

SOUTHERN MISS CAN'T EVEN CHEAT THE SMART WAY

In a national scandal, Southern Miss and former head basketball coach Donnie Tyndall have been under investigation for financial assistance to Southern Miss players who were academically ineligible at the time. Multiple sources have reported the violations stem from how non-scholarship athletes paid for tuition and living expenses, along with potential academic improprieties. The oft repeated question is how could Southern Miss and Tyndall have been so stupid.

In fact, according to CBSSports.com report it is pretty easy for a smart (albeit dishonest) coach and school to get away with this kind of violation.

There's a way to get done what Donnie Tyndall -- or somebody connected to the Southern Miss program he ran from April 2012 to April 2014 -- allegedly got done.

It's in violation of NCAA rules, certainly.

But it's smart and difficult for the NCAA to catch.

Need to handle expenses for a player before you can put him on scholarship?

Here's how you do it: You instruct the player to get an apartment near campus, enroll in classes and max-out on student loans. Tell him to get as much student-loan money as he can. Buy a nice TV. Hook an Xbox One up to it. Live life. Enjoy. And don't worry about a thing because those student loans will be "handled" down the road, one way or another.

Five years later, a booster will pay the balance off.

Maybe wait 10, just to play it safe.

"That's absolutely the way you'd do it," one coach told me Thursday. But, I'm told, that's *not* the way Tyndall -- or somebody connected to the Southern Miss program he ran from April 2012 to April 2014 -- allegedly did it, point being the first-year Tennessee coach now has some kind of mess on his hands.

Tyndall is waiting to hear the scope and nature of his discipline under the NCAA coach control provisions of the rules, regardless of whether he was personally responsible for the violations. However, while accepting responsibility for any such misconduct, Tyndall's public statement appears to shift the burden for non-compliance to Southern

Miss. "During my time at Southern Miss, I believed that our program followed NCAA rules and worked well with the university's administration to maintain an atmosphere of rules compliance," Tyndall said.

To date there has been no announcement of the penalties to be attached to Southern Miss' basketball program. If Tyndall is telling the truth, the penalties are likely to be severe. However, given the sorry state of the program, readers continue to question whether anyone would notice if the program was suspended for multiple years. A number of readers have suggested that if the school is unable to "cheat" effectively, perhaps it should save a lot of money and voluntarily shut down the program.