Let’s “Transform” the Colts the Way We Do Public Schools: Phase 2

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This is Phase 2 of my rebuilding plan for the Indianapolis Colts. Phase 1 called for reforms in governance and tenure. Phase 2 will focus on reforming the FAILING Colts organization in the manner that the Obama administration is reforming public schools.

The Obama administration has given FAILING public schools 4 options:

- **Close** – close the school and transfer students; or
- **Turnaround** – replace at least 50% of the school staff;
- **Restart** – turn the school over to a charter operator or outside manager;
- **Transformation** – fire the principal, provide training and coaching to teachers, and make changes in curriculum and instruction.

The first option of just closing down the Colts may be worth exploring. Perhaps we could turn the Lucas Oil field into one big indoor garden and let former fans spend their Sunday afternoons tending their own plot of ground while thinking about all the great football memories the Colts gave them. Or perhaps we could turn it into a go kart track and invite former players to be honorary starters. Personally, I am not in favor of this option… I would once again have to become a Bear fan… which might bring back all those nightmares of Bobby Douglas throwing deep.

The second option, turnaround, is definitely worth thinking about too. What a great opportunity to reduce costs! We could reduce 36 player positions and reduce ticket prices. Anyway… 71 players are way too many… can only play 11 at a time. Maybe some of them could go both ways to further reduce the budget. Alternatively, we could trade (replace) 36 of our least senior players (union contract only allows us to trade players with five or fewer years of experience) to some other team for their 36 least senior players! Wow! That could really be fun and might even let our Colts meet standards. The Lions might be interested.

Restart, the 3rd option, also has some merits. We could just turn the team over to a charter operator or some other outside manager. I like that because maybe I could run a pro football franchise… something I have always wanted to do. Surely I and my cronies could do just as well as Jimmy Irsay and Bill Pollian… after all they FAILED to meet standards and make “AYP”.

The 4th option, transformation, is perhaps the best of all. Why? Like the public school model of transformation which most school districts will select as their “reform” model, this is the most politically appealing and least disruptive. In public schools, principals don’t have any real power and seldom have any real constituency since they are moved around every couple years (or when politically expedient). Under this option, all we have to do is fire Coach Caldwell, retrain the players, and change the playbook, and presto – we will meet standards! We will win all of our games and the next Super Bowl! This will not be politically sensitive or disruptive. How many kids even have a jersey with Coach Caldwell’s name and number on it?

In closing, three cautions should be set forth in what not to do to rebuild the Colts. We need to make sure we NEVER empower the players and coaching staff to make decisions and then have the audacity to hold them accountable. Let’s avoid the trap of de-centralization. We all know that a heavy-handed bureaucracy is the best way to manage all organizations… especially pro football franchises and schools.

Secondly, never even think about de-regulation. Can you imagine Coach Caldwell or Payton Manning without a playbook handed down by the team’s elected board of directors? What a mess that would be. We all know team rules and plays are best developed by those furthest from the playing field.

Finally, don’t even think about de-politicizing the Colts. We fought hard for our elected board. I can’t even bear the thought that those thousands of laws controlling the Colts might not even exist. Can you even imagine running the team without mandatory case conference committees, mandatory union bargaining with year around discussions, or public board meetings every week so board members can micromanage the team and have their
day in the sun? We just can’t trust the coach and players to do the right thing. They need to be stripped of all their judgment. We can’t just let them tackle anybody you know... it’s got to be in the policy book as to who, when, where, and in what manner they can tackle an opponent.

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