

Bravo Boston College

By **Dan Wetzel**, Yahoo! Sports

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The boss told the employee that if he did something he'd be fired. The employee did it. Like 99 percent of us would, the employee got fired.

It's difficult to work up much sympathy for Jeff Jagodzinski, who was Boston College's football coach until he was canned Wednesday for defying orders – in this case interviewing for the head coaching position of the [New York Jets](#).

The man brazenly brushed off authority and paid for it.

The underlying issue though is built on decades of lies and deception; empty contracts and empty promises in college athletics.

Jagodzinski is a football coach and he knows as well as anyone that football coaches get fired, often quickly. A five-year extension today can be a pink slip tomorrow. It's a bottom line, cut-throat business of minimal loyalty.

There was talk even Joe Paterno was going to get run out of Penn State this year.

Jagodzinski was like most football coaches who believe their contract is not a guarantee of employment but a starting point for a buyout. It's why almost every coach has his eye on his next job – in Jagodzinski's case a higher-paying one in the NFL.

You can understand why Jagodzinski would want to coach in the NFL. You can understand why he didn't consider just talking to an NFL team high treason.

His mistake was trying it with Boston College. At most colleges, such an action would result in a rich contract extension. Schools have been bamboozled for years by coaches with wandering eyes. The mere rumor of NFL interest gets most of them a raise.

Boston College is like few other programs though. It might be naive and hopelessly rooted in a bygone era, but athletic director Gene DeFilippo isn't apologizing for it. Nor should he.

DeFilippo plucked Jagodzinski from the [Green Bay Packers](#) when he was just an assistant with no head coaching experience at any level.

He gave him a big salary at a great academic school in the Atlantic Coast Conference. He expected loyalty in return. When he asked Jagodzinski for that during the hiring process two years ago, DeFilippo says Jagodzinski promised it.

Interviewing with the Jets was a clear break of that promise. It was the modern coaching game being played at one of the nation's last remaining old-school programs.

The old ways won. Wednesday, DeFilippo held a press conference where he kept praising Jagodzinski for being a great coach and a close friend but someone who needed to be fired anyway.

"When somebody looks you in the eye and shakes your hand and tells you something, that to me is as important as a contract," DeFilippo said to the Boston Globe. "When somebody gives you a break and then after two years, the first chance you have to go interview, then you're going to take off, that is a little bit ... it hurts.

"I certainly would not have hired a coach if I thought he was going to leave in two years," DeFilippo continued. "The understanding was I wanted a coach who was going to be here for a long time, and I thought I had one."

The firing was a harsh move, yet a breath of fresh air.

The root of the problem is a coarsening of relations in college athletics. There was a time when coaches received a minimum of five years at a school. There was a time when losing seasons, even consecutive ones, were forgiven. There was a time when there was a real partnership between individual and institution, an understanding that a good man can have a bad run and still be the right fit.

Those days are mostly gone. College athletics is often worse than the NFL. Even legendary coaches can be run off for a single bad season. Schools have shown virtually no loyalty or long-term thinking.

Everything is about winning right now. These institutions of higher learning often get led around by the whims of super boosters.

Boston College has always been an exception though. Through the years it's been patient with coaches. Not perfect, but closer than most schools. It maintains a high graduation rate, makes athletes take real classes and aspires to NCAA compliance in a way few others do. There is still some decency in Boston.

It tends to scoff at the win-obsessed ways of other schools.

DeFilippo expects his coach to understand that. Sure a coach should be nervous at most places, he argued, but BC is different. The school is loyal and thus it expects the same in return. If you don't want to be here, someone else will take the job. We're not begging anyone to stay.

DeFilippo felt burnt about two years ago when Tom O'Brien, who could've coached there forever, up and left for North Carolina State. The AD promised he wouldn't be fooled twice. Jagodzinski should've understood that.

To some, Boston College is short-sighted, running off a good man and a good coach just for talking to an NFL team. The program might be set back.

Boston College was actually being long-sighted. In an era of epic sellouts by schools, in a win-at-all-costs environment, BC said that we value loyalty above almost everything. We are who we are; take or leave it.

Without apology it chose to be one of the last throwbacks amid the storm.