

College coaches beware: A nation's wandering eyes are on you

There was a question on everybody's mind at Oregon's spring game on Saturday.

It wasn't about the Duck running game, or the team's inability to stop the big play on defense. No, we all wanted to know what was on Mike Bellotti's mind.

"Do you have any thoughts on Alabama firing head coach Mike Price?"

"I think that's a tremendous shame," Bellotti said. "Obviously, I don't know any of the details. I know Mike Price is a very good person and a very good football coach. That's a hard thing to handle."

"I think it's a very fragile existence nowadays at the Division I level. I think we're aware of it, but these things bring it home even more."

Fragile indeed.

Price's firing on Saturday and Larry

Eustachy's ouster from the Iowa State basketball program on Monday magnify the scrutiny collegiate programs are receiving these days. In the past, shelling out cash at a topless club wouldn't even get a college coach a slap on the wrist.

Now, even the slightest slip-up can cost a seven-year contract. For Price and Eustachy, the term "slip-up" is a nice way of putting it, but neither broke the law in its true spirit.

What invariably did-in both coach-

es is the fact that their actions portrayed their respective schools in a negative light, and with athletic departments being the true windows into the souls of universities these days, the two were easy targets.

This just goes to show how one mistake can undo a career. Price was a model coach—or so we were led to think—at Washington State, and Eustachy never had a negative word reach ESPN.

In a world where sporting events are interactive, and a multitude of television channels show sports 24/7, college coaches are under increasing scrutiny in every aspect of their daily lives.

Price and Eustachy each acted poorly, but in years past, it's doubtful either would have gotten the ultimate axe for their transgressions. They

would have received a suspension, a talking-to from the university president, and a warning not to do it again.

Not anymore. Not in this world. Not at a time where recruits can land a school its next shoe deal.

Nope. The ultimate choice has to be taken.

Acted poorly and went to a strip club? See you later. Don't let the door knob hit you on the way out.

Of course, had Price actually been wise enough to sign that seven-year contract before he took over the program, maybe he would still be in Tuscaloosa.

Let's say that again: Sign your contract before you move into your office.

Then there's Eustachy and his mind-boggling transgressions.

OK, there's really no way to stick up for what he did. I mean,

sure, you're an alcoholic — and yes, this came out after the incident — but in no way is that related to college coeds at Missouri.

And Natural Ice? If you're going to have to go to a college party to get your kicks, spring for the students. Give 'em something better.

Point is, what these two did is going to be in the spotlight. Eustachy deserved his firing, and maybe Price didn't, but they've both opened the door for public scrutiny.

Think coaches get pried on enough as it already is?

Wait a little while.

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

Springtime and Oregon football



Jason Fife looks toward the Oregon sideline at Saturday's spring game. Fife, after starting all 13 games last season, will enter fall practices in a battle with sophomore Kellen Clemens for the starting quarterback spot.
Mark McCambridge
Emerald



Chris Vincent and Robby Valenzuela (99) do battle at the Oregon spring game. Vincent is a candidate for the starting running back spot, vacated by Onterio Smith after last season. Valenzuela is a member of the Oregon defensive line, which has the potential to be one of the best in the Pacific-10 Conference next season.
Adam Amato Emerald