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Bears need to start searching for new coach



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It is time to get rid of Bears head coach Lovie Smith, once and for all. Face it, Bears fans: last night's upset of the Vikings aside, the season is limping to a close, and the responsibility for the Bears' disappointing record rests squarely on the shoulders of its head coach.

It is the primary responsibility of a head coach to win games or at least to help the players to improve individually so that there is hope for the future. For the past three seasons, Smith has done neither.

The most incriminating evidence is the fact that mediocre players leave, only to become better, while allegedly talented players come to the Bears to destroy their careers.

For example, look at the quarterback comparison between the discarded Kyle Orton and supposed savior Jay Cutler. Cutler threw four interceptions in the first game against the Green Bay Packers. Nowhere to go but up, right? Wrong! Prior to last night's unexpected offensive outpouring, Cutler had thrown 19 touchdown passes and a whopping 25 interceptions, tops (or bottoms) in the NFL, including the infamous loss against the San Francisco 49ers in which Cutler threw five interceptions in one game.

Meanwhile, Orton has thrown 20 TDs and only nine picks in leading the Denver Broncos to a 6-0 start and a possible playoff berth.

Running back Cedric Benson is a prime example of a player who did not succeed on the Bears, and when he left, he became a much better player. Now, he plays for the Cincinnati Bengals and has performed better than he ever did for the Bears. In each of his three seasons for Chicago, Benson did not rush more than 700 yards. He never improved and was considered a bust. After leaving the Bears after three unsuccessful seasons, Benson has become highly successful as a Bengal, gaining over 1200 yards so far this season in leading the Bengals to the American Football Conference North crown.

Meanwhile, the player who replaced Benson, Matt Forte has accumulated a paltry 828 yards in 15 games.

Given these disparities, it is no surprise that the Bears' winning percentage has declined steadily over the past three years since the Bears went to the Super Bowl. Since then, Smith's winning percentage has decreased dramatically, and this year's current tally is a sparkling .400. With a rapidly aging defense and offensive line, they don't look to improve any time soon.

Not that Smith would admit responsibility. Smith has fired half his coaching staff in the last five years, including defense coordinator Ron Rivera, whose defense was the strength of the Super Bowl team, replacing him with Bob Babich, only to relieve Babich of the signal calling duties. After the woeful offensive production this year, look for offensive coordinator Ron Turner to fall under Smith's axe next.

I know that the McCaskeys, the family that owns the Bears, will squeeze a nickel until Jefferson screams and are reluctant to buy out the remainder of Smith's salary. However, it would be well worth the expense. The time has come to let Smith go and take general manager Jerry Angelo with him.



Lovie Smith surveys his 6-9 team.

Photo courtesy MCT Campus