



Published on Sports Management Resources

[“Not one Dime Back” – Jim Calh...](#)

[Connee Zotos, Ph.D.](#)

[Senior Associate](#)

It seems like everyone that saw, heard or read about Jim Calhoun's response to the reporter who asked him about the magnitude of his salary given the economic climate had an opinion about it. Some agreed or disagreed with the tenor of Coach Calhoun's response but the interesting part was that many people provided alternative answers. One of my colleagues suggested that he should have told the absolute truth; "that most current coaches and wannabe coaches would crawl on their belly's across glass just for the opportunity to coach in a high level program". What would the response have been if he had kept his cool, or had the time to think about it like the rest of us had, and said something like the following?

On days when practice is running smoothly, the team is in a zone, we are winning and the players and the coaches feel a sense of family only second to the real thing, I'd probably coach for nothing. But then there are the other days. The ones where the pressure to win can be consuming, serves as a constant threat to my employment, and makes time with my family non-existent; or the times when I'm named in a lawsuit, threatened by a parent or an alumnus, or my family becomes the target of a blog that presents them in a vile, hateful way. Or when, no matter how hard our coaching staff tries to mentor

young men, a player makes a thoughtless decision that has serious ramifications to him, the team, the program, the university and/or our coaches. And how about raising more and more money for the program or doing more and more interviews with reporters who would rather talk about ancillary issues they can spin anyway they choose rather than the success of the team. On those days, I'm not sure there is enough money in the world to make it worth it. Next question...

But truly, when you peel down to the core of this issue, there was really only one accurate answer and that was to tell that reporter to go talk to the President of the University and the Board of Trustees. If you agree that coaches' salaries have gone way over the top, the finger has to be pointed directly at the top of the administrative ladder. How many times is the Knight Commission going to implore presidents to take charge of these high-powered programs? Now the Commission is telling presidents to seize this time of economic unrest to take a position. Surely no one, even rabid alums, could blame them. But will the administrators show the courage to do so?

And what about the NCAA? In my opinion, Myles Brand has tried valiantly to get presidents on-board with a halt to the arms race, yet they continue to raise the ante every time they hire a new coach. Not only have salaries increased exponentially, so have the length of multi-year contracts, which have gone way beyond good business practices. It is true that many university presidents aren't known for their business acumen but just the opposite is true for most members of Boards of Trustees. They would never make the decisions within their own businesses that they constantly make about hiring coaches.

So what gives? Is it the "elation" factor? That contagious feeling of uninhibited joy that comes from association with a nationally prominent team. Is it the search for excellence and the pay-off that comes from success? Or do they really believe the athletics directors rhetoric that the team will fall into an abyss and never recover if they don't hire among the established elite and pay these well-known coaches more than they have ever been paid before? What is it that has caused these educators and Trustees to be complicit in a system that allows athletics departments to dictate their own salaries, to side-step affirmative action laws or university hiring policies, to spend tax dollars and/or student fees with nothing more than a promise of "value-added". Some would say that presidents and trustees have merely looked the other way. The result is the same...a system that is broken, that discriminates against minorities, and is as fiscally irresponsible as many of the businesses and non-profits we've been reading about in the papers these days.

Source URL: <http://sportsmanagementresources.com/print/pdf/node/116>