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THE MONEY ISSUE

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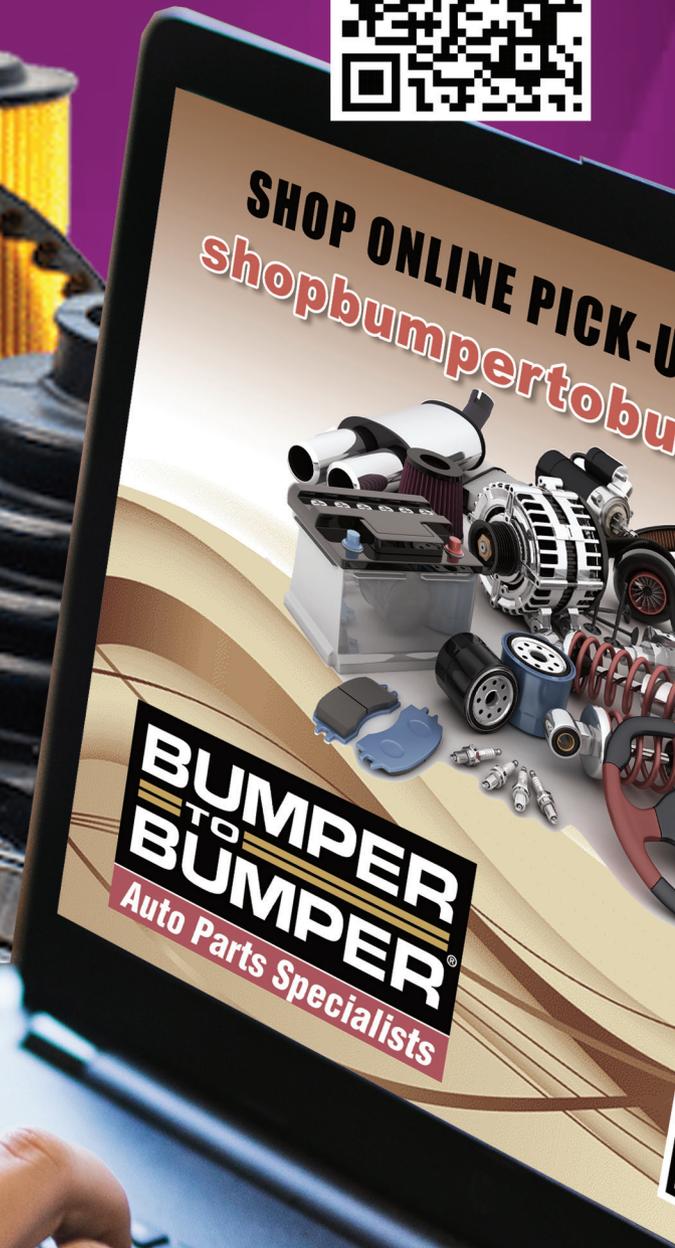
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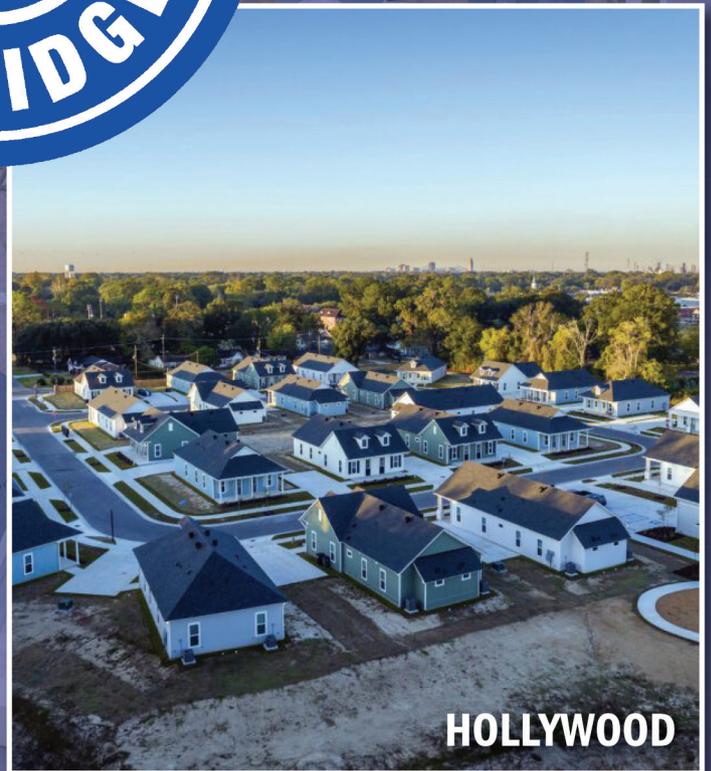
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COVER 2, PAGE 3

Tiger of the Month

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Kailin Chio Photo: Michael Bacigalupi

Kailin Chio

LSU gymnastics sophomore Kailin Chio is silencing any talk of a sophomore slump with a sensational start to the 2026 season. The Henderson, Nevada, native burst onto the scene as a freshman in 2025, earning SEC Freshman of the Year honors with a program-best 39.800 all-around score and multiple perfect 10s.

This year, Chio has elevated her game further. She notched the season's first beam 10.0 against Kentucky, earning her second SEC Gymnast of the Week award. Weeks later, she delivered again — scoring 9.975s on vault and beam before capping the night with her first career floor 10.0 against Auburn. Her 39.875 all-around total ranks as the second-highest in LSU history and secured her third weekly conference honor.

Anchoring lineups with poise and power, Chio is fueling No. 2 LSU's dominant performances. With nationals on the horizon, the best is yet to come. 

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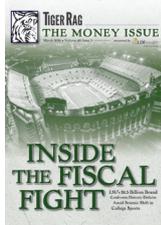
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LSU's athletic Department faces unprecedented, projected deficits in 2026-27



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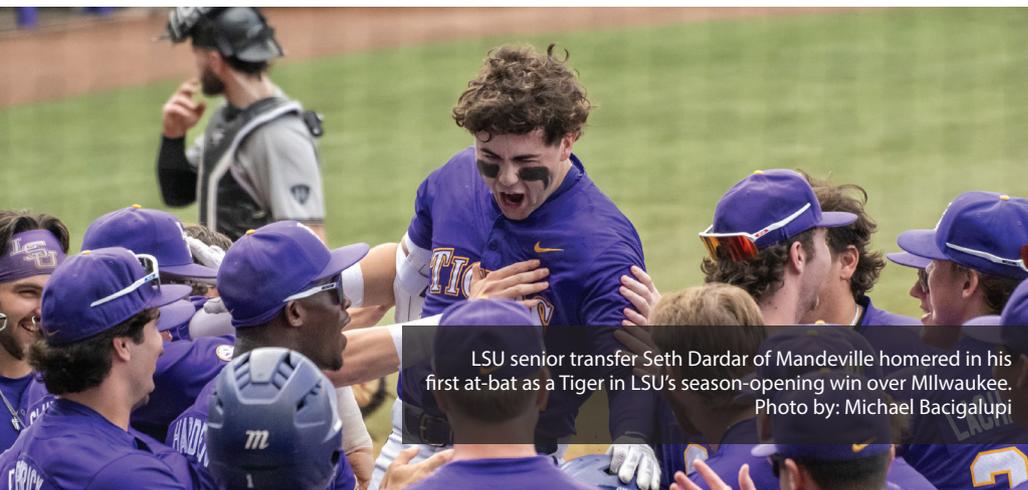
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LSU senior transfer Seth Dardar of Mandeville homered in his first at-bat as a Tiger in LSU's season-opening win over Millwaukee. Photo by: Michael Bacigalupi



Glenn Guilbeau
Tiger Rag Editor

No. 6 LSU had everything going in its game against No. 3 South Carolina on a wild Valentine's Night at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center.

The first prime time women's college basketball regular season game on ABC on a Saturday night in history was at the King of Saturday Nights – LSU.

It was also Spanish Town Saturday in Baton Rouge. What a night to have a top six game, where two of the center courts of Louisiana culture could converge – Mardi Gras and Tailgating.

And LSU coach Kim Mulkey dressed for the nines, Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras all rolled into one. But that wasn't new. No big woo.

But that's just it. This was a big woo. Mulkey had lost five straight as LSU's coach to South Carolina coach Dawn Staley, the only coach who has ever held Kim Mulkey's number so tightly. Mulkey loses to no one like that. Counting her seasons at Baylor and LSU, Mulkey was 2-6 against Staley.

And LSU had lost 17 straight to South Carolina. But this was the night the Krewe of Curse was to come down.

And the fans did their job. The Pete Maravich Assembly Center was sold out with a capacity of 13,200. The house was rocking, and LSU took a 21-16 lead to close the first quarter.

But maybe the house was too much for the home team as South Carolina went on to win, 79-72. This happens. Players get so excited at the moment that they can't do the little things.

South Carolina led 41-40 at halftime and stretched that a bit in the second half. Twice late in the third and four times in the fourth, LSU crept to within one, but never took the lead.

LSU smelled the lead, tasted it, but the moment was too big to digest.

It was too big for LSU's best in senior Flau'jae Johnson, who was averaging 13.8 points on 47 percent shooting and 77 percent from the free throw line. She scored a team-high 21 on 9 of 18 shooting with 8 rebounds. But she made only 3 of 8 in the second half and missed 4 of 6 free throws in all,

The Best Chance Kim Mulkey Has To Finally Beat South Carolina As LSU's Coach May Be At The '26 Final Four

including two straight with 45 seconds left that would have given LSU its first lead at 74-73 since the first half. But LSU never scored again.

LSU had everything going.

The Tigers out-rebounded the Gamecocks, 46 to 37, and 18-11 on the offensive boards. Field goals at 28, points in the paint at 38 and turnovers at nine were all even. Second chance points and assists were two apart.

The game couldn't have been more thrilling or even. But not at the free throw line, where South Carolina hit 15 of 17 to LSU's 14 of 23.

"That's your difference in the game," Mulkey said.

LSU's players – its best players – wanted it so badly that they wanted it too badly.

"At the end, we got lucky," Staley said. "Flau'jae doesn't miss free throws. They had 18 offensive rebounds on us. Teams like LSU win games like this. So, it's just surprising."

What LSU needs is one more game against South Carolina this season – at the Final Four in Phoenix on April 3-5. This rivalry deserves a Final Four frame.

And maybe, LSU will get lucky.

Glenn Guilbeau is the editor of Tiger Rag and a columnist. A member of the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, he previously was a national columnist at OutKick.com/FOX News and covered LSU for USA Today Network and the Baton Rouge Advocate. Reach him at glenn@tigerrag.com.



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LSU's Misdiagnosis Of Garrett Nussmeier Gets A Response From Richard Condon

By Glenn Guilbeau, Tiger Rag Editor

Former LSU quarterback Garrett Nussmeier explained to Tiger Rag after a Senior Bowl practice in Mobile, Alabama, on Jan. 30, how LSU doctors misdiagnosed his abdomen injury that he played with last season in pain.

"We found out what it actually was a month ago," Nussmeier said of his new medical team. "It wasn't what we thought throughout the entire season. So, we're making new progress there, and that's why. We got the correct diagnosis finally about two months ago."

Nussmeier didn't say exactly what the injury was, but his father, Saints' offen-

sive coordinator Doug Nussmeier, said it was torso related.

"Some things you've got to work through different steps before you get to what you're dealing with," the elder Nussmeier said. "Unfortunately, it took a long time. You've got to go through the process, find out what's wrong."

Unlike at LSU last season, Nussmeier threw with authority and zip at the Senior Bowl practices and in the game as he was named MVP. He completed 5 of 8 for 57 yards and led the American team on two TD drives in a 17-9 win.

The story struck a nerve with Richard Condon of "Condon Uncensored" fame on 98.1 FM in Baton Rouge.

"You would think it was 1925 and not the 2025 season," @CondonBeingReal tweeted of LSU's medical team.

In response to Tiger Rag's story on LSU possibly keeping coach Matt McMahon because of budget deficits, @JefferyGre52032 tweeted, "They're going to have to fire McMahon. And Beth Torina needs to go, too."

E-mail Glenn Guilbeau at glenn@tigerrag.com

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The Greenville News
@GreenvilleNews

Dawn Staley, South Carolina staff wearing 'Boo' hoodies to poke fun at LSU crowd



Garland Gillen
@GarlandGillen

A Lundi Gras edition of Football, Fútbol, Food:

- Lane Kiffin becomes carnival royalty at Endymion
- How many local soccer players have made it to Major League Soccer
- Popeyes hits different this time of year



Koki Riley
@KokiRiley

Jake Brown hit a home run. And then he hit another one, and another one.

By the time the 3rd inning came on Monday, Brown was a swing away from a 4th HR in 5 ABs. That blast happened 3 pitches later.



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3/8

HAPPY 43RD BIRTHDAY TO
FORMER LSU FOOTBALL PLAYER
MARCUS SPEARS



3/9

HAPPY 57TH BIRTHDAY
TO FORMER LSU
BASKETBALL PLAYER
CHRIS JACKSON, NOW
MAHMOUD ABDUL-RAUF



3/12

HAPPY 62ND BIRTHDAY TO
FORMER LSU TRACK & FIELD STAR
KYM CARTER



3/14

HAPPY 44TH BIRTHDAY
TO FORMER LSU FOOTBALL PLAYER
MARCUS RANDALL



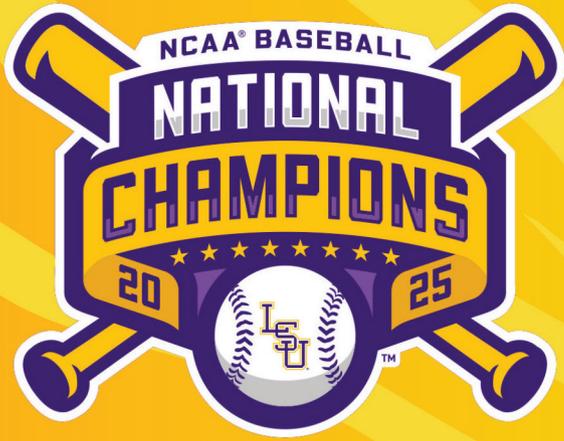
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NEXT LEVEL TIGERS

Former LSU Great Will Campbell Feels The Pressure After Allowing 14 QB Pressures In New England's Super Bowl Loss To Seattle

By Glenn Guilbeau, Tiger Rag Editor

For a guy who plays the blind side position in the NFL, which is left offensive tackle for a right-handed quarterback, former LSU left tackle Will Campbell sure got seen a lot during Super Bowl LX.

Perhaps no offensive lineman in NFL history was watched more in a single game than Campbell and talked about more in the aftermath of his New England Patriots' 29-13 loss to Seattle at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.

Campbell, one of the greatest offensive linemen from LSU and fourth pick of the 2025 NFL Draft, was one Bad Bunny. He got hopped over, through and around by Seattle pass rushers early, often and late in the game.

In all, he allowed two of six sacks on New England quarterback Drake Maye and 14 quarterback pressures in all – the most by any single player all season.

As if it wasn't embarrassing enough for LSU fans, they also got reminded of their 21-0 loss to Alabama in the national championship game on Jan. 9, 2012. In the fourth quarter of the Super Bowl while being shut out 19-0, New England had not crossed Seattle's 43-yard line, which was eerily similar to LSU not penetrating Bama's 50 until the fourth quarter 14 years ago.

But Campbell had bigger problems. And he scrambled from media after the game, ducking all interviews and making it worse.

At least, the Monroe native apologized the following Tuesday.

"Hopefully y'all can forgive me and we can move past it. I appreciate y'all," he said to Boston area media. "Just had a lot of emotions. When I get emotional, I tend to have no mind. I know myself, and if I would have spoken after, I would have said something I didn't need to say."

At least, he made no excuses.

"Obviously, I was drafted high, paid a lot (\$43.6 million over four years guaranteed)," he said. "Obviously, it sucks. But it doesn't suck for anyone more than it sucks for me."

Few on New England played very well. Maye threw two interceptions and missed open receivers. Former LSU receiver Kayshon Boutte had one catch for 21 yards. And former LSU linebacker K'Lavon Chaisson had one tackle. Rookie linebacker Bradyn Swinson recorded no statistics.

Former LSU guard Anthony Bradford had a good night. He started at right guard for Seattle and picked up his second ring as he was on LSU's 2019 national championship team.

And LSU still holds the record for having at least one player in the most consecutive Super Bowls at 25.

Campbell just hopes there are more for him.

"I'm 22 years old," he said. "I'm young. I'm learning." **TR**



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New Ole Miss coach Pete Golding can't criticize Lane Kiffin with a straight face

By Glenn Guilbeau, Tiger Rag Editor

Funny, how Ole Miss fans and some media members crucified coach Lane Kiffin for leaving the Rebels to be LSU's new football coach.

Suddenly, because he was leaving, Kiffin became coacha non grata. He was evil. He was duplicitous. In reality, he is the same guy now as he was then – and American college football coach. There was also an allegation of tampering against Kiffin that ended up being bogus.

In reality, Ole Miss fans and some media are just mad because Kiffin left them at the altar. One writer even made reference to him as being a ho, as opposed to a housewife from a Dr. Dre song called "Housewife," which says, "You can't make a ho a housewife."

The writer insists he didn't actually call Kiffin a ho, but close enough. And Kiffin rightfully confronted him after his last game as Ole Miss' coach.

Ole Miss replaced Kiffin with defensive coordinator Pete Golding, who suddenly became a saint and the Antikiffin, not to be confused with the Antichrist.

Then all of a sudden, Golding got caught with his hands in the tamper jar, according to Clemson coach Dabo Swinney. California linebacker Luke Ferrelli committed to Clemson early in the portal window last January, but later ended up with Ole Miss. Swinney alleged that Golding kept recruiting Ferrelli after he was enrolled, even texting, "I know you're signed, but what is your buyout?"

So, can Golding or anyone at Ole Miss with a straight face criticize Kiffin for taking a few of his Ole Miss players with him to LSU, which is common?

And now Ole Miss star quarterback Deuce Knight, who transferred from Auburn, is upset because he says

Golding told him the starting job was his, whether or not 2025 starting QB Trinidad Chambliss won his hearing against the NCAA and got a year of eligibility for 2026.

A Mississippi court granted an injunction on Feb. 12 that allows

Chambliss to play next season. Knight knows he's not going to beat him out, and there are no more portal windows until next year.

And suddenly Golding is everything Ole Miss fans have been saying Kiffin is. **TR**

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The Perfect Fit

Austin Thomas' talent is assembling talented pieces

(Reprinted from January, 2015, Tiger Rag Magazine)

By CODY WORSHAM, Tiger Rag Editor

Austin Thomas doesn't need an alarm clock.

He doesn't sleep much, as it is. Nights in the office often run past midnight – he counts four in the last week – and even when he does make it home, his head is often a swirling kaleidoscope of interlocking

pieces in perpetual motion, preventing the static state of mind rest requires.

He has a puzzle to solve.

And, before the sun rises, he has calls to take.

“My phone usually rings between 5 and 6 with somebody asking for something regarding a high school or a prospect or coach or something of that nature,” says Thomas, who is entering his third year as LSU's director of player personnel. “That's usually my alarm clock. I don't typically have to set one.”

Thomas' name might not ring a bell with Tiger fans, but when an LSU coach is on the road recruiting and needs information – any bit of information – he typically goes to Thomas first.

Thomas, 30, is a lifelong recruitnik who watches film on 2,500 prospects per cycle and with recruiting coordinator Frank Wilson, maintains and manages LSU's extensive recruiting database. He organizes events and visits and crunches scholarship numbers. He administers multimedia recruiting tools like LesMiles.net, the Miles Method iPad app and LSU's digital recruiting board. He culls and collects the pieces for the coaches to assemble them into elite classes that may one day compete for national championships.

“It's always been fun to help structure a program and help the coach achieve his vision,” he says. “It's like a puzzle. That's what makes it fun.”

Sometimes, that requires late nights watching film. It also means 5 a.m. phone calls from coaches needing info that could spell the difference in signing a star and losing their job.

That's what Austin Thomas does. And he wouldn't have it any other way.

Editor's Note: Austin Thomas left LSU three years after this story appeared to go to Texas A&M (2018-19), then Baylor (2020-21) and Ole Miss (2022-23) before returning to LSU (2024-25) and is now back at Ole Miss for 2026. The complete story is at:

www.tigerrag.com/the-perfect-fit-austin-thomas-talent-is-assembling-talent-ed-pieces/ **TR**

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Athletic Director

Verge Ausberry

LSU's new leader explains challenges and strategies facing athletics with NIL, revenue sharing, and having to choose which sports to be great at and maybe not so great

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

New LSU athletic director Verge Ausberry sat down with Tiger Rag vice president/executive editor Todd Horne and editor Glenn Guilbeau on Wednesday, February 4 in his office.

TIGER RAG: What are some of your strategies for 2026 and how do you subsidize costs in this new college athletics landscape with Name, Image & Likeness, revenue sharing and the price of coaches and layers rising?

VERGE AUSBERRY: Really there's no definitive answer to that at this time. Being an athletic director is different than it was three years ago, five years ago. Everybody in the country right now, with the uncertainty we have, we're all trying to figure that out. What's it going to look like? There are no real regulations now. We're dealing with the courts, congress, collective bargaining. You hear about Super Leagues. We at LSU, we're going to take a leadership position.

TIGER RAG: How does LSU take a leadership position with your deficit after new football coach Lane Kiffin's seven-year \$91 million contract and a \$54 million buyout to Brian Kelly, who was fired with six years left on a 10-year deal at approximately \$100 million?

AUSBERRY: Not only making cuts and trying to find new revenue, but we have to be proactive. You're right, there are going to be deficits. And where the deficits come from - the buyout of the football coach. We want to be in the black. But when you do a \$54 million buyout, you hire the new

staff, and you make some other changes, that's going to be a strain on us.

The Tiger Athletic Foundation has been bailing us out for 10 years at close to \$100 million. They can't keep doing that. What's that model going to look like? Those are things we're

going to have to look at as a department. Yeah, there'll be cuts. And prioritizing things, prioritizing some sports. Yes, we will do that.

TIGER RAG: Which sports will you put more priority on and which less?

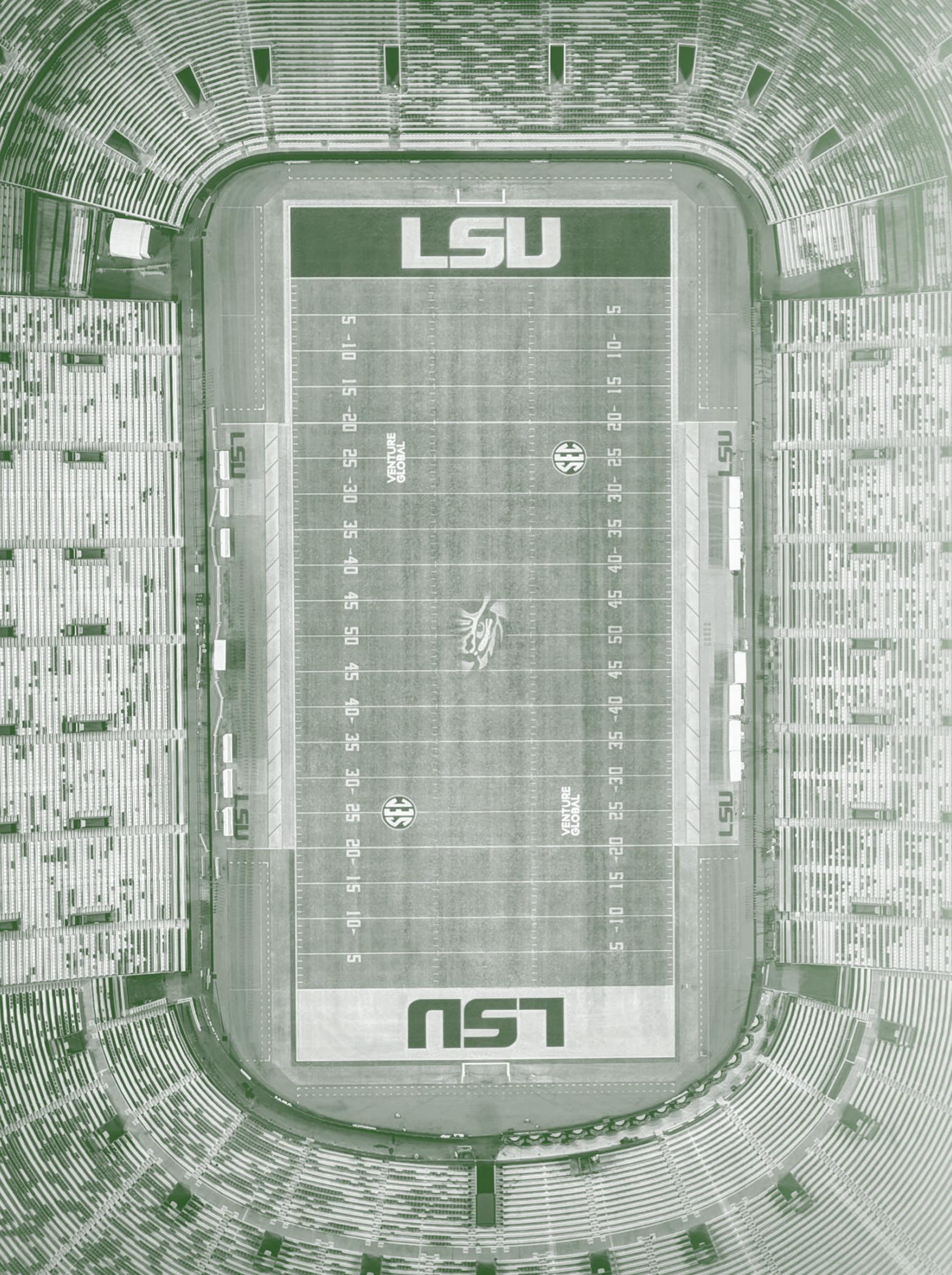
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LOCKDOWN DEFENDER

PROUD PROTECTOR OF THE PELICANS

HUB

RISK MANAGEMENT | EMPLOYEE BENEFITS



LSU

LSU

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VENTURE GLOBAL

VENTURE GLOBAL



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LSU's Billion-Dollar Brand vs. a \$30 Million Hole

By TODD HORNE, Executive Editor

On a Saturday night in Death Valley, 102,000 souls roar as one.

Smoke curls from tailgate grills, golden helmets flash under floodlights, and a grandfather lifts his grandson onto shoulders worn smooth by decades of the same ritual.

“This is why we bleed purple and gold,” he whispers, voice cracking.

But in the fluorescent-lit offices across the street, the mood is grim.

LSU Athletics closed Fiscal Year 2025 with \$223.4 million in revenue and a slender \$3.8 million surplus -- football's record \$66.8 million profit carrying the load.

One year later, a \$25–\$35 million deficit looms, fueled by revenue sharing, a \$54 million coaching buyout, and a new \$91 million contract.

New Athletic Director Verge Ausberry calls the model “broken” and “not sustainable. Not at all.”

Yet LSU's \$1.543 billion brand -- fourth nationally -- offers hope.

In Louisiana, the Tigers aren't just a program. They're woven into life itself. And that devotion, Ausberry believes, will endure.

How the Tigers Are Betting the House on Football's Future

The Last Surplus: How Football Printed Money in 2025

It's a Saturday night in Death Valley, and more than 102,000 fans are roaring as the Tigers march downfield under the lights.

The band blares, the golden helmets gleam, and for a moment everything feels eternal.

In the stands, a grandfather lifts his grandson onto his shoulders -- same spot he sat with his own dad decades ago. "This is what it's all about," he tells the boy, voice thick.

But behind the pageantry, spreadsheets tell a different story -- one that ends, for now, on a high note.

Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025) was the final chapter of the old world.

LSU Athletics posted total revenues of \$223.4 million -- the third straight year above \$200 million -- and closed with a modest surplus of \$3.8 million. Football alone brought in \$117.5 million while costing just \$50.7 million to operate, producing a record profit of \$66.8 million. That single sport subsidized everything else: women's basketball, baseball, gymnastics, track, the works. To put this in perspective, LSU's overall athletic department expenses totaled \$219.6 million, with the highest costs stemming from \$82.7 million in combined compensation for coaches, support staff, and administration, alongside \$27 million in unspecified operating expenses. This surplus marked a rebound from previous years, ending a streak of deficits and highlighting the department's financial resilience before the storm of new economic pressures.

"Football isn't just our identity -- it's our economy," former athletic director Scott Woodward said in a 2024 interview, words that ring truer than ever looking back.

"As long as Death Valley roars and the checks clear, we can do anything."

The money flowed from familiar places. Ticket sales remained strong (\$43.6 million from football alone). SEC media distributions jumped to \$53.1 million as the conference's ESPN deal continued its escalation. Sponsorships, handled through

Playfly Sports Properties, kept growing. And the Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF) transferred tens of millions more in donor pledges tied to premium seating. Additional boosts came from multi-million-dollar increases in media rights (\$18.6 million) and conference distributions of bowl-generated revenue (\$13.1 million), underscoring the SEC's escalating financial power.

"We were riding high," one longtime TAF member recalls anonymously over coffee in Baton Rouge, steam curling from his cup like tailgate smoke. "I remember one donor -- a private equity guy raised in Baton Rouge but who built his empire back east -- handing over a seven-figure check after the baseball title. He flew in just for the celebration, still wearing his pinstripe suit, and shook my hand like we were closing a deal. 'This one's for the kid I used to be,' he said, voice catching. 'Growing up, all I had was a cheap radio under the covers on summer nights, listening to Skip Bertman's teams. Baseball was my escape -- still is. Now I can give back to the program that gave me hope when nothing else did.'"

It was the last year without direct player pay. No \$20.5 million revenue-sharing line item. No monthly \$800,000–\$900,000 reminders of a coaching buyout.

Just pure, old-school college football economics -- football prints money, everything else spends it, and the surplus covers the gap.

Administrators knew the party was ending.

“This was the calm before the storm,” one senior athletics staffer said off the record last fall, voice dropping as he stared out at the practice fields. “We’d just come off a gymnastics championship,

baseball was scorching -- everyone felt invincible. But we knew 2026 would hit like a hurricane.”

They were right.

The Shockwave: Why 2026 Looks So Different

November 2025. Brian Kelly is out. Lane Kiffin is in. The headlines scream chaos, but the real explosion happens quietly, in budget projections. LSU is staring at a deficit projected between \$25 million and \$35 million for Fiscal Year 2026 -- the worst in modern program history.

“It felt like someone pulled the plug on our bathtub,” a department insider says, shaking his head in a dimly lit hallway lined with championship trophies. “One minute we’re counting surplus; the next, we’re staring at red ink deeper than anyone expected.”

The triggers are straightforward, brutal, and intertwined:

1. Revenue Sharing Hits

The House v. NCAA settlement is now fully live. LSU, like every Power 4 peer that wants to compete, is paying the full \$20.5 million cap directly to athletes. Roughly 75%—\$15–\$16 million—goes to football. “I sat in a meeting where a player asked, ‘Does this mean we’re employees now?’” the insider recalls, laughing ruefully. “We said no, but the check sure felt like a paycheck.” This cap, set at approximately 22% of the average Power 5 conference revenue from media rights, ticket sales, and sponsorships, is expected to rise by about 4% annually, reaching an estimated \$32.9 million by 2034-35, excluding scholarships and other benefits.

New Athletic Director Verge Ausberry breaks it down plainly: “The \$20.5 million revenue share is for your whole department—75 percent for football, 15 percent for basketball, five percent for women’s basketball, five percent for other sports. That’s how we have our revenue share.”

2. The Kelly Buyout

The \$54 million obligation is real and ongoing. After a brief legal skirmish, LSU agreed to pay the full amount in monthly installments through 2031. No single anonymous donor is covering it, despite early rumors. The money comes from self-generated athletics revenue. That’s roughly \$800,000–\$900,000 leaving the budget every month unless

Kelly mitigates by taking another job.

“People thought some oil tycoon was writing a check,” a Baton Rouge booster laughs bitterly over po’boys at a downtown dive. “My phone blew up with texts—‘Who’s the hero?’ Reality hit hard when the monthly bills started coming.” Ausberry is unequivocal: “No, that’s not true at all. Not true at all. That’s our buyout. You have the head coach’s buyout. That’s about a \$800K–\$900K.” He adds, “If we didn’t have that buyout with coach Kelly, we’d be in great shape. But right now, with the buyout, yeah that’s going to strain us a little bit.”

3. Kiffin’s Price Tag

Lane Kiffin’s seven-year, \$91 million deal averages \$13 million annually -- second-highest in college football. Add staff salaries (Defensive Coordinator Blake Baker at \$3 million, others in the seven figures) and a \$3 million buyout to Ole Miss, and the coaching line item balloon. Kiffin’s contract includes a base salary of \$400,000 supplemented by \$12.6 million in additional compensation, with incentives that could elevate his pay to the nation’s highest if he secures a national championship.

“Lane’s worth every penny if he wins,” the booster says, pausing to watch old highlight reels on his phone. “But right now, it feels like we’re paying for yesterday’s mistakes and tomorrow’s hopes at the same time.”

Ausberry sees the necessity but draws a hard line on the cycle: “All these big buyouts have to stop. Sometimes, you might say, ‘You know what, I’ve got to keep this coach an extra year.’ We can’t be so active with firing coaches and changing coaches. That’s why you see a shorter-term contract with Lane Kiffin... Money’s about the same, but it’s a shorter term. We’re not hooked with a burden for so many years.” He continues, “Lane did already cut staff. He doesn’t have as much staff as Brian Kelly had. They made some cuts, especially in the personnel area.”

4. Lingering Obligations

Ed Orgeron’s final payment cleared in December 2025, but the ripple effects of multiple staff transitions

remain. For a fleeting moment, LSU was effectively paying three head-coach-level salaries at once. “We joked it was the most expensive coaching staff in history,” the insider adds with a wry smile, “and none of them were on the sideline together.” This echoes past payouts, like Orgeron’s \$17 million exit in 2021,

all funded internally without legislative intervention, drawing from football profits and SEC media cash.

The department’s own football profit -- still expected to exceed \$60 million -- can’t fully absorb the department-wide bleed.

The Hidden Strain: TAF’s Pivot and the Limits of Booster Generosity

For decades, the Tiger Athletic Foundation was the ultimate safety valve.

Need a new football operations building? TAF.

Scholarships? TAF.

Coaching supplements? TAF.

That era is over.

In 2024, TAF transferred a record \$88 million (cash plus completed facility assets), draining liquid reserves. The foundation’s mission has shifted dramatically: from splashy capital projects to funding \$17 million in annual scholarships and helping bridge the new revenue-sharing gap. This pivot reflects broader donor fatigue amid rising NIL demands and ticket prices, with TAF now prioritizing sustainability over endless bailouts.

“We’re not a bottomless ATM anymore,” a TAF member admits candidly over coffee in Baton Rouge, steam rising like tailgate smoke. “I’ve been giving since the ’80s. Back then, a new scoreboard felt like immortality. Now donors ask,

‘Is my money for lights or players?’ That question stings -- like telling your kid Santa’s on a budget.”

Ausberry is blunt about the foundation’s role and its limits.

“Really, the Tiger Athletic Foundation has been bailing us out for a long time -- for the last 10 years at close to \$100 million. They’ve been bailing us out year after year. And we have to start protecting TAF, too. They can’t keep just bailing us out. What’s that model going to look like?” He extends the concern to the entire donor base: “There is donor fatigue. There’s NIL-donor fatigue. There’s ticket price fatigue -- our customers’ fatigue. We can’t just keep going up, going up and asking donors for this and that. We’re straining the whole system. This system we’re sitting in today is not sustainable. Not at all. This model is broken.”

No one is walking away -- Louisiana’s love for LSU runs too deep -- but the blank-check days are gone.

TAF’s new reality is sustainability, not rescue missions.

The Escape Plan: How LSU Intends to Climb Out

LSU isn’t panicking.

Administrators project a return to balanced budgets by 2027–28. The plan is aggressive, multi-layered, and built on the one asset no deficit can erase: the brand.

“We’ve been through storms before,” Verge Ausberry says in his office, championship rings catching the light. “Katrina, probation, coaching changes -- this one’s big, but we have tools we didn’t have ten years ago.”

Ausberry’s blueprint is unflinching:

1. New Revenue Streams

Jersey patches (Woodside Energy), on-field corporate logos, expanded premium seating -- these previously

forbidden avenues are now open and already generating seven-figure gains. The Woodside Energy partnership, unveiled in early 2026, features the company’s logo on all 21 varsity uniforms starting in the 2026-27 season, potentially adding millions annually as part of the NCAA’s evolving sponsorship landscape.

2. SEC Windfall

February 2026 brought record conference distributions: LSU received \$72.4 million, an \$18.6 million jump year-over-year. That increase nearly offsets the entire revenue-sharing cap by itself. The SEC’s total distribution for 2024-25 reached \$1.03 billion, a \$200 million increase from the prior year, driven by escalating TV contracts and playoff revenue.

3. Football's Eternal Buffer

Even in a deficit year, football is projected to remain wildly profitable. That \$60+ million surplus continues to subsidize the rest of the department. Ausberry prioritizes ruthlessly: "The bottom line is we have to understand... that building sitting over there across the street, if football is not winning, then we've got more problems than anything. Then, nothing's winning. And that's the key. So, when you prioritize these things, you've got to sit there and say, 'Hey, look, what are we going to be great at? What do we have to be great at?' And that's the football team."

He frames it as the ultimate gamble: "We think if you win in football, you make it up. We get to the playoffs. You start making that up. That's the gamble we have here. That's what we're doing. We're putting all our eggs in football. We have to."

4. Targeted Cuts

Hiring freeze. \$4.3 million trimmed from non-essential travel, banquets, and ceremonies. Incremental belt-tightening across the department. These measures build on past efficiencies, such as the \$4.3 million in savings from reduced administrative overhead, ensuring cuts are sustainable without gutting core programs.

Ausberry favors sustainable trimming over drastic slashes: "I would like to have all my executive teams come up with a five percent cut. Just a natural cut. And cuts that can't be unwound, so you make the cut,

it's a cut. Then after we look at that, we might look at it again -- another five percent cut... I would rather promote from within and sometime do with one less person. Spread the salary around and do some extra work. That's how we have to start looking at things."

5. The Long Bet

Spend heavily now on roster and staff to win championships, which in turn drive future ticket sales, donations, and media value. "Win a couple playoffs," a booster says, eyes lighting up, "and this deficit becomes a footnote." This strategy aligns with historical trends, where playoff appearances have boosted revenue by tens of millions through increased merchandise, sponsorships, and fan engagement.

Ausberry remains cautious on extreme measures like private equity: "Well, you do a private equity firm, that's a different ballgame. They come in with a certain percentage long term, how does that look? ... You deal with private equity, they're going to want some long-term inventory. Once you get certain benchmarks, how long does that go? Short term or long term? And a lot of times with private equity, they come in and start controlling things. You lose some control when you deal with private equity." He sums up the urgency: "We can't afford to keep paying coaches, paying players the way we are. It's not sustainable. The money has to come from somewhere... Like, soon. Very soon. We have to figure out as administrators, what is this going to look like?"

Billions-Dollar Tiger: Why Deficits Won't Derail the Brand

Here's the paradox: LSU is running deep red ink, yet its brand valuation sits at \$1.543 billion -- No. 4 nationally behind only Texas, Texas A&M, and Ohio State. This valuation, as assessed by a Wall Street Journal analysis in early 2026, factors in decades of success, national visibility, and market position, placing LSU just behind Ohio State's \$1.547 billion and ahead of Georgia's \$1.472 billion.

"Numbers on a spreadsheet don't scare networks or recruits," an industry analyst observes over lunch. "They scare accountants. LSU's brand scares living defenses."

Deficits don't scare evaluators in 2026. They see reinvestment.

Paying the full revenue-sharing cap signals commitment to elite status. Record football profits signal health. A passionate, football-obsessed state signals durability.

Ausberry highlights the brand's magnetic pull.

"I'm talking with corporations, and they're telling me, 'We want to be part of LSU right now. Your brand is the strongest.' Even people who have given other schools around the country a lot of money are saying, 'Hey, we want a piece of LSU.' We're one of the top three brands in the country."

He credits the coaches who amplify it: "Kim Mulkey is part of that. Jay Johnson is part of that. Lane Kiffin is part of that... What Kim Mulkey brings to the table for us, we can't buy. It's priceless."

Outside Tiger Stadium, a lifelong season-ticket holder watches his grandson toss a miniature football under the oaks. His voice cracks with emotion: "We don't just play football in Louisiana -- we live it. My dad brought me here in '59, I brought my kid,

now it's his turn. And that kind of devotion doesn't vanish with red ink -- it endures."

In fact, LSU isn't just surviving this new era -- it's built for it.

The brand travels nationally, recruits globally, and commands premium media money. Recent roster valuations estimate LSU's 2026 team at \$25-40 million, bolstered by high-profile transfers like quarterback Sam Leavitt and offensive tackle Jordan Seaton, reflecting the brand's pull in the NIL era.

In a world stratifying into 24-36 true powers, LSU is locked in the top tier.

The deficit is real.

The pressure is intense.

But as long as Death Valley roars on Saturday nights, the spreadsheets will eventually balance. Because in Louisiana, LSU isn't just a program. It's woven into the fabric of life. And that kind of devotion carries on.

Why No Single Donor Could Simply Write A Check To Obliterate Brian Kelly's Colossal \$54 Million Buyout

When LSU severed ties with Brian Kelly in November 2025, rumors thundered through Baton Rouge and the state: Could a billionaire booster swoop in and erase that staggering \$54 million obligation with one sweeping check?

Fans pictured a chicken-fingered founder or a diehard alumni with NBA championship-ringed fingers swooping in like caped crusaders.

But Athletic Director Verge Ausberry crushed that fantasy instantly.

"No, that's not true at all. Not true at all. That's our buyout," Ausberry said.

"You have the head coach's buyout. That's about \$800 to \$900k a month."

The truth is a labyrinth of legal traps, policy roadblocks and political landmines prevent a billionaire donor from carrying the full load of Kelly's buyout.

The Contract Is a State Obligation

Brian Kelly's contract isn't a private promise -- it's a binding pledge to the LSU Board of Supervisors, a public arm of the State of Louisiana. That means:

- The buyout sits on the state's books, not in a private account. LSU must slash those installments -- about \$800K-\$900K every month through 2031 -- using its own revenue.
- No donor can unilaterally assume or pay off that debt without ripping up and rewriting the contract -- a move certain to spark lawsuits, IRS probes and political fireworks.
- Private dollars can only flow through narrow, approved channels into the athletic department, which then disburses the payments. No secret back-door transfers allowed. Louisiana law flatly bans using taxpayer or academic funds for athletic buyouts. LSU is forced to fund these payouts

through ticket sales, media deals, sponsorships and private support -- but the university itself remains the payer of record.

TAF'S FIDUCIARY IRON RULES

The Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF), LSU's primary fundraising arm, pours nearly \$100 million annually into facilities, scholarships and coach supplements.

But as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, it operates under iron-clad fiduciary constraints.

- Donor intent is sacred. Gifts earmarked for new scoreboards or endowed scholarships can't be repurposed to wipe out a coach's exit package—doing so would trigger lawsuits, IRS investigations and the loss of tax-deductible status.
- Once TAF funds hit LSU's books, they convert into public money, instantly subject to audits, transparency requirements and legislative oversight. A massive, untagged gift to cover a buyout would set off every alarm in Baton Rouge.
- TAF is shifting focus toward scholarships and long-term revenue-sharing initiatives, not bleeding reserves to rescue past hiring decisions.

Ausberry underscores the broader strain: "Really, the Tiger Athletic Foundation has been bailing us out for a long time -- for the last 10 years at close to \$100 million. They've been bailing us out year after year. And we have to start protecting TAF, too. They can't keep just bailing us out."

THE NIL FIREWALL: SEPARATE POOLS, SEPARATE PURPOSES

Modern boosters divide their support between TAF and independent NIL collectives like Bayou Traditions.

- NIL dollars flow directly to players, fueling LSU's fight to recruit and retain talent.

- Legally, NIL money can never pay university debts or coach buyouts -- doing so would flout NCAA rules and tax law.
- Every dollar sent to NIL is a dollar unavailable to TAF for offsetting legacy costs, creating a brutal donor-arithmetic dilemma.

**THE HARSH TRUTH:
NO LONE WOLF CAN FINISH THE JOB**

Sure, private donors have chipped away at past buyouts -- recall the partial bailout of Ed Orgeron's \$17 million exit --and athletics revenue, aided by TAF

transfers, ultimately covers the cost.

But no single benefactor can stealthily or directly assume the full \$54 million without traversing an avalanche of legal, fiscal and structural landmines. This broken model -- escalating contracts, revolving-door coaching changes, ballooning buyouts -- strains everyone. Until college athletics confronts these realities, LSU will shoulder Kelly's buyout one brutal monthly installment at a time, mitigated only if Kelly takes another job.

In Louisiana, Tiger passion runs deep, but legal firewalls run even deeper.

The Raw Mechanics Behind LSU Athletics' \$30 Million Blitz to Buy Out Brian Kelly

In the actual 2025 showdown, LSU first dangled a \$25 million settlement, then cranked it to \$30 million (with a two-installment sweetener) hoping to snatch a quick, discounted exit.

Kelly rebuffed both offers, sparking a legal firefight that ultimately forced LSU to swallow a staggering \$54 million in stretched-out monthly installments (complete with mitigation carve-outs).

Had Kelly accepted a \$30 million lump sum, LSU Athletics would have unleashed its own war chest of self-generated revenue -- backed indirectly by private boosters through the Tiger Athletic Foundation (TAF).

Here's the breakdown of how LSU (and other blue-blood programs) would have funded this heavy hit:

1. Primary Arsenal: Athletics Department Revenue

- **Football Cash Engine:** LSU football cranks out eye-popping annual profits (\$55-\$66 million+), fueled by ticket sales, SEC media windfalls (a record \$72 million recently), corporate sponsorships and premium seating. Even in lean years, football functions as the department's economic juggernaut, instantly convertible into a six-figure-a-month payoff.
- **Liquid Reserves on Deck:** The department sits on massive cash reserves and incoming revenue streams. Drawing down a one-time \$30 million drop wouldn't even faze its balance sheet -- just a brief flicker on the profit radar.
- **Zero State Aid:** Louisiana law yanks public education dollars out of buyouts -- no taxpayer bailout here. Every cent would come from athletics' self-generated coffers to dodge political landmines.

2. Precedent from Past Payouts

- **Orgeron's \$17 Million Exit (2021):** Paid in installments directly from the department's revenue, proving LSU doesn't blink at big buyouts.
- **A Decade of Doorbuster Deals:** Over \$43 million shelled out in recent coach departures -- all financed internally, no legislature intervention required.

3. Private Booster Backstop (TAF & Donations)

- **TAF Fuel Transfers:** As a private 501(c)(3), TAF routinely pumps tens of millions into athletics for operations, scholarships and facilities. Those boosts feed straight into the department's budget, beefing up liquidity for obligations like coach buyouts. While TAF doesn't hand off a dedicated buyout check, it can accelerate unrestricted transfers to supercharge cash on hand.

- **Collective Booster Power:** No single donor foots the entire bill -- contrary to rumor. Instead, a chorus of boosters via TAF bulks up the department's war chest. Restricted gifts stay locked to projects, but operational or "use-anywhere" donations remain fully deployable.

4. Why a Lump Sum Made Ruthless Sense

- **Cash-Flow Rampage:** With colossal SEC payouts and relentless football revenue, LSU could swallow a \$30 million slug without blinking.
- **Discounted Decapitation:** Taking the lump sum saves roughly \$24 million versus stretching out payments -- and slams the door on years of \$800k-\$900k monthly drains. That liberates future budgets for revenue sharing, top-tier hires (think Lane Kiffin) and competitive upgrades.

- No Loans, No Panic: High-revenue Power Four programs don't borrow for buyouts -- they rely on war chests and incoming streams.

Bottom line: LSU Athletics would simply have treated Kelly's exit fee as an operational line-item -- drawing on football profits, SEC media cash and TAF transfers.

Officials like then board chairman Scott Ballard made it clear: this money comes 100% from

self-generated and private sources.

Offering \$30 million in cold, hard cash signaled LSU's confidence that it could absorb the hit without derailing any other priority.

As Ausberry reflected on the fallout: "If we didn't have that buyout with coach Kelly, we'd be in great shape. But right now, with the buyout, yeah that's going to strain us a little bit."

Football Drives the SEC Machine – And It's Not Even Close

When the NCAA's agreed-upon procedures reports for Fiscal Year 2025 landed in January 2026, they painted the same unmistakable picture that has defined Southeastern Conference athletics for decades: football is the undisputed economic engine, and everything else rides in its wake.

Across the league, football programs generated the overwhelming majority of self-sustaining revenue while remaining the only sport consistently in the black.

The numbers filed by the 16 SEC members tell the story plainly.

At LSU, football alone posted \$117.6 million in revenue against \$50.7 million in expenses, delivering a record \$66.9 million profit that subsidized every other sport on campus. League-wide, the pattern held firm: massive ticket sales, bowl payouts, and above all, the escalating media rights deals tied directly to football pushed the conference to distribute a record \$1.03 billion to its members – with the lion's share traceable to the football fields. This represented a 23.7% increase from the previous year's \$808.4 million, highlighting the conference's explosive growth amid new TV deals and playoff expansions.

The SEC's television contracts, College Football Playoff appearances, and championship game – all football products – fueled the billion-dollar windfall.

No other sport comes close.

Men's basketball, baseball, and the Olympic sports combined rarely break even, much less turn the kind of profit that keeps entire athletic departments afloat.

Verge Ausberry has no illusions about where the money comes from, and he isn't shy about saying it out loud.

When asked about rumors that some SEC programs are quietly de-emphasizing football – shifting resources to baseball or men's basketball because they believe they can't compete for national titles on the

gridiron – Ausberry didn't hesitate.

"I've heard that," he said.

"We're dealing with it. As one of the top football programs in the SEC and in the country and 75 percent of the revenue share going to football, I think if teams don't want to invest in their football, they're making a mistake. Because football pays for everything in the SEC, even from those schools that don't compete for national championships in football.

"So, bottom line, if you're not putting it into football, and I'm going to go ahead and say this. You know what, then maybe the top schools need to get a portion of the distribution from the schools not going as heavy into football. I might get slapped on the hand on this here, but if you're not invested in a sport that's generating the money for the SEC? And if you don't want to invest in football as much as the others? Then you know what? Then LSU, Texas, Texas A&M, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Tennessee that are investing, they should get a percentage, because the money's not coming from all those other sports.

"Football drives the show. It's not even close. So, if they don't want to invest, then they're not driving the big revenue pot that we're all getting and sharing. If they don't want to do that, that's fine. But start giving us more. The SEC is built on football. Those TV contracts – all that big money – is from football."

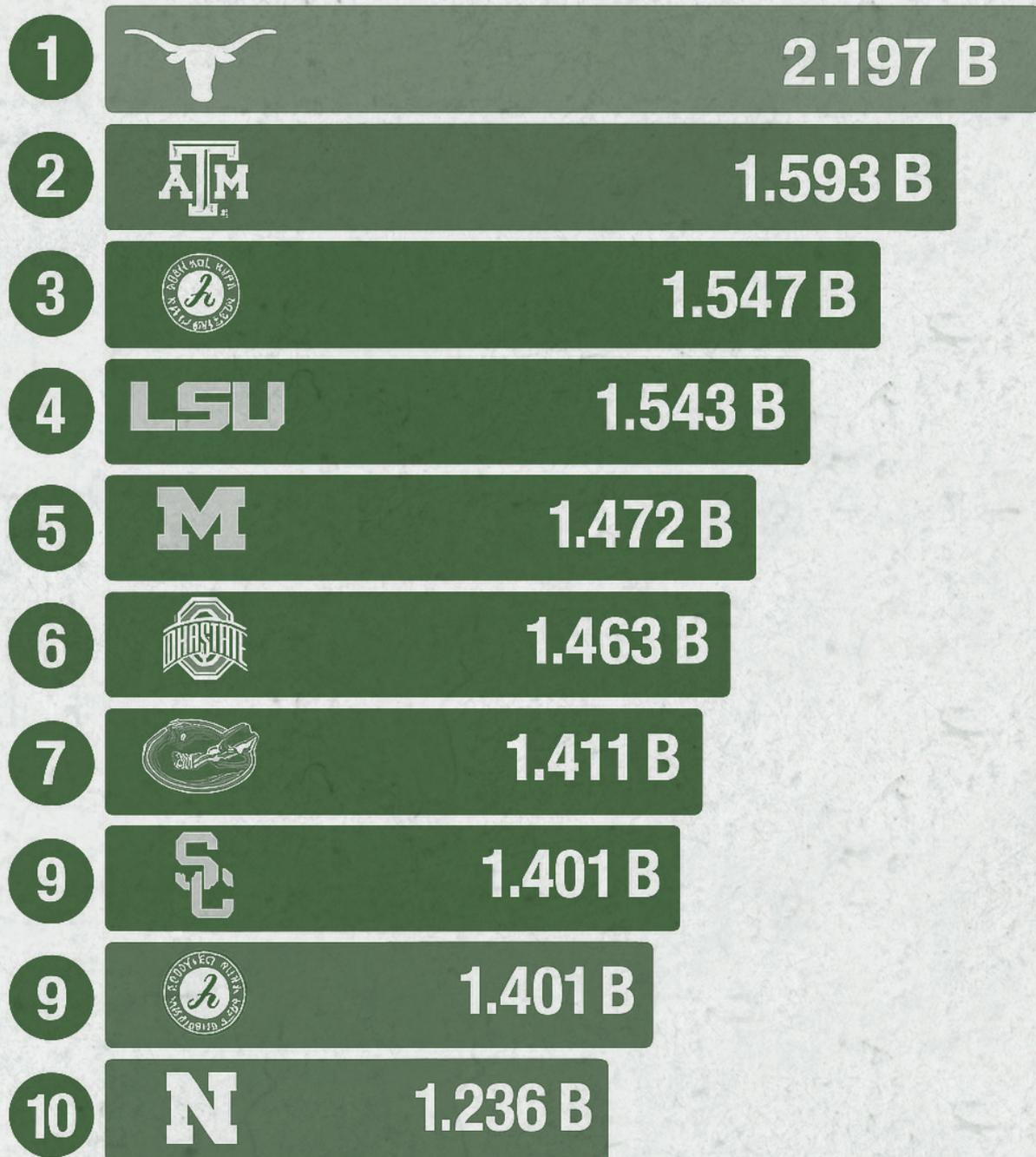
At LSU, that philosophy isn't changing – not now, not ever.

Death Valley remains the economic heartbeat of the athletic department, and as long as Verge Ausberry is steering the ship, football will continue to get the priority, the investment, and the resources it needs to stay elite.

Because in Baton Rouge, just like across the SEC, football isn't just the flagship sport. It's the only one paying the bills.

TOP 10 BRANDS IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL

BASED ON THE WALL STREET JOURNAL VALUATION REPORT, FEB 2026



LSU Sports is Barely in the Black Financially, with Uncertain Financial Times Ahead

Revenue sharing with LSU Athletes will take a \$20.5 million bite starting this year

By Piper Hutchinson, Investigative Reporter

As LSU sports barely breaks even financially, difficult times potentially lie ahead for both its athletic teams and academic programs.

A report earlier this month from the Louisiana Legislative Auditor revealed LSU athletics' profit margin for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2025 was just \$28,604. That's an increase from losing more than \$800,000 the previous year.

The current fiscal year is the first under new revenue-sharing rules. The NCAA now requires Division I schools to distribute up to 22% of their intake annually, which comes to about \$20.5 million for top-earning programs like LSU's.

The meager surplus for LSU athletics comes as every other department on campus has gotten used to lean budgets. Last fall, the university mandated a 2% reduction campuswide to support academic and research initiatives. Its athletics department was not to be subjected to the new money-saving measures.

LSU athletics director Verge Ausberry and spokesman Zach Greenwell have not yet responded to a request for comment for this report.

The redirection of the 2% cuts was in response to President Donald Trump administration's slashing federal research funding, which has dramatically impacted higher education finances nationwide.

During difficult budget times in the past, LSU's athletic department has transferred money to the university. After Gov. Bobby Jindal slashed the state budget, including spending on state universities, the school received tens of millions of dollars from its sports programs from 2012-19, when athletics director Scott Woodward ended the practice shortly after he took the job.

"It's something that's very dangerous, when universities rely on recurring money, especially from an auxiliary like the athletic department," Woodward told Tiger Rag in 2019. "So no, I think, while I will always support the university in some form or fashion, we can not sustain what we're currently doing."

Last fall, the university mandated a 2% reduction campuswide to support academic and research initiatives. Its athletics department was not to be subjected to the new money-saving measures.

But with the cost of revenue-sharing looming, the multi-million dollar surpluses LSU reported in years past could become a relic — and send athletics looking for new sources of income.

Some will come from the private sector, such as a newly announced partnership with oil and gas company Woodside Energy for sponsored uniform patches. The university has not disclosed the value of the deal.

Some new income is slated to come from taxpayers, as lawmakers approved legislation last year to create a fund to subsidize Division I athletic programs at Louisiana's public universities. Money for the fund comes from an increased tax on sports gambling, and each school sports program will receive about \$1.7 million annually starting this spring.

Though the money cannot be used to directly pay players, it will certainly free up cash to do so. The fund's resources can be used for new scholarships, insurance, medical coverage, facility enhancements,

litigation settlement fees and education-related scholarships universities give to college athletes.

The pending budget gap could also force LSU athletics into a reversal of roles, seeking money from the university it once helped subsidize. Though it is unlikely LSU sports would ask for or receive direct university aid, another option would be to seek a student fee.

LSU currently does not have a student fee supporting athletics, although other Southeastern Conference schools do, including Auburn, Georgia and Ole Miss. Their athletics departments bring in millions from these fees, according to data from the Knight-Newhouse College Athletics Database. Auburn leads the SEC in student fee collections with an annual average of almost \$7 million.

Though such assessments might be perceived as easy money, a student fee for athletics at LSU would come with its own complications. The university has increased tuition for students in certain high-cost programs, and state lawmakers have weighed legislation that could decrease how much state financial aid LSU students receive.

Steven Rackley, a sport management professor at Rice University and a longtime former athletic director, said in an interview the cost of revenue sharing hitting at the same time as proposed federal funding cuts for higher education will force difficult decisions.

"Presidents and board of trustees, whoever it may be, are going to have to decide how much is athletics worth as opposed to the worth of doing research in academia on campus, and that's going to be just a tough discussion that those people are going to have to have," Rackley said. **TR**

For the 2025 fiscal year (ending June 30, 2025), LSU athletics reported a \$3.8 million surplus, with \$223.4 million in total revenue and \$219.6 million in operating expenses.

Football generated a record \$66.8 million in profit, while men's basketball added \$2.5 million.

Key 2025 Financial Details

(July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025):

Total Revenue:
\$223.4 MILLION.

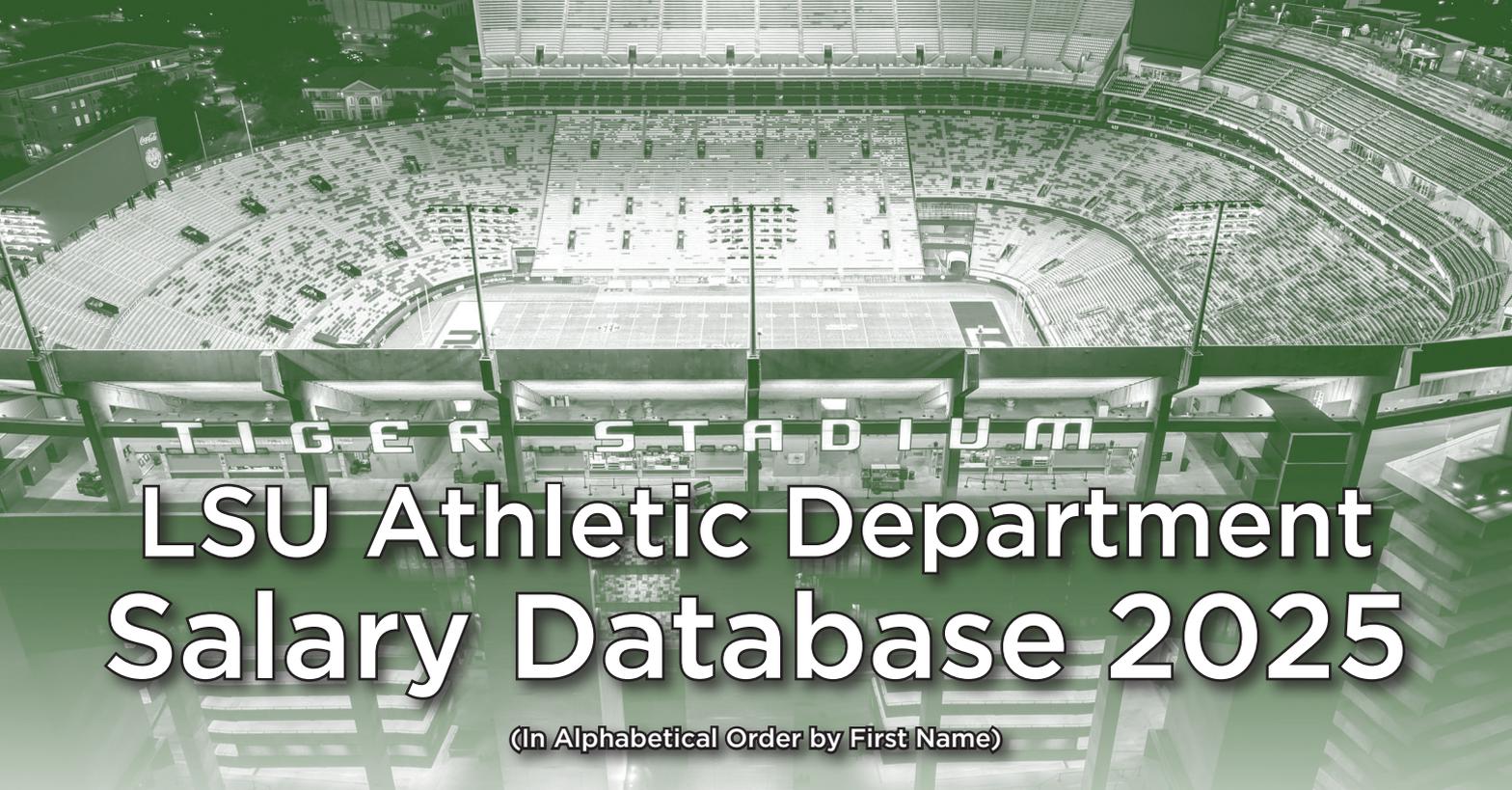
Total Expenses:
\$219.6 MILLION.

Net Surplus:
\$3.8 MILLION.

Football Profit:
\$66.8 MILLION

(\$117.6 million revenue vs. ~\$50.8 million expenses).

Major Expenses:
\$44.5 MILLION on coaching
(\$21.6 million for football staff, including \$10.79 million for Brian Kelly).



LSU Athletic Department Salary Database 2025

(In Alphabetical Order by First Name)

EMPLOYEE	SUPERVISORY ORGANIZATION	JOB PROFILE	TOTAL BASE BAY	FREQUENCY
Aaron Metrejean	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Grounds	Mechanic Supervisor A	31.08	Classified Hourly
Abigail Roy	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Creative Content	Video Producer/Videographer	55,000.00	Annual
Adam Kleffner	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Lead Sports Analyst	90,000.00	Annual
Alex Atkins Jr	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	250,000.00	Annual
Alex Kern	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	98,000.00	Annual
Alexis Conaway	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Beach Volleyball	Director - Sports Operations	55,000.00	Annual
Alexis Jane Rather	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - RG - Womens Golf	Assistant Coach	100,000.00	Annual
Alyssa O Leal	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Communications	Assistant Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	52,000.00	Annual
Aman Anand	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Senior Sports Analyst	100,000.00	Annual
Amanda Barbee	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	75,000.00	Annual
Amarius JeMar Lincoln	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Admin - NIL	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	50,000.00	Annual
Andrea L Tepe	LSUAM Pres - Athletics	Chief of Staff	121,400.00	Annual
Andy Kokhanovsky	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	110,000.00	Annual
Angela E. Black-McGuff	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Compliance	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	60,000.00	Annual
Anthony Courteau	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman	Maintenance Repairer 1	19.32	Classified Hourly
Anthony Williston	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant	17.37	Classified Hourly
Antione R Lee	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman	Maintenance Repairer Master	23.68	Classified Hourly
Antonio Parks	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Lead Sports Analyst	80,000.00	Annual
Antony Blackburn	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Womens Soccer	Assistant Coach	65,000.00	Annual
Ashleigh Clare-Kearney Thigpen	LSUAM Athletics - Leadership and Strategy	Associate Athletic Director	145,200.00	Annual
Ashley Kowalewski	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room (Melissa Moore Seal (00010029))	Assistant Coach	70,000.00	Annual
Ashley Shook	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Volleyball	Assistant Coach	50,000.00	Annual
Augustus Palmer Stark	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Creative Services	Director- Athletic Program	67,000.00	Annual

Austin Thomas	LSUAM Pres - Athletics (Scott Woodward)	Senior Associate Athletic Director	400,000.00	Annual
Bailey Hill	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Benjamin Hershey	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Womens Tennis	Coordinator - Operations	54,000.00	Annual
Bennie J Brazell	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	160,000.00	Annual
Beth Torina	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Senior Womens Administrator	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Blair Napolitano	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Compliance	Assistant Athletic Director	105,200.00	Annual
Blaire Hiler	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Volleyball	Director - Sports Operations	65,200.00	Annual
Blake Baker	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Brad Davis	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Brandon C Berrio	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Executive Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	83,000.00	Annual
Braydin Sik	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Communications	Assistant Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	49,500.00	Annual
Briah TAndra Reed	LSUAM Athletics - Football Admin - Recruiting	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	60,000.00	Annual
Brian Darnell Carter Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Football Ops	Custodian 3	14.94	Classified Hourly
Brian F Broussard	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Associate Athletic Director	151,400.00	Annual
Brian Kelly	LSUAM Pres - Athletics	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Brogan Kate Barr	LSUAM Athletics - CoS - Swimming and Diving	Assistant Coach	60,000.00	Annual
Bruce Buggs	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Student-Athlete Mental Health	Associate Director - Athletic Program	90,000.00	Annual
Bryan Paar	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Event Management	Executive Director - Athletic Programs	79,000.00	Annual
Bryce Hal Neal	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Softball	Assistant Coach	175,000.00	Annual
C Kent Lowe	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Communications	Associate Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	86,000.00	Annual
Carl St. Cyr	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	60,000.00	Annual
Casey Long	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Assistant Coach	350,000.00	Annual
Cashius Amun Claiborne	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant	16.70	Classified Hourly
Cati Leak	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Beach Volleyball	Assistant Coach	55,000.00	Annual
Chante E. Powers	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	97,000.00	Annual
Charles William Winstead Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Department of Facilities and Grounds	Director - Sports Operations	100,000.00	Annual
Chase Leiva	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman	Carpenter Master	23.68	Classified Hourly
Chelsie Jean Caulfield	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Football - Ops - Support - Player Development	Director - Athletic Program	66,000.00	Annual
Chigozie Marthias Chukwu	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Horticultural Attendant	19.86	Classified Hourly
Chris Martin	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	125,000.00	Annual
Chris P LeMaire	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Horticultural Attendant-Foreman	22.77	Classified Hourly
Christina Danielle Landrum	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Assistant Athletic Trainer	60,000.00	Annual
Christine Delaune Sotile	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Student-Athlete Mental Health	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	82,000.00	Annual
Christopher J. Artigues	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Baseball	Director - Sports Operations	50,000.00	Annual
Christopher Martin Simpson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Womens Tennis	Assistant Coach	90,000.00	Annual
Ciara Silva	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian 2	13.52	Classified Hourly
Clay Miller Harris	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Deputy Athletic Director	250,000.00	Annual
Clayton Patterson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Video	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	65,000.00	Annual

Cody Crump	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Tiger Stadium	Director- Athletic Program	68,000.00	Annual
Conor Cable	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Womens Soccer	Assistant Coach	60,000.00	Annual
Cordae Hankton	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Lead Sports Analyst	85,000.00	Annual
Corey Joseph Raymond	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Cortez Hankton	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Courtney Griffeth	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Gymnastics	Associate Head Coach	150,000.00	Annual
Crystal Cryer Bowman	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Business	Coordinator - Budget/Finance/Accounting	55,000.00	Annual
Dalis Robert Boyette	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	180,000.00	Annual
Damian Alexander Willis	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Director	80,500.00	Annual
Daniel Gaston	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Senior Associate Athletic Director	222,000.00	Annual
Danny Bryan	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Head Coach	155,000.00	Annual
Daphne Mitchell	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Assistant Coach	205,000.00	Annual
Darian Cain Medran	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	44,000.00	Annual
Dave Haskin	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Associate Athletic Director	114,000.00	Annual
David Alexander Patrick	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
David E Landry	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - Broadcast Operations	Director- Athletic Program	80,000.00	Annual
Demara Lajuan Earnest	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Football Ops	Custodian 2	12.50	Classified Hourly
Dennis G Shaver	LSUAM Athletics - Leadership and Strategy	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Derek David Calvert	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Director - Athletic Program	91,000.00	Annual
Deron Irons	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ticket Office	Assistant Athletic Director	102,600.00	Annual
Deslyn Coleman	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian Supervisor A	18.72	Classified Hourly
Devin Smith	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant	18.06	Classified Hourly
Dillion Shropshire	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Football Ops	Custodian 2	14.06	Classified Hourly
Donovan T Tate	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Director- Athletic Program	103,000.00	Annual
Douglas L Aucoin	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Director - Media Services/Audio Visual Services	175,000.00	Annual
Drew Robert Livingston	LSUAM Athletics - CoS - Swimming and Diving	Head Coach	100,000.00	Annual
Dustin Herry	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant	19.27	Classified Hourly
Dustin Taylor Ducree	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	66,300.00	Annual
Eddie St-Vil	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Assistant Athletic Director	98,300.00	Annual
Eleanor Lindsey Baldwin	LSUAM Athletics - CoS - Swimming and Diving	Coordinator - Athletic Program	51,500.00	Annual
Elise Broussard	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - TcktOff - Operations	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	60,500.00	Annual
Emily Sue Dean (On Leave)	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Creative Content	Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	65,000.00	Annual
Emily Villere Dixon	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Senior Womens Administrator	Director- Athletic Program	93,000.00	Annual
Eric Allen Hummel	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - TcktOff - Operations	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	62,500.00	Annual
Eric Dustin Maxwell	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - Broadcast Operations	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	82,000.00	Annual
Eric Held	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Director- Athletic Program	80,000.00	Annual
Frank Wilson III	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Associate Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Gabe Merville	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ticket Office	Executive Director - Athletic Programs	86,200.00	Annual
Garrett Griffeth	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Gymnastics	Assistant Coach	215,000.00	Annual
Garrett Shaffer Runion	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Revenue Generation	Head Coach	260,000.00	Annual

Gary Eugene Redus	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Assistant Coach	305,000.00	Annual
Grace Ghee	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - Marketing and Promotions Support	Assistant Director - Communications/ Marketing/Events/Outreach	50,000.00	Annual
Haleigh A. Bryant	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Gymnastics	Assistant Coach	85,000.00	Annual
Hannah Ericksen	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Creative Content	Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	67,000.00	Annual
Hannah Roudebush Faldetta	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	78,300.00	Annual
Harrison Walker Valentine	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Administration	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	50,000.00	Annual
Houston Franks	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	120,000.00	Annual
Isaac Brown	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Weight Room	Associate Coach	183,750.00	Annual
Isaac S. Trujillo	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	93,000.00	Annual
Jace Long	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - RG - Mens Golf	Assistant Coach	90,000.00	Annual
Jack A Erickson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	64,500.00	Annual
Jack Witte	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	60,000.00	Annual
Jackson Loupe	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant	18.06	Classified Hourly
Jacob J Marucci	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Director- Athletic Program	199,000.00	Annual
Jacob Olsen	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Jacob Samuel Farber	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Social Media	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	63,500.00	Annual
Jaden Rogers	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Game Day	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	58,000.00	Annual
Jai Surya Choudhary	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Associate Director - Athletic Program	65,000.00	Annual
Jake Amos	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Revenue Generation	Head Coach	295,000.00	Annual
Jake Edward Steinhardt	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Business	Coordinator - Operations	62,000.00	Annual
Jake Flint	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Jalen Dorell Courtney-Williams	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Jamie Tutko	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Baseball	Director- Athletic Program	82,900.00	Annual
Jasia Malay Asberry)	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Tennis Facility	Custodian 2	12.98	Classified Hourly
Jasmin Wooten	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Training & Leadership Development	Director- Athletic Program	75,000.00	Annual
Jason Erickson	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Compliance - Administration	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	64,000.00	Annual
Jason Paul Feirman	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Executive Director - Communications/ Marketing/Events/Outreach	106,000.00	Annual
Jay Bradley Johnson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Department of Facilities and Grounds	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Jay Clark	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Jeff Deveer	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Operations	Director - Data Processing/Computer Services	126,500.00	Annual
Jeff Moore	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Director- Athletic Program	75,000.00	Annual
Jeffrey Shawn Martin	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Director- Athletic Program	150,000.00	Annual
Jennifer Cihonski	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Assistant Athletic Trainer	62,500.00	Annual
Jennifer Krok	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Jennifer Latrice Hawkins	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Tennis Facility	Custodian 2	13.42	Classified Hourly
Jennifer Roberts	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Director- Athletic Program	185,500.00	Annual
Jeremy Henderson	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Athletics - Sports Turf Specialist/Coordinator	55,000.00	Annual
Jeremy Tredway)	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Grounds	Director- Athletic Program	92,500.00	Annual

Jermaine Johnson	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman	Maintenance Repairer Master	26.04	Classified Hourly
Jermauria S. Rasco	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	70,000.00	Annual
Jill Wilson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Volleyball	Associate Head Coach	125,000.00	Annual
Jimmy Lee Joseph	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	50,000.00	Annual
Joe Schwartz	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	102,600.00	Annual
Joe Sloan	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
John Meyer Simmons	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Athletics - Sports Turf Specialist/Coordinator	55,000.00	Annual
John Omar Robles	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian Supervisor A	18.72	Classified Hourly
Jon Belton	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Director - Sports Operations	150,000.00	Annual
Jon M Pfeifer	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Maintenance and Grounds	Assistant Athletic Director	100,000.00	Annual
Jon Sakovich	LSUAM Athletics - CoS - Swimming and Diving	Associate Head Coach	80,000.00	Annual
Jonny Saterfield	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Video	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	70,000.00	Annual
Jordan Billingsley	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Athletics - Assistant Sports Turf Manager	78,000.00	Annual
Jordan L Desouge	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Pete Maravich Assembly Center	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	58,000.00	Annual
Jordan Pennella	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Weight Room	Director- Athletic Program	115,000.00	Annual
Jordin Westbrook	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Chief of Staff	110,000.00	Annual
Joseph Curtis Evangelista	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Joseph Davis Jackson Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - SEC Network	Broadcast Engineer - SEC Network	80,000.00	Annual
Josh Jordan	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Baseball	Assistant Coach	320,000.00	Annual
Joshua Ryan Green	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - SEC Network	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	55,000.00	Annual
Joshua Thomas Simpson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Baseball	Assistant Coach	200,000.00	Annual
Julia Howard	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Assistant Athletic Trainer	59,500.00	Annual
Julia Mary Fecke	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Marketing and Promotions	Director- Athletic Program	57,000.00	Annual
Julian Felder	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Pete Maravich Assembly Center	Associate Director - Operations	65,000.00	Annual
Julianna Threatt	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Julie Cribbs	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Maintenance and Grounds	Associate Director of Athletics	100,000.00	Annual



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Julio Benjamin Morales	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - Applied Sport Science	Assistant Manager - Athletic Programs	55,000.00	Annual
Justin Butsch	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Tennis	Associate Head Coach	85,000.00	Annual
Justin Lockett Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant-Leader	22.25	Classified Hourly
Kandace Kurtz Hale	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Community Engagement	Head Coach	60,000.00	Annual
Karen J Thomas	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Tennis Facility	Custodian 2	15.55	Classified Hourly
Katherine R Bell	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - PMAC Night Shift	Custodian 2	14.21	Classified Hourly
Katie Amelia Copeland	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Gymnastics	Director - Sports Operations	67,400.00	Annual
Katie L. Guillory (On Leave)	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	77,200.00	Annual
Katie Lindelow Dickens	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Beach Volleyball	Assistant Coach	50,000.00	Annual
Katie O'Brien	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - RG - Womens Golf	Director - Sports Operations	59,300.00	Annual
Kawanda Stewart	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Tennis Facility	Custodian 3	14.34	Classified Hourly
Kayla Lawson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Nutritionist Director	113,300.00	Annual
Kaylin Rice	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Assistant Coach	130,000.00	Annual
Keava Soil-Cormier	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Administration	Assistant Athletic Director	115,000.00	Annual
Keelen Jamal Alford	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - TcktOff - Operations	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	52,000.00	Annual
Keli Zinn	LSUAM Pres - Athletics	Executive Deputy Athletic Director	425,000.00	Annual
Kelsey Dulinski	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Marketing and Promotions	Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	65,000.00	Annual
Kenneth Faldetta	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	76,400.00	Annual
Keonte Herrera	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Communications	Assistant Director - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	56,000.00	Annual
Kevin Patrick Peoples	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Kevin Robert Inlow	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Volleyball	Assistant Coach	80,000.00	Annual
Kevin Seal	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Grounds	Maintenance Foreman	31.21	Classified Hourly
Kevin T Faulk	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Director- Athletic Program	100,000.00	Annual

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David Campbell, Bluebonnet; Hunter Creed, Bluebonnet; Nicole Glover, Coursey; Prentiss Wilks, President - Chief Lending Officer; Julie Bourgeois, Gonzales; David Henry, Prairieville; Heath Mire, Coursey. Not pictured: Matt Stevens, Prairieville.

Kim Mulkey	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Senior Womans Administrator	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Kramer Reid Robertson	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Lead Sports Analyst	80,000.00	Annual
Kyle Andrew Seger	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Weight Room	Associate Coach	183,750.00	Annual
Kyle Koncar	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Grounds	Director- Athletic Program	67,500.00	Annual
Kyle Williams	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Kylee Sulser	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - TcktOff - Operations	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	58,500.00	Annual
LaKeitha Ariane Poole	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Assistant Athletic Director	142,000.00	Annual
Lance Dwayne Guidry	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	50,000.00	Annual
Lance Junot	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman	Maintenance Repairer 2	22.83	Classified Hourly
Layne Avery Courter	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Leah Wintz	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Business	Coordinator - Athletic Program	55,000.00	Annual
Lee Andrew Scioneaux	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Marketing and Promotions	Assistant Athletic Director	100,000.00	Annual
Lenzie Newman	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Assistant Athletic Trainer	60,000.00	Annual
Leroy Williams Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian Supervisor A	21.16	Classified Hourly
Lindsey Thompson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Social Media	Director - Communications/Marketing/ Events/Outreach	66,000.00	Annual
Loree Beth Ramezan	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Operations	Director of Business Affairs	105,000.00	Annual
Loretha Asberry	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian 3	15.69	Classified Hourly
Lori Williams	LSUAM Pres - Athletics	Deputy Athletic Director	300,000.00	Annual
Louis V Bourgeois	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Tiger Stadium	Director of Athletics	78,000.00	Annual
Lucas Aaron Moreau	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Business	Coordinator - Budget/Finance/Accounting	51,000.00	Annual
Luke Dudley	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - ER - Management	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	57,000.00	Annual
Lyle Robelot	LSUAM Athletics - CoS - Swimming and Diving	Assistant Coach	60,000.00	Annual
Lyndsey Hayes	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Training Room - Sports Nutrition	Associate Director - Athletic Program	62,000.00	Annual
Madison Ai Nhi Mai	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Mandy Miller	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Assistant Athletic Trainer	62,000.00	Annual
Marc David Wanaka	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Baseball	Director- Athletic Program	59,600.00	Annual
Marc St. Felix	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Lead Sports Analyst	85,000.00	Annual
Margin Emma Mealey	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - PMAC Night Shift	Custodian 2	13.00	Classified Hourly
Mario Joseph Macaluso	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Sports Performance	Analyst - Administrative/Research/Service	52,500.00	Annual
Mark Joseph Lee	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Department of Facilities and Grounds	Associate Athletic Director	113,000.00	Annual
Mary Jane Merrill	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Operations	Manager - Athletic Programs	72,500.00	Annual
Mary Kathleen Wood	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Softball	Director - Sports Operations	60,000.00	Annual
Matt Westman	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Marketing and Promotions	Assistant Director - Communications/ Marketing/Events/Outreach	45,000.00	Annual
Matthew Hancock	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - ER - Olympic Sports	Assistant Manager - Athletic Programs	47,500.00	Annual
Matthew Joseph McMahon	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Operations	Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Matthew Karin	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Softball	Director- Athletic Program	70,000.00	Annual
Matthew Montgomery	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - Tiger Stadium	Director- Athletic Program	63,000.00	Annual
Matthew Norman LaBorde	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Senior Associate Athletic Director	225,000.00	Annual

Matthew Tyrus Morgan	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Physical Therapist	129,000.00	Annual
Meghan Amacker	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Football Ops	Custodian 2	12.98	Classified Hourly
Melissa Moore Seal	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Director- Athletic Program	111,500.00	Annual
Merrick de la Vergne Stafford	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Michael Bonnette	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Associate Athletic Director	128,000.00	Annual
Micki S Collins	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Associate Athletic Director	260,400.00	Annual
Mike David Jones	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	44,000.00	Annual
Mike Racham Chatman	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	200,000.00	Annual
Milan S Stokes	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Human Resources and Payroll	Manager - Athletic Programs	61,600.00	Annual
Miriam F Segar	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Senior Associate Athletic Director	244,300.00	Annual
Mitchell James Scaglione	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - CS - Photography	Photographer	46,500.00	Annual
Mo Carney	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Information Technologies	Assistant Director - Data Processing/ Computer Services	110,500.00	Annual
Monica Johnson	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian 2	16.45	Classified Hourly
Morgan Acosta	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Health and Wellness	Director- Athletic Program	51,500.00	Annual

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Morgan Durham	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Maintenance and Grounds	Assistant Athletic Director	95,000.00	Annual
Morgan Phillips	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Director- Athletic Program	100,000.00	Annual
Mr. Nathan Paul Lemoine Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Sports Performance (Nutrition Football)	Sports Science Technician - Athletics	60,000.00	Annual
MyKaela LyCole Houston	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Nathan Dodson	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	44,000.00	Annual
Nathan Yeskie	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Baseball	Assistant Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Neal Raymond Lamonica	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Operations	Associate Athletic Director	148,000.00	Annual
Nicholas Budde	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - SM - Football	Coordinator - Communications/Marketing/Events/Outreach	52,000.00	Annual
Nicholas D Williams	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman Mechanics	Mechanic 2	23.07	Classified Hourly
Nicholas Lamendola	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - CC - Post Production	Video Producer/Videographer	55,000.00	Annual
Noah E Joseph	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	50,000.00	Annual
Noah Keeter	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Football - Ops - Support - Operations	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	60,000.00	Annual
Pamela Virginia Atkinson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	86,000.00	Annual
Patrick Liam Kelly	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Coordinator - Sports Operations	60,000.00	Annual
R Shawn Eddy	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	Associate Athletic Trainer	99,500.00	Annual
Reginald K Miller	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Horticultural Attendant-Foreman	25.33	Classified Hourly
Renee A Braud	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Administrative Coordinator 4	26.36	Classified Hourly
Rhett Dean LeBlanc	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - Broadcast Operations	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	45,000.00	Annual
Rick Bishop	LSUAM Athletics - Chief of Staff	Head Coach	160,000.00	Annual
Robert Gene Starkey II	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Associate Head Coach	400,000.00	Annual
Robert Lee Alphonse	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - Football Ops	Custodian 2	12.48	Classified Hourly
Rodney R Glynn	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial	Custodian Supervisor A	21.31	Classified Hourly
Ronald Dupree Jr.	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Special Assistant (Athletics)	400,000.00	Annual
Russell L Brock	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Administration	Head Coach	120,000.00	Annual
Ryan Thomas Alexander	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	44,000.00	Annual
Ryan Thomas Sehrer	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Social Media	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	65,000.00	Annual
Sam anthony Petitto	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Director- Athletic Program	120,000.00	Annual
Samantha Etherington	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Womens Soccer	Director - Sports Operations	58,500.00	Annual
Sandra Monet Moton	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Softball	Assistant Coach	110,000.00	Annual
Sarah Elizabeth Ramundt	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Executive Director - Athletic Programs	100,000.00	Annual
Savannah Lynn May	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Pete Maravich Assembly Center	Assistant Director - Athletic Program	58,000.00	Annual
Sebastian Furness	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - Womens Soccer	Associate Head Coach	110,000.00	Annual
Seimone Delicia Augustus	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Womens Basketball	Assistant Coach	150,000.00	Annual
Sekenzo Claiborne	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - FG - MG - EM - Shop - Landscape	Horticultural Attendant	16.70	Classified Hourly
Shaeeta Kendretta Williams	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Community Engagement	Director- Athletic Program	86,100.00	Annual
Shawn L Facione Jr	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Weight Room	Assistant Coach	93,600.00	Annual

Sheldon Rogers	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Horticultural Attendant-Leader	20.68	Classified Hourly
Shelly L Mullenix	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Senior Associate Athletic Director	209,100.00	Annual
Sian Hudson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Department of Facilities and Grounds	Head Coach	200,000.00	Annual
Stephen James Guillaumin	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Fields	Athletics - Assistant Sports Turf Manager	75,000.00	Annual
Stephen T. Hurst	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman Mechanics	Mechanic 4	28.03	Classified Hourly
Steve Lautz	LSUAM Athletics - Leadership and Strategy	Executive Associate Athletic Director	144,500.00	Annual
Sylvia M. Russell	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	50,000.00	Annual
Tamara Ards	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	160,000.00	Annual
Tamara Arlette Davis	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Coordinator - Athletic Program	62,000.00	Annual
Tameka Warren	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Tasmin Mitchell (On Leave)	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - Mens Basketball	Assistant Coach	175,000.00	Annual
Tayden McGuire	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Ops - IT - Analysts	Analyst 3 - Data Processing/Computer Services	60,000.00	Annual
Taylor Brooks	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - MP - SEC Network	Assistant Director - Sports Operations	55,000.00	Annual
Taylor M. Johnson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Training Room	2-Year Intern- Athletic	35,000.00	Annual
Taylor McNeilly Fogleman	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Head Coach	155,000.00	Annual
Taylor R Jacobs	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - New Media	Associate Athletic Director	150,400.00	Annual
Taylor Tress Pleasants	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Softball	Assistant Coach	56,000.00	Annual
Terrance L Bold	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Marketing and Promotions	Assistant Director of Athletics	87,400.00	Annual
Thomas R. Lene	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	105,000.00	Annual
Timothy Rattay	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	50,000.00	Annual
Todd Lane	LSUAM Athletics - LS - Track and Field	Assistant Coach	160,000.00	Annual
Tommy Sherman Wilson	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Director- Athletic Program	75,000.00	Annual
Tonya Doral Johnson	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Senior Womens Administrator	Head Coach	270,000.00	Annual
Trey Leo Holtz	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Lead Sports Analyst	80,000.00	Annual
Tyler Schiefelbein	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Creative Services	Coordinator - Athletic Program	59,000.00	Annual



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Valerie A. Parker	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - PMAC Night Shift	Custodian 2	13.42	Classified Hourly
Verge Samuel Ausberry II	LSUAM Pres - Athletics	Executive Deputy Athletic Director	286,000.00	Annual
Wendy Galley Nall	LSUAM Athletics - Leadership and Strategy	Associate Athletic Director	123,000.00	Annual
William Anderson Jones II	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - WR - North Stadium Weight Room	Assistant Coach	76,500.00	Annual
William Kirkwood	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Shops Foreman	Plumber/Pipefitter Master	28.84	Classified Hourly
William Paul Franques	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NM - Communications	Associate Director of Athletics	79,200.00	Annual
William S. Clouden	LSUAM Athletics - Football Administration	Sports Analyst	44,000.00	Annual
William S. Loe	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - Department of Facilities and Grounds	Project Manager	96,500.00	Annual
Ya'el Yael Lofton	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - NCAA Football	Executive Assistant	110,000.00	Annual
Zach Greenwell	LSUAM Athletics - Operations	Senior Associate Athletic Director	225,000.00	Annual
Zachary Jermain	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - SWA - Softball	Director- Athletic Program	72,000.00	Annual
Zakiya M Price	LSUAM Athletics - FG - Ops - Grounds - Custodial - PMAC Night Shift	Custodian 3	14.82	Classified Hourly
Zaviar Gooden	LSUAM Athletics - Ops - HW - Weight Room	Assistant Coach	90,100.00	Annual



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cont. from page 13

AUSBERRY: Don't know yet. That's going to be over time and about who's winning and doing well and who's not. But all these big buyouts have to stop. We might say, "You know what, I've got to keep this coach an extra year." We have to be careful about firing coaches. People talking about firing coaches, getting rid of this coach here, or that coach. I'm like, "Well, no. We've got to hold on that."

And that's why you see a shorter-term contract with the football coach. Money's about the same, but it's a shorter term. We're not hooked with a burden for so many years. One thing about having our new president (Dr. Wade Rouse - he's a financial guy. He worked on Wall Street. He worked in financial markets. There's a lot of different questions out there. Do we subsidize this by loan? But we're going to make this work. And we're in a better financial position than a lot of schools. We're going to be fiscally responsible.

TIGER RAG: So, it's not true that one donor paid Kelly's buyout?

AUSBERRY: No, that's not true at all. Not true at all. That's our buyout. That's about a million dollars a month.

TIGER RAG: Could you talk more about prioritizing sports?

AUSBERRY: The bottom line is we have to understand, if football's not winning, then we've got more problems. Then, nothing's winning. That's the key. So, when you prioritize these things, you've got say, "Hey, look, what are we going to be great at? What do we have to be great at?" And that's the football team. I think Kim Mulkey can take care of herself. Jay Johnson can take care of himself. Jay Clark can take care of himself. Our tennis teams are winning. Our golf teams are winning. Our soccer teams are winning.

TIGER RAG: So, the days of former athletic director Skip Bertman saying in 2001 that all the sports can be great are over?

AUSBERRY: That can't happen. We can't afford to do it. Not in the current model we're sitting in today. Nobody can be successful like that. Because winning is expensive. We're looking at that. What are we going to be successful at? How are we going to be successful? And what is it going to cost us? We have to realize there's donor fatigue. There's NIL-donor fatigue. There's customer fatigue with ticket prices. We can't just keep going up and asking donors for this and that. We're straining the whole system. This system we're sitting in today is not sustainable. Not at all. This model is broken.

TIGER RAG: How long do you have to come up with a plan?

AUSBERRY: Like, soon. Very soon. We have to figure out, as administrators, what is this going to look like? We can't afford to keep paying coaches, paying players the way we are. It's not sustainable. The money has to come from somewhere. **TR**

Former LSU Head Coach Nick Saban
Photo by: Alabama Athletics



EQUILIBRIUM

How Nick Saban Finally Taught Me What John Nash Won the Nobel Prize For... And Why It All Started Right Here in Baton Rouge

by Robert Miller (Special to Tiger Rag)

Here's my confession: Like most of you, I watched *A Beautiful Mind*. Russell Crowe. The schizophrenia. The Nobel Prize. Jennifer Connelly looking concerned in soft lighting. Beautiful film. Very moving.

And like most of you, if someone had asked me to explain what John Nash actually won the Nobel Prize for; the mathematical contribution, not the overcoming-mental-illness part, I would have suddenly remembered I needed to check on something in the other room.

I understood **Nash equilibrium** the way I understand the infield fly rule: technically, yes, in theory, but please don't ask follow-up questions.

Then I watched LSU hire Nick Saban. And fire Les Miles. And hire Ed Orgeron. And fire Ed Orgeron. And hire Brian Kelly. And fire Brian Kelly. And I watched coaching salaries go from "*that seems high*" to "*I'm sorry, HOW much?*" And I watched us build facilities that would make a Dubai sheikh say, "*bit excessive, no?*"

And somewhere around the third \$50 million building renovation, I thought:
"Oh. That's what Nash meant."

continued next page

THE CONCEPT, FOR THOSE OF US WHO SKIPPED THAT CLASS

Nash equilibrium describes a situation where everyone is making the best decision they can, given what everyone else is doing; and yet the collective outcome is terrible for everyone involved.

The textbook example is an arms race. Two countries. Each can either arm or disarm.

If both disarm everybody saves money, everybody's secure. **This is obviously the best outcome.**

If both arm everybody spends a fortune, nobody gains an advantage. **Worst outcome.**

But here's the trap. If I disarm and you arm, you dominate me. So, I think: *"Well, if they're arming, I have to arm. And if they're disarming, I should arm anyway because then I win."*

The rational choice is always **"arm."** For both sides. Forever. Even though both sides would be better off if they could just agree to stop.

That's **Nash equilibrium**: rational people, making rational decisions, producing collectively insane outcomes. and being completely unable to stop.

I read about this in graduate school and thought, *"Interesting. Anyway, what's for lunch?"*

I did not realize I was watching it happen in real time a quarter mile from my house across University Lake.

NOVEMBER 30, 1999: THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

(Or Started, Depending On Your Perspective)

Mark Emmert was Chancellor of LSU. This was before he became President of the NCAA and presided over the complete immolation of college athletics, but we'll get to that. In 1999, he was just a guy with a vision for LSU's academic profile and, apparently, a telephone.

He called Nick Saban at Michigan State.

Now, at this point, Nick Saban was not **"Nick Saban."** He was *"Nick Saban, journeyman coach at Michigan State who had one good season."* His first four years in East Lansing were 6-5-1, 6-6, 7-5, and 6-6. Then came 1999: a 9-2 record, wins over Notre Dame, Michigan, Ohio State, and Penn State in the same season for the first time since 1965. One good year. He was not on any billboards. He was on nobody's short list. When LSU announced the hire, the reaction in Baton Rouge was--and I'm paraphrasing the general sentiment here, *"Who? And we're paying him WHAT?"*

What: **\$1.2 million per year.**

This was, at the time, an outrageous sum to pay a college football coach. *One point two million dollars! For a guy from Michigan State!* People were genuinely upset. Letters were written. Editorials were penned. The general consensus was that Mark Emmert had lost his mind.

Here's the thing, though. And I need you to pay attention to this part, because this is where the arms race starts.

Saban had conditions.

He told Emmert he wouldn't take the job unless LSU built a new football operations building. And an academic center for athletes. And better facilities for the players. This wasn't negotiation; this was an ultimatum. Build it, or I'm staying in East Lansing.

Emmert said yes.

And in that moment, a butterfly flapped its wings in Baton Rouge, and twenty-five years later, UCF built a lazy river for its football players and LSU has sleep pods in every locker.

I am not making up the lazy river. Or the sleep pods.

THE CASCADE, OR:

How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Build A \$50 Million Weight Room

Saban wins the national championship in 2003. Emmert makes him the highest-paid coach in college football history. A seven-year deal that would've paid him \$3 million annually by the end.

He leaves for the Dolphins in 2005, which works out great. (I'm kidding. It was a disaster. He went 15-17 and publicly denied he was going to Alabama right before going to Alabama. This is not relevant to the Nash equilibrium point, I just enjoy remembering it.)

At Alabama, Saban **builds. And builds. And builds.**

The football operations facility. The weight room. The nutrition center. The academic support complex. The player lounges with barber shops and smoothie bars. Each one nicer than the last. Each one immediately becoming the thing every other program had to match.

Because this is the Nash calculation playing out in real time:

"If Alabama has a \$50 million facility and we don't, we can't recruit against them. If we can't recruit, we can't win. If we can't win, donors stop giving. If donors stop giving, we can't build facilities. If we can't build facilities, we definitely can't recruit."

The rational choice is always: **build the building.**

So, Georgia builds. And Texas builds. And Ohio State builds. And LSU builds. And suddenly you have locker rooms with waterfalls, and sleep pods, and bowling alleys, **yes, bowling alleys**, because apparently eighteen-year-olds won't play football for your university unless they can bowl.

By 2020, facilities at top programs were so lavish that visitors from actual Gulf oil states, people whose day jobs involve building indoor ski slopes in deserts, were touring them and taking notes.

Think about that. People from countries where gold-plated everything is considered restraint were looking at SEC football facilities and thinking, *"Interesting choices."*

That's not a functioning market. That's a collective hallucination with a capital campaign attached.

THE MAN WHO LIT THE MATCH GOES ON TO RUN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Now it gets, and I'm using a technical term here. **absolutely bonkers.**

Mark Emmert. The chancellor who hired Saban. Who agreed to the facility demands. Who paid the salary that seemed insane in 1999 and now looks like a coupon. That Mark Emmert.

He left LSU in 2004. Became president of the University of Washington. And then, in April 2010, he became President of the NCAA.

The NCAA. The organization theoretically responsible for making sure college athletics doesn't spiral into complete chaos.

For the next thirteen years, Mark Emmert sat in Indianapolis and watched the system he helped create at LSU metastasize across the entire sport. The O'Bannon case. The Alston case. The complete collapse of amateurism. The NIL free-for-all. The transfer portal. **All of it.**

The guy who lit the match got promoted to fire chief. And then expressed concern about all the fires.

He was forced out in 2023. His tenure is generally regarded as, and I'm being charitable here, *"not great."*

continued next page

THE PROPHET RETIRES AND IMMEDIATELY STARTS PROPHETING

January 2024. Nick Saban retires.

Seven national championships. The most dominant run in college football history. He didn't just win the arms race; **he was the arms race**. Every facility upgrade, every salary escalation, every recruiting advantage for twenty-five years traced back to that phone call in 1999 and that ultimatum about buildings.

And what does he do the moment he steps away?

He starts warning everyone about the monster.

The NIL chaos. The transfer portal insanity. The impossibility of building a program when your roster turns over 40% every year. The exploitation of athletes by agents and collectives. The complete absence of enforceable rules.

He's right about all of it. He's also, and I cannot stress this enough, the person most responsible for creating the conditions that made it inevitable.

This is not hypocrisy. This is **Nash equilibrium**.

Saban couldn't unilaterally disarm. If Alabama had said, "*You know what? We're going to stop spending, stop using the portal, stop playing the NIL game*", they would have lost to Georgia every year forever. The only rational response to an arms race, while you're in it, is to win it.

But winning an arms race doesn't end the arms race. It accelerates it. Every championship Alabama won raised the stakes for everyone else. Every facility they built became a new floor. Every salary they paid became the baseline.

Saban understood this better than anyone. He exploited it better than anyone. And now he's describing it better than anyone.

He just never called it by its name.

WHERE WE ARE NOW,

In Case You Haven't Been Paying Attention

Head coaches make \$10-12 million per year. The next contracts will be \$15 million. Then \$20 million. This is not speculation; **this is math**.

Assistants, assistant coaches, are making \$2-3 million.

NIL collectives are committing \$20-30 million annually at top programs. Some of those commitments are real. Some of them are, how do I put this, **aspirational**.

The facilities arms race continues unabated. If you haven't toured LSU's football operations complex lately, I encourage you to do so. Bring sunglasses. The surfaces are very shiny.

And the thing about arms races: **there's no natural stopping point**. There's no moment where everyone collectively decides "okay, that's enough buildings." The **Nash equilibrium** holds until something external breaks it.

What breaks arms races?

Treaties. Regulations. Caps imposed by a governing body.

What do we have?

The NCAA, which can no longer enforce anything without getting sued. Conferences that are busy poaching each other's members rather than coordinating on costs. Collectives that operate in a legal gray zone with no oversight. And a federal government that seems entirely uninterested in regulating amateur athletics, which is reasonable, because these aren't amateur athletics anymore, are they?

So, the equilibrium holds. Spending rises. Everyone is worse off than they would be under a coordinated system.

And no one can stop.

THE NOBEL PRIZE, EXPLAINED BY FOOTBALL

What John Nash figured out, mathematically, college football demonstrates viscerally:

Individual rationality does not add up to collective rationality.

Smart people, making smart decisions, can produce catastrophically stupid outcomes.

And once you're in the trap, you can't think your way out, because thinking is what got you there.

The athletic director who approves a \$60 million facility expansion? **Rational.** The booster writing seven-figure checks to a collective. **Rational.** The coach strip-mining the transfer portal every January? Completely rational.

And the system is eating itself.

A NOTE FROM YOUR CORRESPONDENT

I'm 77 years old. I have never played an organized snap of football in my life. I wasn't even a good enough trombone player to make the Golden Band from Tigerland. Four degrees from this university, and the closest I got to the field was Section 402.

But here's what LSU gave me.

Every game day Saturday until my son left for West Point, he and I were in Tiger Stadium. That's the gift. Not the degrees, not the statistics training, not the career. The fall Saturdays with my son. The two of us walking from our house, walking distance to the stadium, 42 years in the same place, watching the sun go down over the west stands, listening to the band play "Hey Fightin' Tigers," feeling 102,000 people hold their breath at the same time.

That's what LSU football meant to me. **Still means.**

So, when I tell you the system is broken, understand I'm not some outside critic. I'm a man who spent the best Saturdays of his life in that stadium, who wants his grandchildren to have what his son had.

I've been exposed to enough statistical training to know when I'm watching a system without an equilibrium, and enough Louisiana living to know when everyone's bluffing at the same table.

What I know is this: the arms race that's consuming college football started here. **In Baton Rouge.** With a phone call and a demand for a building.

We didn't know what we were starting. Neither did Emmert. Neither, probably, did Saban, though if anyone should have seen it coming, it was the guy who demanded it.

Twenty-five years later, we're all living in the world that phone call created. Watching coaches get \$100 million contracts. Watching players transfer three times in four years. Watching collectives promise money they don't have to kids who don't know any better. Watching everyone make individually rational decisions that collectively make no sense.

Russell Crowe made **Nash equilibrium** look beautiful.

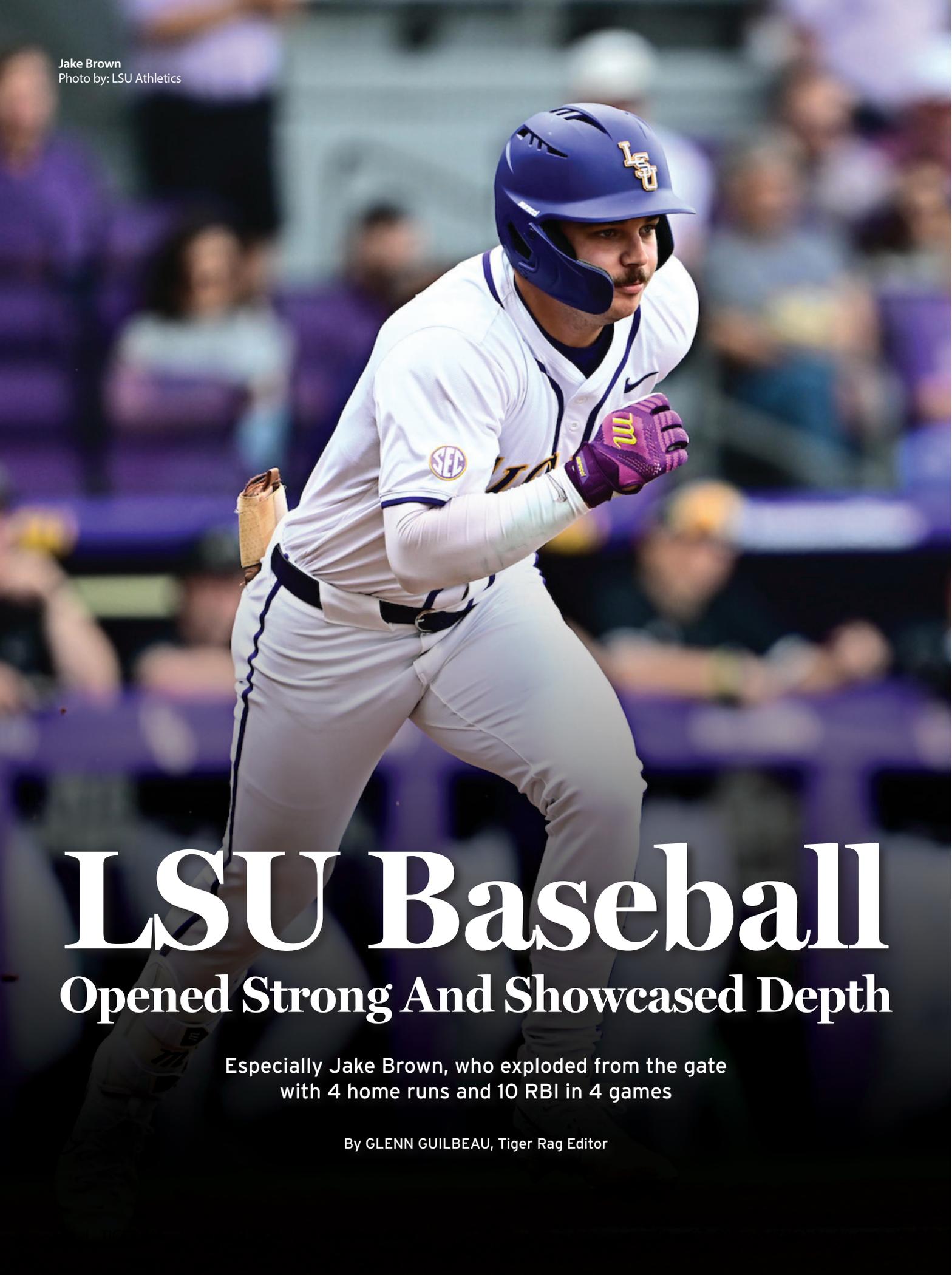
Nick Saban made it look inevitable.

And it all started right here, in a chancellor's office on the LSU campus, when a man from Michigan State said, "*build me a building*" and we said yes.

Geaux Tigers.

Robert Miller, 77, holds four degrees from LSU, was never good enough at trombone for the Golden Band, and has finally found a use for his graduate training. He can be reached at robert@kironinteractive.com

Jake Brown
Photo by: LSU Athletics



LSU Baseball

Opened Strong And Showcased Depth

Especially Jake Brown, who exploded from the gate
with 4 home runs and 10 RBI in 4 games

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

No. 1 LSU opened the 2026 season with a revolving door of players at second and third base, designated hitter, catcher and left field. Look forward to seeing more of that throughout most of the season for coach Jay Johnson.

“We have a lot of depth, and that will be one of the strengths of our team,” he said.

That means a lot of substitutions, some platoons and a plethora of pinch-hitter options. Johnson handled all that expertly last season, and it was important for the Tigers as they won the national championship.

Johnson also kept his roster happy, and virtually all of it returned for this season.

Through a 4-0 start, Johnson had used five second basemen, four designated hitters, three third basemen, three catchers and three left fielders.

Senior transfer Brayden Simpson of High Point was the opening day second baseman, but senior Kansas State transfer Seth Dardar started game two and four with junior Oregon State transfer Trent Caraway starting game three.

Backing up at second in all four games was true freshman Jack Ruckert of Catholic High in Baton Rouge. Dardar and true freshman Ethan Clauss of Las Vegas also saw reserve duty.

True freshman Mason Braun of South Bend, Indiana, started game one and game four at designated hitter with regular catcher Cade Arrambide, a sophomore, taking a turn there along with true freshman catcher Omar Serna.

Caraway will be the regular third baseman and started three of the first four games there. He moved to second in game three when sophomore

John Pearson started at third. This was because Simpson started in left field for injured regular left fielder Chris Stanfield, who bruised his hand sliding into home in game two. Braun later replaced Simpson in left. Senior Tanner Reaves played left in game four. Reaves also saw backup action at third in game one as did Caraway in game three.

Serna started game two at catcher. Arrambide started the other three there. Junior Dayton transfer Edward Yamin IV backed up Arrambide at catcher in game three.

Senior transfer Zach Yorke of Grand Canyon started all four games at first base and did not come out. He went 4-for-11 (.364) with two home runs and three RBIs.

Junior returnee Jake Brown started all four games in right field and hit a team-high .529 with four homers and 10 RBIs, including a grand slam and six RBIs in game two. He had eight home runs all last season.

Brown also became the first Tiger since Jared Jones in 2023 to hit two home runs apiece in back-to-back games in

games three and four. Over those two games, he also hit three home runs in three at-bats.

“Hard to say anybody is off to a better start in the country than him,” Johnson said. “Jake is the leader of this team, there’s no question about that. I’m very thankful that he’s a Tiger. And I think he’s got a chance to be one of the best players in the country this year.”

Also coming in hot was Arrambide, who was 7-for-17 for a .412 average with a home run and five RBIs in four starts. Dardar was 4-for-10 for .400 with two home runs and six RBIs in four starts. Caraway hit .385 (5-for-13) with a triple and a double and six RBIs in four starts.

Sophomore Derek Curiel started all four games in center field and was 6 of 13 with a double and four RBIs. Braun hit .300 (3-for-10) with a home run, a double and three RBIs in three games and two starts. Junior shortstop Steven Milam hit .267 (4-for-15) with two doubles and five RBIs.

LSU used 15 pitchers in the first four games with five of those pitching twice. Those were all relievers – red-shirt junior Gavin Guidry (1-0, 0.00 ERA, 1 save, 10 strikeouts, 1 hit, 0 walks in four and a third innings), sophomore Mavrick Rizy (0-0 0.00 ERA, 4 strikeouts, 0 hits, 1 walk in 2 and two-thirds innings), redshirt sophomore Deven Sheerin (0-0, 0.00 ERA, 4 strikeouts, 0 hits, 0 walks in 1 and two-thirds innings, sophomore Iowa Western transfer left-hander Ethan Plog (1-0, 0.00 ERA, 2 strikeouts, 1 hit, 1 walk in 1 inning) and senior Grant Fontenot (0-0, 27.00 ERA, 1 strikeout, 3 hits, 0 walks in two-thirds innings).

“We really like our bullpen,” Johnson said. “Gavin is the best closer in the country, and what’s remarkable is we won the national championship while he was out with an injury (back).”

Junior Kansas transfer Cooper Moore had the best opening start in game two as he allowed four hits and one run with 11 strikeouts and zero walks to go to 1-0 with a 1.50 ERA. **TR**



Matt McMahon Has A Chance To Survive

If he finishes strong, he might make it because of major deficits from Brian Kelly's \$54 million buyout and Lane Kiffin's \$91 million contract

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

LSU athletic director Verge Ausberry really wants to keep LSU men's basketball coach Matt McMahon, despite the team cratering since Southeastern Conference play began in early January.

But McMahon has got to win some games down the final stretch of March, so his record is not so embarrassing for the third time in his four years.

Particularly since the man who tried to get former LSU athletic director Scott Woodward and Ausberry to replace McMahon last year with McNeese State coach Will Wade is now the new chairman of the LSU Board of Supervisors – Lake Charles business owner Lee Mallett. Governor Jeff Landry, who also wanted Wade as LSU's coach, promoted Mallett from board member to president in February.

Wade, who coached LSU with great success but amid a plethora of major NCAA violations from 2017-22, instead took the head coaching job last year at North Carolina State. He was off to an impressive 18-8 season with a 9-4 mark in the Atlantic Coast Conference this season at a program with a much larger roster budget than LSU's. So, why would he leave now?

The Board did not change Ausberry's stance on McMahon.

"We will discuss that with the whole Board at the end of the season," Ausberry told Tiger Rag. "I have a solid relationship with Mr. Mallett and the entire Board – an excellent relationship. We have a basketball coach."

And Ausberry inherited significant budget deficits when he replaced the fired Scott Woodward as athletic director last December.

"Yes, there'll be cuts. And prioritizing some sports," Ausberry said.

Asked which sports will be prioritized after football, Ausberry said, "That's going to be over a period of time and about who's winning and doing well and who's not doing well. But all these big buyouts have to stop. Sometimes, you might say, 'You know what, I've got to keep this coach an extra year.'"

He didn't mention McMahon in that context, but that would not be a reach.

"We can't be so active with firing coaches," he said. "We've got to evaluate that and assess that. But the bottom line, if you fire a coach, remember that's a \$10 million buyout."

The buyout for McMahon and his staff would be approximately \$10 million if he is fired this year. He makes approximately \$2.9 million a year in the fourth year of a seven-year contract.

"Then, to bring another coach in, that's about another \$15 million, not including the NIL packages you've got to get ready for the new coach," Ausberry said. "That's about a \$40 million swing. We just have to be careful about firing coaches. People talking about firing coaches, getting rid of this coach here, getting rid of that coach. I'm like, 'Well, no, no, no. We've got to hold on that.'"

Particularly because Woodward saddled LSU with paying fired football coach Brian Kelly a \$54 million buyout. Then LSU hired Lane Kiffin to replace Kelly at \$91 million over seven years. And Kiffin just signed a 41-man NCAA Transfer Portal class for an entire roster at a cost of approximately \$40 million-plus.

"The basketball team lost two of its best players," Ausberry said of junior starting power forward Jalen Reed (Achilles) and junior starting point guard Dedan Thomas Jr. (foot). Reed was gone in December. Thomas, averaging 15 points and 6.5 assists, missed most of the SEC season and was scheduled for surgery in February.

"I think really, he (McMahon) would be in a different position, if he had those two," Ausberry said. "Before you make that decision, you've got to weigh all that into it. And we are. I made some comments earlier about it. I said, 'LSU should be in the NCAA Tournament.' But bottom line, we have to be fiscally responsible. And that fiscal responsibility is going to be important to our Board, our new president (Wade Rouse), to our Tiger Athletic Foundation board members and to us in this building."

In a pre-NIL world where athletes were not so expensive and athletic departments nationwide did not have the deficits they have now, McMahon might already be fired.

"The decisions that we make from now on, we have to think about them fiscally," Ausberry said. "It's not the wild west like we used to be, just pulling the trigger and making changes." 



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Jada Richard
Photo by: LSU Athletics



LSU Women Fail To Win Another Big One

But the Tigers will have more chances in NCAA tournament

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Reporter

After LSU coach Kim Mulkey lost her sixth straight game to national power South Carolina and nemesis coach Dawn Staley, 79-72, in the first prime time game on a Saturday night in ABC history on Valentine's Day, it was time to start over.

The Tigers had opened February with a flourish, beating No. 22 Alabama, 103-63, with ease, shooting 56.1 percent from the field and forcing 17 turnovers. The win not only made a statement but also suggested the Tigers could be heating up at the right time heading into a top five matchup at No. 4 Texas. That proved not to be the case.

For the third time this season, LSU imploded in the fourth quarter, getting outscored by Texas, 20-11, over the final 10 minutes. Just as in earlier losses to Kentucky and Vanderbilt, late-game struggles resurfaced. LSU committed 19 turnovers and shot just 33.3 percent in the fourth quarter.

"Well, you've got to take care of the ball," Mulkey said. "But it wasn't just the turnovers. It was poor shot selection. That's equivalent to a turnover to me - just taking poor shots."

The Tigers were able to bounce back and blew away Auburn, 77-44, before another major test in No. 3 South Carolina before a sold-out Pete Maravich Assembly Center.

The stage was set for a top six showdown - another opportunity for LSU to take a step toward a No. 2 or No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament that it failed to answer against Texas after a light non-conference schedule.

LSU fans and the P-MAC lived up to the hype in the game as did both teams as they traded blows and excellent play throughout the entire 40 minutes.

LSU had a chance to take the lead with 45 seconds remaining, but senior guard Flau'jae Johnson - a 70 percent free throw shooter on the season - missed both of her free throws. South Carolina capitalized on the next possession when senior forward Madina Okot scored through traffic inside to make it 75-72.

Johnson's last-second attempt to tie the game fell short, and Okot sealed the deal by making her free throws. LSU, which has only one player who regularly plays shooting 80 percent or higher from the line in Jada Richard, was 14 of 23 from the line for 60 percent. With far fewer attempts, South Carolina made more at 15 of 17 for 88 percent.

Therein was the loss.

"We missed nine, and that was the difference," Mulkey said. "Look at the stat sheet. We scored the same number of field goals. We out-rebounded them by nine. We were 14-for-23 at the foul line. That's where the game was lost. Make your free throws, you win."

The loss marked LSU's 18th straight against South Carolina, and Mulkey still remains winless as the Tigers' coach against Staley at 0-6 and 2-7, counting her years at Baylor.

The familiar theme of this season resurfaced for LSU - the inability to find ways to win in tight games.

The Tigers hope to learn from the loss.

"Nick Saban said, 'Never waste a failure.' So, we're not going to waste this loss. We've got to learn from it, grow from it," Johnson said.

"Some of us have to just look in the mirror, and down the stretch bow our neck and stop dropping these close games," junior guard Mikaylah Williams said. "Doing what we need to do early in the game, so it doesn't come down to free throws at the end. Taking care of our business in the first half, so we don't have to do all that fighting in the back end."

Or, make your free throws.

LSU closes the regular season at Mississippi State on March 1 before SEC Tournament play in Greenville, South Carolina, opens on March 4. Then it's the NCAA Tournament on March 18.

The Tigers are likely out of the hunt for a No. 1 or No. 2 seed, unless they are able to make a furious run and win the SEC Tournament or reach the championship game.

Mulkey said her coaching staff will make sure the Tigers do all things necessary to get the team back in championship mode. She remains confident that her team will respond. Remember, it did open the SEC season at 0-2 before climbing back into contention.

"It's our jobs as coaches when we get back on that practice floor to make sure we get them back in the right mindset to keep winning a few more basketball games," she said. "We'll see. They've done it all year, so I hope that they'll continue to do it as we head into March Madness." **TR**



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LSU Gymnastics Hitting Stride

But Coach Jay Clark knows the Tigers have the potential to do much better

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Reporter

The LSU gymnastics team got off to a strong start last month as the Tigers reached No. 2 in the nation with what coach Jay Clark considers a deep roster.

LSU was 6-1-1 overall and 3-1 in the Southeastern Conference heading into late February with a convincing win over No. 14 Penn State (4-2, 3-1 Big 10 Conference). But Clark was not satisfied with the Tigers' 197.525 score.

"I thought we were inconsistent," Clark said after Penn State. "We just never really gained any momentum."

In Clark's view, LSU is not reaching its full potential.

"We have yet to really put one together," Clark said. "We had that 198 at home against Kentucky, but we had an event that night that was not very good. So trying to get everyone on the same page

is really where our focus is right now. It's not about trying to keep a winning streak going. It's about growth. It's about preparing. It's about getting where we need to be for late in the season and continuing to try and find ourselves."

So, Clark challenged his team to go into the next meet and deliver its most consistent and complete performance of the season.

And his Tigers delivered.

LSU recorded its second score of 198 or higher, posting a 198.325 in its win over No. 17 Auburn (1-5, 0-5 SEC) on Feb. 13 at the midway point of the season. The Tigers set season-high marks on vault (49.550), bars (49.575) and floor (49.775) in the process.

Clark said he was proud of his team's ability to finally execute throughout an entire meet.

"Well, that was better," Clark said with a laugh in his opening remarks. "I told them afterwards they answered the bell. We were visibly disappointed with last week and felt like we had prepared to do a much better job. And so they heard that and they talked about it. We said it's time to put one together. I don't care about a score. That's out of our control. Scores don't mean all that much to me, except they calculate what they calculate. But the performance level was the best we'd had all year from top to bottom."

Not only was LSU's 49.775 on floor a season high, also tied for the highest floor score in program history. Each gymnast in LSU's floor lineup recorded either season or career-high scores.

Meanwhile, through the first six meets, sophomore Kailin Chio proved to be one of the best gymnasts in the country. She has captured five all-around titles and recorded season-highs that include perfect 10s on beam and floor, along with a 9.975 on vault and a 9.925 on uneven bars.

Chio's 39.875 all-around score in the Auburn meet was the second-highest all-around total in program history. Clark said he's running out of ways to describe Chio's impact.

"When it comes to her, she's great," Clark said. "She's matured. She's saying things better and responding to things better than she did a year ago."

With just five meets remaining before the Tigers attempt to win their sixth SEC championship in nine years, Clark's squad appears to be catching fire at the right time. **TR**

UPCOMING MEETS

Friday, Feb. 20

At No. 1 Oklahoma, 8 p.m. | ESPN2

Friday, Feb. 27

No. 3 Alabama, 8:30 p.m. | SEC Network

Sunday, Mar. 1

Podium Challenge (Baton Rouge, La.), 3 p.m.

Sunday, Mar. 8

at No. 5 Florida, 5 p.m. | SEC Network

Friday, Mar. 13

No. 8 Arkansas, 7:30 p.m. | SEC Network

Saturday, Mar. 21

SEC Championships, TBA | SEC Network



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LSU junior Noah McWilliams is No. 134 in the World Amateur Golf rankings
Photo by: LSU Athletics



LSU Spring Sports Calendar In Full Swing

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Reporter

Although LSU fans may be focused on baseball and men's and women's basketball, several other sports are currently in action.

MEN'S GOLF

The LSU men's golf team picked up right where it left off in the winter. The Tigers started their spring season off by finishing second in the Puerto Rico Classic after shooting 30-under par at the Grand Reserve Golf Course in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. The Tigers are ranked No. 2 team in the country behind Virginia.

Schedule

March 7-9, Hayt Tournament, Sawgrass Golf Course, Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

March 16-18, Pauma Valley Invitational, Pauma Valley, California.

WOMEN'S GOLF

The LSU women's golf team started its spring season with a fourth-place finish in the Puerto Rico Classic with a 14-under-par through three rounds of play.

Schedule

March 2-4, Darius Rucker Intercollegiate in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

March 16-17, Betsy Rawls Longhorn Invitational, Austin Texas.

March 27-29, Clemson Invitational, Sunset, South Carolina.

SOFTBALL

The LSU softball team got off to a rocky start at 7-4, which is the Tigers worst mark through 11 games since a 6-5 ledger in 2022. LSU has struggled to find consistent pitching and to score.

SEC Schedule

March 6-8, at Tennessee
March 14-16, Texas A&M
March 20-22, at South Carolina
March 27-29, Oklahoma

MEN'S TENNIS

The Tigers opened the season at 9-1 and reached No. 17 in the rankings.

SEC Schedule

March 1, Ole Miss.
March 6, at Texas
March 8, Tennessee
March 13, Oklahoma
March 15, Texas A&M
March 20, Arkansas
March 22, Mississippi State
March 27, at Auburn
March 29, at Vanderbilt

WOMEN'S TENNIS

The No. 5 LSU women's tennis got off to a 7-1 season with three wins over ranked opponents – No. 18 UCLA, No. 14 Tennessee and No. 9 North Carolina State.

SEC Schedule

Florida, March 5
Auburn, March 7
At Arkansas, March 13
At Oklahoma, March 15
March 19, At Missouri
March 21, Vanderbilt
March 27, Texas
March 29, Texas A&M

TRACK AND FIELD

The men's and women's LSU track and field teams will wrap up their indoor season at the NCAA Championships in Fayetteville, Arkansas, from March 13-14.

Outdoor Season Schedule

March 21, LSU Invitational
March 27-28, Hurricane Invitational, Miami

SWIMMING AND DIVING

Schedule

March 8-11, NCAA Diving Regionals, Bryan-College Station, Texas
March 18-21, NCAA Women Swimming and Diving Championships, Atlanta
March 25-28, NCAA Men's Swimming and Diving Championships, Atlanta 



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Andre Champagne
Tiger Rag Staff Writer

Historically, the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament has shown one clear trend: the path to a national championship is significantly smoother for No. 1 seeds.

While upsets happen and lower seeds occasionally find a way to cut down the nets, the numbers don't lie. The No. 1 seed has always dominated in the NCAA Tournament.

Since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1994, No. 1 seeds have compiled a staggering 474-101 overall record. More importantly, they have won 23 national championships in that span – 18 more than No. 2 seeds and 20 more than No. 3 seeds. No. 2 seeds are 332-119, while No. 3 seeds are 272-121.

The tournament's recent trend reinforces No. 1 seed supremacy even further. Dating back to 2015, top seeds have captured eight of the last 10 national championships. It is still very possible to win a national title without the No. 1 seed, though.

As a matter of fact, LSU coach Kim Mulkey proved that in 2023, when her Tigers won the program's first national championship as a No. 3 seed. But LSU did not have to beat No. 1 overall seed South Carolina that year, because No. 2 seed Iowa and a blossoming Caitlin Clark knocked the 42-0, defending national champion Gamecocks off, 77-73, in the Final Four semifinal behind 41 points by Clark. She became the first player in women's NCAA Tournament history to score 40 or more in back-to-back NCAA Tournament

Any Seed Other Than A No. 1 In NCAA Tournament May Be Detrimental For LSU Women's Basketball

games as she put up 41 to beat Louisville in the Elite Eight.

LSU beat Virginia Tech, 79-72, in the other national semifinal, then the Tigers and Angel Reese blew out Iowa and Clark in the national championship game, 102-85.

But if the 2026 Tigers want the best shot of winning another title this season, they will need the most favorable draw possible.

Earning a No. 1 seed comes with several benefits. The first two tournament games are set against a No. 16 seed and either a No. 8 or No. 9, avoiding potentially tricky No. 7 or No. 10 opponents. A top seed is also often placed closer to home for the Sweet 16 and Elite 8 rounds, which can help fan travel and create an advantageous atmosphere.

A No. 1 seed also can give teams a better chance of avoiding facing the same opponents in the NCAA Tournament. For example, LSU has played UCLA in the last two NCAA Tournaments – in the second round in 2024 when the Tigers won and in the Elite Eight last year when the Bruins won.

“What you're seeing happen is you've got South Carolina ranked third (in the Associated Press poll), Texas ranked fourth, and LSU and Vanderbilt fifth and sixth,” Mulkey said on her radio show recently. “So, what's going to

happen is you're going to get paired up with UCLA again for three years in a row, because they're not going to pair you up with Texas. They're not going to pair you up with South Carolina.

“It's good and bad that we're all so good in the SEC, but it kind of gets old that you're always going to have to be in the bracket with a team that you've played for three

years. That's because so many of us are jumbled right together in the SEC.”

Because the SEC is so deep again this season, LSU may still face the same opponents. But there's a difference between facing a conference team you know well and running into the Bruins for a third straight year. UCLA's size and perimeter depth have created difficult matchups for LSU, making another potential meeting far from ideal. Of course, either way, LSU may just not be good enough as it lost to Texas and South Carolina in February.

That's exactly why earning a No. 1 seed carries such large implications. A top seed could place LSU into a different region, potentially opening the door to facing different contenders, such as the Louisville Cardinals or the Michigan Wolverines, rather than revisiting the same obstacle yet again.

It may not seem like it now, because LSU lost a golden chance for a No. 1 seed with the losses to Texas and South Carolina. But if LSU finishes strong in the regular season and makes a deep run in the SEC Tournament, it at least has a chance for a clearer path toward another championship run.

LSU can still very well win a championship without a top seed, but the Tigers path to Pheonix would likely be much more difficult.

Unless – as it 2023 – it gets some help, and somebody else knocks off South Carolina and Dawn Staley, who are now 6-0 against Mulkey as LSU's coach.



Todd Horne
Vice President / Executive Editor

LSU's annual women's basketball deficit—roughly \$8 million—has drawn scrutiny ever since head coach Kim Mulkey inked a \$3.35 million salary after her 2023 national title.

But athletic director Verge Ausberry insists that, in the world of high-major women's hoops, Mulkey's price tag is not a loss but an investment in brand equity and revenue upside that rivals private-sector return on investment. "Every top women's basketball program across the nation is in the same boat—South Carolina, UConn, Tennessee," Ausberry told *Tiger Rag*. "They're all paying up, and they're all seeing value that far exceeds the dollar figure on the ledger."

Title IX and institutional priorities have made women's sports a core part of the LSU business model.

Without Mulkey's recruiting clout and national profile, Ausberry calculates, LSU would face an \$11 million hole annually instead of \$8 million. "Ticket sales drop off a cliff if she's not here," he says. "Corporate partners lose visibility. Broadcast interest wanes. That brand cachet is priceless, and you can't buy it on the open market."

The same logic applies to LSU's baseball franchise, which runs near breakeven despite Jay Johnson earning the highest coaching salary in the SEC—north of \$3 million annually. "Most Division I baseball programs bleed \$5 million to \$6 million a year," Ausberry notes. "Jay's number pushes us close to a red zero, but his cham-

What's Up With LSU's Financial Commitment to Women's Basketball?

pionships and postseason runs drive ticket sales, sponsor activations, and national TV revenue that more than offset the payroll line." In other words, the Tigers' on-field success mitigates what otherwise would be a multimillion-dollar drain.

Add Lane Kiffin's annual \$13 million-plus football contract to the ledger, and LSU's coaching payroll looks daunting. But Ausberry argues the triumvirate of Mulkey, Johnson, and Kiffin has forged one of college sports' most powerful brands. At sponsor roundtables in New York and Atlanta this spring, Ausberry says, corporate executives were clamoring for inventory. "We've got the top-three brand in college athletics right now," he asserts. "Firms that distribute seven-figure gifts elsewhere are coming to us, saying, 'We want a piece of LSU.' That demand translates into premium ticket packages, enhanced donor levels, and higher media rights fees."

Everything hinges on the Tigers maintaining on-field excellence. LSU's football ticket sales for 2026 topped 44,000 new requests—more than twice the previous year's number. Corporate sponsorships are running 25 percent above budget, and donor contributions are "through the roof," according to Ausberry. Even with those figures, he insists the department must budget as if it'll end the fiscal year in the red and build contingencies accordingly.

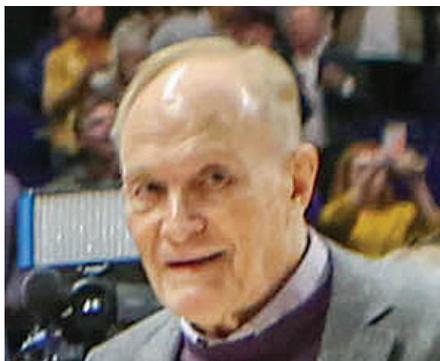
"The reality is, we're going to operate at a deficit," he admits. "But we can't let costs spiral out of control. We have to be disciplined about head count, salary structures, and the purpose behind each hire. If we can promote

internally, leverage existing talent, and stretch budgets by doing more with one fewer full-time employee, that's what we'll do."

That mindset reflects a broader shift in collegiate athletics: financial stewardship married to competitive ambition. While Mulkey's salary pushes LSU's women's basketball program into the red, her recruiting prowess and national championships have already generated millions in incremental value—measured in seats filled, sponsorship deals renewed, and television ratings that buoy network affiliate fees. In Auburn and Fayetteville and Knoxville, other ADs make the same calculus: big salaries, bigger returns.

By the numbers, LSU's sports portfolio may not show a profit line for several seasons. Yet the athletic department—armed with a triple-crown coaching lineup and emboldened by Title IX imperatives—believes the red ink is an investment in long-term brand dominance. "We'll tighten belts elsewhere," Ausberry says. "But we'll pay what it takes to keep Kim Mulkey, Jay Johnson, and Lane Kiffin under one Tiger flag. Because if you're serious about championship culture and national visibility, that's where the real return on investment lies."

Todd Horne is the vice president and executive editor of *Tiger Rag* and started covering LSU sports in 1986. He is a graduate of the LSU Manship School of Journalism. Reach Todd at todd@tigerrag.com



Dale Brown
Tiger Rag Featured Columnist

One Lucky Fan: A Story You Do Not Want To Miss

Talbot to launch the first Inside LSU Basketball television show.

What began as a simple TV project grew into a four-decade odyssey: Talbot traveled with the team, attended every practice and locker-room talk, and helped secure appearances by stars like Wayne Newton, Larry Gatlin, Barbara Mandrell and Kenny Rogers. But more than basketball highlights, Talbot says, it was Coach Brown's indefatigable belief—his signature exhortation “Never Give Up!”—and his genuine compassion for everyone he met that transformed Talbot's own life and, he believes, the lives of countless others.

From impromptu motivational clinics in Baghdad under Saddam Hussein's motorcade, to lost drives outside Paris where Brown famously stripped off his own shoes for a barefoot child, Talbot witnessed firsthand how Brown used his platform to uplift the down-and-out, greet every fan with a kind word, and instill in young people the power of perse-

verance. Along the way they shared lighter moments—Shaquille O'Neal lobbying for a cell phone gift, a running joke about Brown's trademark “And finally, in conclusion,” and even conversations with celebrities like Jerry Clower and Kenny “Sky” Walker.

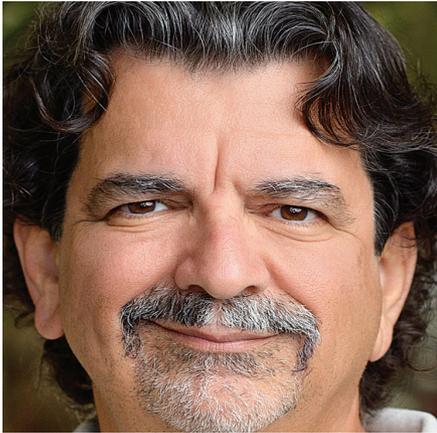
Talbot closes by calling himself “the luckiest LSU fan,” grateful not only for the ups and downs of Tiger basketball, but for a friendship with a man who, in Talbot's words, was put on this earth to make it better. For those who followed Dale Brown's storied coaching career, Talbot's letter serves as a vivid reminder that Brown's greatest legacy lives beyond the wins and Final Fours—in the lives he inspired, the kindness he freely gave, and the steadfast conviction that, with hard work and belief, anything is possible.

Due to print space restrictions, Talbot's complete story (roughly 950 words) is published online at <https://TigerRag.com>.

Check it out at <https://tigerrag.com/one-lucky-fan>

**POWERING A
WORLD THAT'S
ALWAYS ON.**

Cummins
ALWAYS ON



Jim Kleinpeter
Tiger Rag Featured Columnist

Even a Hall of Fame coach can't always simply dial up a national title. The conditions have to be right and then getting the right breaks once the NCAA Tournament starts is important.

But in her fifth year, Kim Mulkey is looking like she has the right combination of players, regardless of what happened when the Tigers played South Carolina in the PMAC last month, to be a threat.

Going into the top five match with the Gamecocks, Mulkey clearly has the best team she assembled since that 2023 title team that squashed Iowa in the championship game. That team wasn't a lock or even a favorite and may have gotten a big break when Iowa beat South Carolina, which entered the Final Four with a 36-0 record.

Regardless of the outcome for the St. Valentine's Day showdown, which was considered a battle for one of four No. 1 tournament seeds, Mulkey has a team blessed with experience, versatility and depth. She knows how to do the rest.

The last two seasons it seemed basketball was exceeded by off court drama whether it was player dismissals or suspensions, a perceived journalistic "hit piece" on Mulkey or an intra-team love triangle. The pieces didn't all fit together like that title team which played its best basketball in the tournament.

Mulkey hinted as much in LSU's 77-44 win at Auburn, a trap game if there

Kim Mulkey's Team This Season Built For a Deep Tournament Run

ever was one. The Tigers took care of business from the start to finish and played the whole bench. That provided a welcomed rest for the frontliners who are nearing a part of the season where they will have to max out their minutes.

"I thought today you saw some flashes of what we're capable of, and really, I got to rest a lot of players," Mulkey said.

Even if LSU can't snag one of the four No. 1 seeds, they are built for a long tournament run. Connecticut, UCLA, Texas, South Carolina and LSU are all worthy of top seeds someone is going to get left out. But it won't matter. LSU won its title as the No. 3 seed and they are looking no worse than a No. 2.

They have experience. Flau'Jae Johnson was a freshman on that title team and she's playing like an old hand now. She doesn't always have to score and doesn't seem bothered by that. At times she's electrifying with her ability to drive to the basket and also hit threes.

Johnson leads the team with a 13.8 scoring average, but this squad has four in double figures and four more with at least 9.0 points per game and six players average better than four rebounds per game.

Mikaylah Williams who would be THE star on any other team, can go for 20 at any time. But there was a stretch where she was handing out more assists than shots taken, and she seems to like it as much. She's the closest player to Seimone Augustus the Tigers have had.

In the title season if Angel Reese struggled, the team struggled.

The most improved player is clearly Jada Richard, who has been an outstanding point guard. Her play has allowed Mulkey to use MiLaysia

Fulwiley off the bench at all three guard positions. Richard is a threat from behind the arc but also has been a good pull up shooter and a plus defender.

Fulwiley brings great energy and versatility with some Pete Maravich panache. She's a nightmare on defense for opposing point guards, either stealing the ball or forcing bad passes and traveling calls.

Perhaps the most important development is in the frontcourt where two freshmen and two transfers have filled the roles. ZaKiyah Johnson and Grace Knox are different types. Knox is a strong finisher, isn't afraid to shoot a jumper and is a tough rebounder. Johnson has more perimeter skills but has quickness like Reese to get inside for offensive rebounds and putbacks.

Amiya Joyner and Kate Koval were experienced transfers who made life easier for the two younger front court players. Koval has shown a bump in ability from adapting to SEC play. Joyner is an underrated player with eight double doubles and the leading rebounder with 7.1 per game.

Moreso than her last two teams which reached the Elite Eight, Mulkey has the right combination of players. Once the tournament starts, the beauty is you have to win six games; you don't have to beat everybody. And this group looks like it's hitting its stride.

Jim Kleinpeter is a graduate of the LSU Manship School of Journalism. He has been a sportswriter for 45 years, including 33 at the Times-Picayune. Reach him at jkleinpeter@gmail.com.



Jim Engster

President, Tiger Rag Magazine

President Trump pardoned Billy Cannon and four other professional football stalwarts last week for offenses against the United States. Cannon again dominated headlines because of his compelling back story of magnificent athletic prowess, personal magnetism and uncommon redemption.

Eight years ago, there was a request in this space to President Trump to forgive counterfeiting sins committed by the man who catapulted LSU football into the modern era with Paul Dietzel, a telegenic coach who like Cannon, was saturated with charisma.

A representative with the U.S. Justice Department contacted me about the pardon request in 2018, months after Cannon's death on May 20. The cleaning of the slate is complete for a man who participated in a caper which involved the printing of \$6 million in \$100 bills.

Cannon was fighting substantial debts related to poor investments when he discarded federal law and darted into criminal territory. With his blinding speed and brutal power, Billy frequently outran and outmuscled defenders on the field. When the U.S. Secret Service knocked on his door, he quickly pleaded guilty and served two and a half years in a Texas prison.

As the scandal erupted, he was perched in his undershorts on his kitchen floor when his longtime friend Boots Garland came to check on him and asked if he was okay. "Yeah Boots," replied Cannon. "But do you have change for a hundred?"

Cannon lived life in the fast lane and was not averse to short cuts. After the 1960 Sugar Bowl against Ole Miss, he signed a \$50,000 contract to play with the Los Angeles Rams, who had the first pick in the 1960 NFL Draft. Cannon was all smiles under the goal posts

Billy Cannon: Great All American

at Tulane Stadium as he inked the deal with Rams General Manager Pete Rozelle.

The Houston Oilers of the fledgling AFL then offered more money and Cannon signed with them. A judge ruled in Billy's favor and scolded Rozelle, the future NFL commissioner for taking advantage of an unsophisticated country boy.

When Cannon's pro career ended, the first LSU game he attended at Tiger Stadium was the 1972 clash when Bert Jones connected with Brad Davis on the final play to give LSU a 17-16 victory over Ole Miss, the second most memorable win over the Rebs in LSU history.

Cannon reached legendary status 13 years earlier against the Rebels when he raced 89 yards into the north end zone and wrote an indelible chapter in Death Valley with "The Run."

After retiring from the game, Cannon was an accomplished orthodontist approaching middle age at 45. He detailed his financial woes to a neighbor, who was the LSU boxing undefeated lightweight champion in 1955.

John Stiglets, who had a history with federal gumshoes, was regarded as the most talented counterfeiter in the world. He was so good at printing phony money, the bills were almost undetectable. When some suspicious \$100 bills started floating around Baton Rouge businesses, it did not take long to connect the scheme to Stiglets, who was living a few yards from Cannon.

Both men admitted guilt, served time and died in Louisiana. The end came for Stiglets at 75 in Zachary on July 9, 2005. The U.S. Army vet had been living at the Louisiana War Veterans Home in Jackson.

A lesson for men in financial distress is to not reside down the street from counterfeiting kings.

Cannon's pro career was unheralded as he led the AFL in rushing in 1961, and as a tight end averaged 20 yards per catch and ten touchdowns for the 1967 Oakland Raiders, who went 13-1 and lost Super Bowl II to Green Bay.

Cannon ran 88 yards for a touchdown in the first AFL Championship Game on Jan. 1, 1961 as Houston beat the Chargers 24-16, two years removed from Cannon's pass to Mickey

Mangham to beat Clemson 7-0 in the 1959 Sugar Bowl. A year later, No. 20 scored the only touchdown in Houston's 10-3 victory over the Chargers of Sid Gillman as the Oilers repeated as AFL champions.

That victory gave Cannon his third title in four years. LSU would have also won the 1959 NCAA crown if officials in Knoxville had not erroneously ruled Billy did not pierce the goal line on a two-point conversion attempt that preserved a 14-13 triumph for Tennessee to keep Dietzel and the Tigers from a second consecutive NCAA title.

Houston lost 20-17 in overtime in the third AFL Championship Game, meaning Cannon was six points from five straight titles. Billy was a competitor like few others, who was dispatched to the scrap heap in 1983.

Just as he was not to be denied on Halloween of 1959, the consummate winner was determined to never be branded as a loser in life.

Billy Cannon is no longer a convicted felon. Fifteen years ago, he was named by Tiger Rag the most influential athletic figure in the first 150 years of LSU. No. 20 retains his No. 1 distinction with a cleansed record.

Is Ben McDonald the New Shot Doc?

Bob Brodhead served nearly five years as LSU athletic director with the nickname "Bottom Line Bob." An accountant by trade, Brodhead was a critic of deficit spending, but he told this writer the greatest truism in 1980s college athletics was, "You get what you pay for."

This philosophy is evident in the current paths of LSU men's and women's basketball. The men's program makes more than \$2 million annually for the university while the women's program loses almost \$8 million a year.

Matt McMahan is fighting for survival with another subpar season while Kim Mulkey is a rock star with another national championship contender.

The recommendation here is for LSU President Wade Rouse to allow the men's program to rack up the same deficit as Kim's crew and see what happens.

Mulkey would be wise to invest in a free throw accuracy specialist. As a fantastic guard with national champion Louisiana

ENGSTER COLUMN cont. page 60

What They Read

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Tracy McMains

What I'm reading -
Theo of Golden
by Allen Levi

Stories are told; friendships are born; and lives are changed. Theo of Golden is a beautifully written story about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the far-reaching possibilities of anonymous kindness



Shannon Anderson

What I'm reading -
The River is Waiting
by Wally Lamb

A great story that follows a young father grappling with unbearable tragedy as he searches for hope, redemption, and the possibility of forgiveness. (It's a NY Times best seller and an Oprah Bookclub choice)

ENGSTER COLUMN cont. from page 59

Tech, Kim converted 64-percent of her free throws. LSU was at 61-percent in its 18th straight loss to South Carolina.

Mulkey is urged to assign former LSU baseball and basketball icon Ben McDonald to instruct her team on better performance. Big Ben was 19 of 21 from the line while playing for Dale Brown in 1987, that's 90.5 percent.

Words of wisdom from the two-sport legend could help as LSU prepares for a possible post-season rematch with South Carolina. USC's coach Dawn Staley was successful on more than 80-percent of her free throw attempts while playing at the University of Virginia. Her team connected at 88-percent in the Valentine's night win over the Lady Tigers.

Talk Louisiana with Jim Engster is streamed statewide weekdays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and is aired on WRKF Talk 89.3 FM in Baton Rouge as the flagship station. Jim is a graduate of the LSU Manship School of Journalism. Reach him at: jim@louisianaradionetwork.com.



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