

The plot thickens

Posted on Nov 07, Posted by [Joe Biddle](#) Category ["My Bid"; By Joe Biddle](#)

If the present trend continues, Titans Coach Mike Munchak and Tennessee Coach Derek Dooley can meet at a designated coffee shop on their way to file unemployment papers.

Circumstances could not have been any bleaker than they were last weekend when Troy came within a whisker of upsetting Tennessee. A day later, it was Da Bears who blew into Music City and handed the Titans what was arguably their most embarrassing loss in franchise history.

With Tennessee, Dooley is all but dead man walking. When Troy took a lead late in their game, sources report a number of folks sitting in the President's private box engaged in some hush-hush conversation.

If true, it's doubtful they were discussing East Tennessee's beautiful fall foliage. Nor do I think they were making plans for a future golf trip.

If the men of Troy had been successful, I think Dooley would not be coaching this week against Missouri. I would think even Dooley would agree.

The Vols must run the table for the decision makers to give Dooley another year. The first thing he needs to do is send defensive coordinator Sal Sunseri packing. He may be a great position coach, but he has been an abject failure as a coordinator.

While Sunseri may, or may not, have a perfect scheme is up for vigorous debate. But his inability to teach it to Tennessee's players is plain as day. Most shots of Sunseri I have seen during TV games show him yelling to his players. Obviously the results prove he is not getting his message through.

If they should dump Dooley some time between this week and the end of the season I don't see a slam dunk candidate to replace him. And even if Tennessee is of mind to pay Nick Saban type money for Dooley's replacement, I'm not sure anyone who can get the job done would take it.

A new coach would be starting in fourth place in the SEC East with sound programs in Georgia, South Carolina and Florida with a wide gap between them and the rest of the SEC East. Trust me when I say those programs will not surrender their status without a street fight.

Tennessee is not the job it once was. Some fans and media wearing orange tinted glasses claim it is a top 10 job. Please. I will tell you it's no longer a top 25 job. They have to recruit nationally, as South Carolina and Clemson have locked up what was once a fertile Tennessee recruiting state. Georgia and Alabama get the cream of the crop in their states, while Tennessee has seen in-state recruits such as Alabama All-American Barrett Jones and ex-All American linebacker Dont'a Hightower leave the state. Current recruits Max Staver and Jalen Ramsey of Brentwood Academy chose to go to Florida and Southern Cal respectively. Top 20 teams invade Tennessee and take the best players home with them.

As for Munchak, he has more rope. He grew up in the organization, as a player, offensive line coach and the last two years as head coach.

Twenty-five years ago, owner Bud Adams would have fired Munchak after the Bears massacre. The 89-year-old Adams is a more kinder, gentler sort, and not as quick on the trigger.

It will be worth watching to see the plot thicken at Baptist Sports Park, as well as on the Hill.

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