been rumors swirling for the last few years that Pelini is just not cutting it as a head coach and will be forced out, quit or fired soon.

A winning season, yes, but no hopes of a conference title and certainly no chance in the foreseeable future of a national title.

As a Nebraska football fan, let me play devil's advocate for a bit.

A winning record in Division I, especially the Big 10, is very respectable. However, this is Nebraska and we all know that without an undefeated season and a national championship, the season is a waste. Nothing less is acceptable.

There was talk for years of Coach Osborne getting the axe because he couldn't 'win the big one.' Well, Pelini isn't even getting a chance to 'win the big one.'

It took 20 years for Osborne to win a national title. Do we have the patience, as Husker Nation, to give Pelini 20 years to win a national title? Do we not want results now, immediately, in order to win another title?

Now, the athletic department could bring in a proven, yet expensive, coach. Urban Meyer reportedly makes \$4 million a year. A coach of his caliber will cost that and possibly more in the long run. Within five years we could contend for a national title. Maybe not win, but at least contend for a national title. Bill Callahan received \$3.1 million as a buy-out after being fired.

Pelini makes a reported \$2.77 million a year.

Let's take a look at what the potential is out there for really big name coaches, their programs and what they have done in the last 10 years: Pete Carroll at USC, Chip Davis at Oregon, Meyer at Florida.

These coaches have all been very successful, been national title contenders or won national titles and the programs are all now under NCAA sanctions or being investigated.

Two of those coaches, Kelly and Carroll, have gone to the pro ranks, just one year before their programs were put under NCAA scrutiny.

The right time to move on or get out of Dodge before the heat descended upon them?

An interesting question, one that NU would have to ponder in looking at a big-name coach. You may get big-name baggage as well.

The university could hire a young, up-and-coming coach, get them cheap and build the program around new, fresh ideas.

The downside is that this coach will likely go on to a bigger school or the NFL. Another question to ask is, 'Is the head coaching job at Nebraska what it used to be?'

Hitching your wagon to a young coach could mean you have them for the long haul, or you are a step on their path to greatness. It could also mean a longer building time frame as their system may take a few years to build upon and become familiar with all involved.

Do we have time to wait?

Remember the Callahan pro-style passing offense? It never did catch on, nor did our defense, which is why we were embarrassed by Kansas 76-39 a few years back. Oklahoma State defeated NU 45-14 in 2007, a huge loss at the time.

Incidentally, OSU is now under NCAA investigation.

Do we stay the same with 'Good Ol' Bo' and be happy with a top 25 team that averages three losses and goes to a bowl game, or do we go back a few steps with the potential to move forward? This could mean putting our name and reputation at risk and have the NCAA breath down our necks forever.

The University of Miami is still trying to recoup from sanctions a few years back and the program is not, and may never be, the same again.

Tradition, integrity and 'Nebraska football' can easily be replaced by flashy football with players wearing sunglasses on the sidelines, female escorts for the recruits to show them around campus and alumni willing to cheat to win.

As a kid, I remember hearing Osborne talk first and foremost about the character of the athletes. Some of the players went on to be doctors, lawyers and have wonderful civic-minded lives. He was preparing them for life, not for the NFL or a national championship.

'Back in the day' Cornhusker players were seldom drafted because their talent was used up in college.

Nebraska did this by being in the forefront of weight training, performance techniques and the walk-on program. Other schools have caught up and left NU behind. It is time to take the initiative and move 20 years ahead of the rest of the world, not rest on the laurels of the past.

"We won our national titles before you were born," is not a good recruiting pitch. "Come be a part of tradition," doesn't work either.

"Help start a new tradition based on unrivaled commitment to the team concept," and "We'd like you to come to NU and dominate every opponent you see," sounds a little better.

For me, I'd rather be competitive, win more than we lose, go to a bowl game and win based on respect, skill and commitment than cut corners to bring in athletes who stand around with their hands out waiting for their payment from boosters.

To me, Pelini is a Nebraska coach. Not too personable, but he fits the mold of an NU football coach and I believe he's an honest man who will earn his victories fair and square with athletes who believe the same. However, it wouldn't hurt him to adjust the game plan at halftime.

Let the offense do their thing, let the defense knock people on their rumps and enjoy the game.

Once that pressure comes off, we all may be surprised with what the Huskers can do on the field.