Firing coaches: The cause of - and solution to - all college football problems

By Allen Kennedy
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Some of them educated types have some advice for you, Auburn Fan. You better listen up, too, there, Vol Nation.

If you think canning the underperforming asses of Gene Chizik and Derek Dooley mean you'll start getting better football teams, think again.

Academics from the University of Colorado system and Loyola University Chicago studied coaching turnover from 1997 through 2010 to examine the effects of a coaching change on a program's fortunes. According to their recently published research, bad teams might get a short-lived boost from a new hire before reverting to previous form. Middling teams actually tend to see their performances deteriorate, the researchers found.

(Somewhere David Cutcliffe is nodding vehemently.)

In other words, all the resources spent on all of that coaching churn generally don't amount to much - although coaches who get the ax probably appreciate those hefty buyouts.

So, why don't coaching changes produce better returns? I suspect we don't fully appreciate everything that actually goes into building a winning football program. While it's easy to attribute a team's success to what amounts to its only true constant, the head coach, the reality is that he's generally only as good as what he has to work with.

An upstart rising into the upper echelon of programs that sit atop the rankings year in and year out happens so rarely because it requires a unique set of inherent advantages. If you don't have money, a fertile recruiting base, institutional support, top-tier facilities and the like, you can forget about becoming college football's version of a made man.

The reality is that very few schools share the same advantages as Texas and Florida and USC. There's a painful glass ceiling between the upper crust of the sport and the vast majority of programs. Coaches like Jeff Tedford and Danny Hope are about to discover how badly its hurts when you smack up against it.