

Vols get their man

Posted on Dec 12, Posted by [Joe Biddle](#) Category ["My Bid"](#); By [Joe Biddle](#)

You can't spell Butch without UT.

I'll say one thing about the newest Tennessee football coach. Butch Jones owned the press conference last week.

He's going to hire the best staff in college football. The Tennessee job has always been his "dream job."

You have to give him an "E" for enthusiasm. Jones said all the right things that were easy for skeptical Vols fans to digest. You see, the Vol Nation had been on a 19-day roller-coaster ride and some of those fans that had gotten an "I Love Jon Gruden" tattoo, are still being treated for Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

If they're honest, most of them didn't know Butch Jones from Butch Cassidy.

Jones definitely pushed the right buttons. He also left the team meeting, having created a positive buzz among the players.

"The press conference fades quickly, because at the end of the day, it's success on the field," UT Athletics Director Dave Hart cautioned.

On the field next season is going to be one of the most difficult schedules any Tennessee football coach has faced.

The Vols play seven teams that are going to bowl games. They will play five teams that finished in the top 10 of the final BCS rankings this season.

They have a stretch where they play at Oregon, at Florida, South Alabama and Georgia. Then, after an open date to heal up, the Vols face South Carolina, at Alabama before the schedule eases up with November games against Missouri, Auburn, Vanderbilt and Kentucky.

Butch Jones is by all accounts an outstanding football coach. No one has suggested he can perform miracles. He could get his first team to a bowl game with wins over Austin Peay, Western Kentucky, South Alabama, Missouri, Auburn and Kentucky. Vanderbilt is a swing game in case they stub their toes.

People I talked to who have covered Butch Jones have nothing but good things to say about him. A columnist who has covered Louisville and Cincinnati claims if he had to choose between Charlie Strong and Jones, he would take Jones.

"I think Jones is a better coach," he said.

I also talked to an online writer who covers West Virginia. He was really high on Jones when Jones was an assistant on the Rich Rodriguez staff there.

The term "great recruiter" kept cropping up in both conversations. Now we will see just how great a recruiter Butch Jones will be in the SEC. He claims a good recruiter can recruit anywhere. Jones might want to reserve judgment on that statement until he has gone swimming in the shark tank.

He was smart to retain running backs coach Jay Graham, who worked at South Carolina two years before coming back to his alma mater last season. Jones also offered a coaching job to for Vol quarterback Tee Martin, who chose to stay at Southern Cal.

Jones is straight up with his players and it was not surprising that his Cincinnati team gave him a standing ovation when he told them he was leaving to take the Tennessee job.

Jones wasn't offended by not being Dave Hart's first choice, second, or perhaps third.

Pete Carroll was Southern Cal's fourth choice and that worked out pretty well. Mike Bellotti, Dennis Erickson and Mike Riley gave the Trojans thumbs down and Carroll stepped into a gold mine.

Maybe Butch Jones is the one to awaken the sleeping giant.

Contact Sports Columnist Joe Biddle at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#)

Tags: [Joe Biddle](#)