Eye in the Keyhole

Dietzel-Baylor rumors unfounded

BY DOUG WILLIAMS
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In Wednesday's issue of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, writer Clifford King released a story that Baylor head football coach McDermott was on the verge of losing his job. This is nothing new in college football. But when King did mention that three people had been rumored as possible successors - Iowa State head coach Johnny Majors; Louisiana State mentor Charlie McClendon; and USC's Paul Dietzel - a lot of people had no idea what was going on, and one of those people was really wondering what was happening.

"Dietzel was just one of the names coming from Waco," King said. "I can't divulge my source, but it was a competent one, close to the scene. However, this person was in no way connected with the University. The athletic council met Monday, then we'll get a definite word from the University."

Another writer for the Star-Telegram, Dick Moore, tried to put the situation into its proper perspective. "These three names just leaped out of Baylor football. The situation here is real bad. Baylor has won three games in three years. This year's freshmen won one game. The officials at Baylor say they have only four varsity prospects among the freshmen."

"The school is after a name coach," Moore continued. "That's why Dietzel's name probably came up. The past three head coaches here have been assistants. Bill was the top assistant to McClendon at LSU."

My jaunt around the nation then led me to David Campbell, the Sports Editor of the Waco News-Tribune, who supposedly has the inside track on Baylor football. "These three names are totally far-fetched," Campbell stated flatly. "I have no idea where they got their names, or who the Sources are. The whole thing is pure speculation. I personally feel that the Star-Telegram just picked their names out of a hat."

Campbell did state, however that Majors' name has been frequently mentioned in reference to the possible position of Baylor head coach. But according to the Iowa State athletic department, nothing could be further from the truth. "I know that Johnny Majors is not one bit interested in a new job," Sports Information Director Harry Burrell simply said. "We play Oklahoma State this weekend, and it's a big game. That's all I know here."

Rodgers confirmed that the whole thing was somewhat foreign to him, too, and didn't want any information to give to you, because I don't know what they are talking about. I didn't even know that Baylor was looking for a new coach, or that the old one was being fired."

The confused scene then switched to LSU, where everyone from the head coach to the janitor was thinking about the whole story. "Coach Charlie McClendon has two more football games against Notre Dame and Tulane," said Sid Paul Manasse. "He is coaching in the East-West Shrine game, and in Manhattan. Well, the statement of Mr. Dietzel or anyone of the others. He was there by the authority of the office as I was when I read the story."

"Any time there's a rumor of a head coaching change, maybe someone on campus throwing out names," Oliver explained. "I haven't heard anything even remotely related to the story. Even from our own rumor factory here in Waco."

As curiously comical as all this may seem, there is still a tinge of reality. While talking to Campbell, I was informed that Texas A&M was "considering Dietzel as a possible head coach. I don't know what you're talking about," Spec Gammon, the A&M sports public relations man replied rather testily. "It is probably only a rumor."

What does Dietzel have to say on the subject? "I'm not hunting for a job. This University has been very nice to me. I like the climate here in South Carolina. To be quite frank, both schools (Texas A&M and Baylor) have offered me positions in the past. But I'm happy where I am."

What does all this prove? That a veil of secrecy which pervades the entire subject is purely for show. Search for the concrete truth, while allowing strange runners to run rampant. Who suggested the three names quite obviously had no idea of what he was talking about. Baylor must know what he is talking about; two prominent Texas papers don't know what he is talking about; three as logically known coaches don't know what he is talking about.

Perhaps Clifford King's source heard an irate fan who got slightly inebriated and began talking about government fuel and the source mustard diesel for Dietzel; or someone was talking about famous Civil War generals and the source mustard McClellan for McClendon; or an Air Force major gave the source the idea of looking for a guy named Majors.

In any event, it was a truly enjoyable afternoon illustrating that the people who should have known what was going on didn't. Maybe one of the coaches mentioned will eventually become Baylor's next coach. And maybe Clifford King's source will get the Pulitzer Prize for secrecy. And maybe chicken Little's warning cry will turn out to be true.