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from around the Nation*



**July 28, 2008**

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## It's time to move SEC Media Days to Atlanta

By [Tony Barnhart](#) | Friday, July 25, 2008, 07:59 AM

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Hoover, Ala.-At the beginning of SEC preseason media days on Wednesday, commissioner Mike Slive gave his annual look back at what the conference had accomplished over the past year. Among the highlights were four national championships (LSU football, Tennessee women's basketball, Georgia women's gymnastics, and Georgia tennis).

But the thing that makes Slive most proud is the fact that after six years on the job only one sport, Arkansas track, is serving any kind of NCAA probation. Slive, a former judge and attorney, was hired in to reduce some of the excesses that had hurt the reputation of this league. The SEC is far from perfect. No conference is. But by any objective measure, the league is better when it comes to playing by the rules

I had a chance to talk to Slive not long after Tennessee coach Phillip Fulmer was hit with a subpoena as he walked into the Wynfrey Hotel. The subpoena called on Fulmer to give a deposition in a lawsuit by a former Alabama booster against the NCAA. It set off a media frenzy that dominated the second day of the meetings, which is what it was designed to do.

To say that the commissioner was miffed would be an understatement. Here's why:

This is just the kind of knucklehead stuff that Slive has been trying to get rid of in this league since he became commissioner in 2002. There are mechanisms in place to better deal with rules breaking by conference members. There are specific procedures in place when one school thinks another is cheating. This whole episode started years ago because an Alabama booster believed Fulmer was working with the NCAA in its investigation of Alabama. Now a coach can't do that. There is a chain of command that he has to follow. In fact, it became known as "the Phillip Fulmer rule."

This episode brings back the mudslinging days that gave the SEC such a bad reputation. And Slive doesn't like it.

"It's just not appropriate," said Slive. "We are here to celebrate the start of another football season. There is a time and a place for everything and this is not the proper time or the proper place for that kind of action."

I also had a private moment with Fulmer. He was clearly not happy but would not comment any further. In retrospect, Fulmer could have handled this much better. When all the dust had settled it was clear that the lawyers had choreographed the event and given some of the local media the heads up that it was coming. Copies of the subpoena were being passed around radio row at the Wynfrey Hotel just minutes after Fulmer had been served.

He spent the afternoon saying he had not looked at anything and would not comment. Which was accurate. The paper was handed to him, some say dropped in his lap, and Fulmer said he did not look at it. Then after he left Birmingham he conceded that he had received the subpoena but had not read it before he went into the hotel. Then he released a statement. The fact that Fulmer first denied it, and then had to backtrack, just added to the media hype, which reached warp speed.

In fairness maybe any one of us would have done the same thing and not read the document and opened that can of worms until later.

I also spoke with Jeff Hagood, Fulmer's lawyer, Thursday night. Hagood told me that Fulmer has turned the matter over to him and will have no further comment on the issue.

So what are we to make of this?

Prediction: There will be a legal challenge to the subpoena by Hagood and the Tennessee attorneys who will attempt to get it quashed. There is no way that Fulmer is going to give a deposition on Sept. 25, two days before the Vols play at Auburn.

And here is the bigger question to ponder this morning. This is the second time in four years that the SEC has had to deal with Alabama lawyers threatening to subpoena a coach at football media days. Hagood said that the lawyers "hijacked" one of the SEC's most popular functions for their own benefit. Hijacked is probably too strong a word but the lawyers certainly used the event and took away from what it is supposed to be.

Is it time to move the SEC's preseason media days to Atlanta? The SEC football championship game quickly outgrew Birmingham after two years and is now a tremendous success at the Georgia Dome. Given the infrastructure of Atlanta and the growth and popularity of the SEC on a national scale, maybe the time has come to move this event.

This event draws more national media than any preseason event of its kind. And when something like this happens the league gets embarrassed on a national scale. The SEC does not need this kind of silliness. It's time to move it to Atlanta.

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### Comments

By buck b

July 25, 2008 8:24 AM | [Link to this](#)

Are you sure it wasn't Weight Watchers who put the subpoena on UT Coach Phat Fulmer?

Agreed...move the Media Day to Atlanta...maybe we can then end the drought on Lake Lanier with Coach Urban Renewal's tears.....

By Mikey in Sav

July 25, 2008 8:25 AM | [Link to this](#)

Phat Phil will Phigure out a way to Phinagle his way out of this Phiasco.

By Doug

July 25, 2008 8:26 AM | [Link to this](#)

Great idea Tony. The nation's best football conference holds their Media Days in a shopping center in Birmingham,



## The Birmingham News

### Injury report coming to SEC? `Doubtful'

Monday, July 28, 2008

**RAY MELICK**  
News staff writer

Injuries, as any fan of football knows, are part of the game.

And for coaches who are constantly asked about the status of injured players, talking about injuries often becomes a game in itself.

"Some coaches try to hide this (injury) or that," said Georgia head coach Mark Richt. "And you know, sometimes I might sound a little wishy-washy on a guy myself."

Last week the Atlantic Coast Conference adopted an NFL-style guideline for reporting injuries during the week, where players are listed in categories such as "Out, Doubtful, Questionable, and Probable."

Under NFL guidelines, "probable" means a player has better than a 50-percent chance of playing; "doubtful" means a 75 percent chance of not playing, and "out" means not playing at all.

Southeastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive says he doesn't believe there is a need for a similar standardized injury report in the SEC.

"I don't see that coming to the SEC," Slive said. "I think our coaches are capable of explaining to you guys every day the status of their players. I don't see the need for it."

But it has been discussed, according to SEC Associate Commissioner Charles Bloom.

"There were competition issues as well as (privacy) issues that we just couldn't get past," Bloom said. "If an opposing team knew a kid was playing hurt, what might they do to maybe get that player out of the game?"

"But I'll be interested to follow and see how it works (in the ACC), because if they do have some success with it, I could see us revisiting the issue."

As Bloom said, some college coaches don't reveal injuries for fear of giving some kind of advantage to the next week's opponent.

However, hiding injuries is the reason the NFL adopted mandatory injury reports in 1947. Then-Commissioner Bert Bell felt it wasn't good for the integrity of the game for coaches to hide injuries to starting players. He hoped it would prevent gambling interests from getting inside information on players' health.

"If gamblers or people that run that kind of stuff are getting information by trying to squeeze a player or squeeze a trainer, something like that, then I think it might be a very wise thing to do," Richt said.

Because of the students' right to privacy, there is confusion over how much information a coach can give out on a student-athlete. Almost every college athlete signs a waiver that allows their school to give out

information on injuries that occur in competition or practice. However, non-athletic related injuries are considered private, according to SEC officials.

"I can understand (being required to release accurate injury reports) in terms of who is going to play and who's not going to play," said Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville. "It usually comes out in the wash. We have open practices (for the first 20-30 minutes). I can see all the (reporters) out there counting, looking at numbers, looking at who's running around. So it's pretty hard for us to hide somebody in terms of an injury.

"And there's really no reason to do that. You know, somebody might not be full speed that you might not bring up (to the media), or whatever. I'd have to think about that."

#### **In the NFL:**

In the NFL, teams can be fined for providing false information on their injury report, but such fines are rare. In some cases, it has become a joke. New England quarterback Tom Brady was on the injury report every week since the start of the 2005 season until this past year, yet never missed a game during that time.

"Some coaches try to take advantage of it," said Alabama coach Nick Saban. "One of my buddies (in the NFL, New England coach Bill Belichick) used to have about 20 guys every week that were 'probable,' including Tom Brady."

On the other side, former NFL coach Bill Parcells was notorious for having the fewest players on the injury list week to week.

If an ACC school does not release an injury report, "there is no punishment," said ACC Associate Commissioner Mike Finn. "It's a guideline, not a policy. We're trying to create a minimum standard for sharing information."

Another former NFL coach, current Mississippi State head coach Sylvester Croom, said having an NFL-style injury report would actually make it easier on coaches.

"It's easy to say 'probable,' 'out,' 'maybe,'" Croom said. "It just cuts how much I've got to say."

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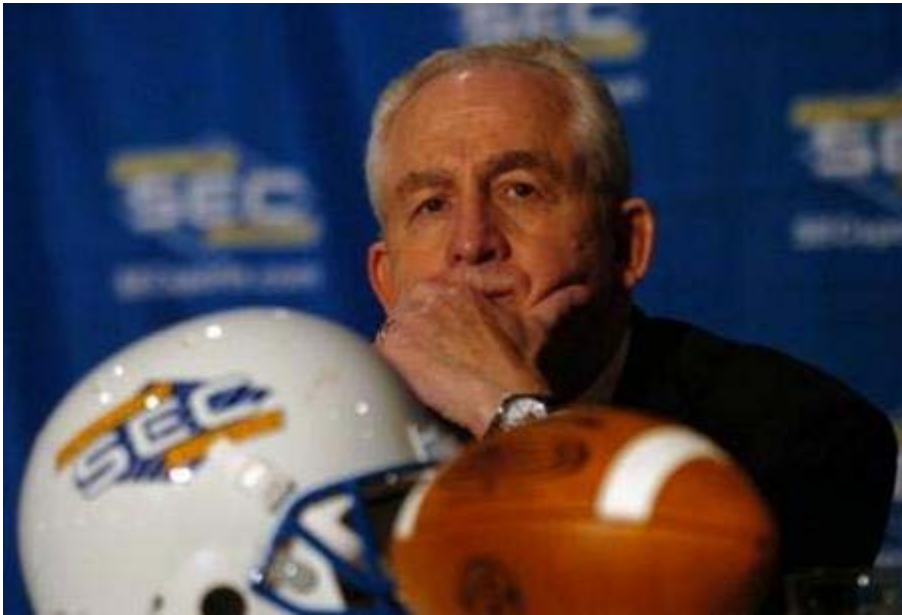
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## The future of the Southeastern Conference

Posted by [rsims](#) July 27, 2008 00:30AM

*This is the eighth and final installment of a year-long, periodic Birmingham News series marking the SEC's 75th anniversary. Today's installment looks at the future of the SEC.*

**The SEC of the future will attempt to capitalize even more on its established brand. But the potential for missteps and new problems looms, because the issues are difficult -- rising athletic costs, academic standards, racial diversity and NCAA compliance, among others.**



Hal Yeager/Birmingham

NewsSoutheastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive prepares to talk to reporters at the Kickoff 2008 event in Hoover last week.

**LIKE A PROUD GRANDFATHER**, the SEC celebrated the end of its 75th anniversary with an extravagant fireworks show in June. The display lit the sky over the Gulf of Mexico in Destin, Fla., as SEC dignitaries dined during the conference's spring meetings.

The wind, though, altered plans. Attendees soon sought shelter while dodging heavy smoke and falling debris that littered their clothes, the hotel pool and an anniversary cake.

As analogies go, the fireworks episode provides a cautionary tale for the SEC. Few conferences, if any, are better positioned for the future than the SEC. But the best-laid plans don't always work out.

The SEC of the future will attempt to capitalize even more on its established brand. But the potential for missteps and new problems looms, because the issues are difficult -- rising athletic costs, academic standards, racial diversity and NCAA compliance, among others.

Of immediate importance is the crucial decision the SEC will soon make on its next set of television contracts. By August, the SEC could decide whether to create its own TV network, as the Big Ten did, or keep a more traditional TV model that would add some new elements.

Eyebrows were raised when the University of Florida recently signed a media rights deal with Fox's Sun Sports for roughly \$10 million over 10 years. Some executives in the television industry wonder if the agreement signals that the SEC will bypass a network this time around.

To have one, the SEC needs to accumulate the media rights for all 12 schools, an issue the Big Ten did not face. SEC schools with significant revenue from local TV deals -- such as Florida, Kentucky, LSU and Tennessee -- might not be interested in a conference network.

SEC Commissioner Mike Slive said Florida's contract with Sun Sports contains a provision stating the agreement is subject to "whatever the conference does or takes," as all SEC schools have in their media-rights deals.

"In the final analysis, it doesn't change whether or not we decide to do a channel or a more traditional TV rights deal," Slive said.

Asked whether schools are willing to allocate their media rights to the SEC for a conference network, Slive replied: "They say, 'Mike, we want to have the most lucrative and most widely distributed television contract in the country.'"



Linda Stelter/Birmingham News

Action from Iron Bowl 2007.

Regardless of which model the SEC chooses, the league stands to make a lot more money. With new TV agreements, the SEC could double its current \$51 million TV revenue without going to a network, according to SportsBusiness Journal.

The SEC's current TV deal generates \$30 million from CBS and \$21 million from ESPN, and the conference is expected to renew with those networks, according to SportsBusiness Journal.

The issue boils down to how much money the SEC can make by creating a network and at what cost for fans to see their favorite team play. The SEC network would receive the lower tier of televised football games, decreasing the availability for fans to see them. Those games are currently shown by Raycom Sports on traditional over-the-air television.

Auburn President Jay Gogue said the network is probably not a good idea if viewed over the first year or two, but is a much better concept when considered over one or two decades.

"Short term, the front-end costs are pretty heavy, so you have to look and see if you can afford to do it," Gogue said. "As you look at it long term, it has a lot of appeal. I'm interested in what's best for the conference and to make our product available to as many people as we possibly can. You don't want to

get into any arrangement where you reduce your product to the consumer."

### **Still need more money**

Generating more revenue is a major issue nationally as the costs of doing business in big-time college athletics continue to increase.

The rising cost of attending college could provide challenges. As public institutions receive fewer public dollars, they are increasing the costs of tuition and housing -- expenses that athletics departments must cover for their athletes.

The result could continue to divide the conference's haves and have-nots. Florida, Georgia, LSU and Tennessee spent on athletics an average of \$79.6 million in 2006-07, compared to \$38.9 million on average for South Carolina, Vanderbilt, Ole Miss and Mississippi State.

"Tuition is the driving force in determining who can remain competitive and who can't," said Larry Templeton, Mississippi State's recently retired athletics director.

"When I came into the SEC in 1987 as AD, the cost for athletic scholarships was \$1,200. The cost this year will hit \$12,000. Are you going to find more revenue? If not, you better cut back a lot of your expenses."

Revenue generated by the conference office is essentially shared equally among the 12 members. There are some exceptions, such as extra money schools receive for TV appearances and bowl games.

"To me, equal revenue distribution is one of the hallmarks of a great league," Slive said. "That's an area we need to retain as we move into the future. There's no reason to think we won't."

Searching for more revenue also comes by establishing new sources. For instance, every SEC member is now under contract with XM Satellite Radio.

The satellite radio rights produced \$227,500 in revenue for the SEC in 2006-07. While that's relatively small change, it does get the SEC's foot in the door on a potentially emerging media market.

The SEC of the future will see distribution of information and pictures in digital form increase. That will surely present challenges between schools and the traditional media as both sides attempt to sell content on the Internet at a time some teams apply greater restrictions on the media's access to players and coaches.

The SEC plans to establish a working group designed to resolve problems between the media and schools.

### **Academic reputation**

Admissions standards within the SEC will continue to be watched closely around the country. A year ago, Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany publicly implied his conference is more ethical and academically minded than the SEC.

"I think there's a tendency for the rest of the country to underestimate the quality of the academic institutions in the Southeastern part of the United States," Slive said.

Outgoing SEC President Andrew Sorensen, who recently retired as South Carolina's president, hopes the

conference's new television deal will improve the SEC's academic reputation nationally.

"The Big Ten has been able to do that very well," Sorensen said. "Our conference is not known for its academic excellence. It's not either/or, and a lot of people think it's mutually exclusive. I think we can do both."

This year, the SEC officially opened an academic consortium that is guided by the provosts of the member universities. The consortium, with headquarters at the University of Arkansas, is designed to share resources and bolster academic teaching and leadership among the 12 schools.

The Big Ten created its well-known academic consortium in 1956. The Big 12 recently started an engineering consortium, and the ACC began sharing academic resources in 1999.

Whether the SEC can stay off NCAA probation will remain a question. Slive, a former attorney, was hired largely to clean up the SEC's image.

Five years ago, he predicted no SEC schools would be on probation by 2008. That didn't happen, due to violations by Arkansas in track and field.

"I don't think it's a coincidence that we're as competitive as we've ever been and we have fewer programs on probation," Slive said. "We put to rest the old theory that if you didn't do it a certain way you couldn't win."

### **Don't expect expansion**

In the years ahead, the SEC will have to monitor any conference realignment around the country. The Big Ten, Pac-10 and Big East are often mentioned as those that could expand and trigger a reaction by other leagues.

During the past 20 years, the SEC added two teams, the ACC added three, the Big Ten brought in an 11th team, and the WAC expanded and contracted and expanded again. Other conferences were created.

The 16-team conference idea, which the SEC studied in the early 1990s, hasn't completely disappeared from discussions about college athletics. Some administrators and writers believe the answers to tight budgets are larger conferences with expanded television reach and geographically sensible divisions that reduce travel and kindle rivalries.

Additional members in the SEC would mean dividing the financial pie even more among the current schools.

"That's difficult. Look at the financial challenges already," Florida Athletics Director Jeremy Foley said. "Obviously, if another league broke off or fell apart for whatever reason, and there were two marquee teams that would enhance your television contracts or your bowl appearances, then that would happen. But I don't foresee that happening. I think expansion in the SEC is done for a long, long time, if not forever."

Diversity figures to remain a challenge for the SEC, which only recently hired blacks for the first time as a head football coach and as an athletics director. Sylvester Croom became the SEC's first black football coach in 2004. Joker Phillips, who is black, was recently named the eventual replacement for Rich Brooks at Kentucky.

"That the appointment of Joker Phillips is not a story is the real story," Slive said. "Because guess what? That's the way things are and that's the way things should be."

For all of the barriers that have been broken, no minority has served as commissioner of any of the nation's top 11 football-playing conferences.

Slive, 68, has two more years remaining on his contract that paid him \$525,000 plus \$1.2 million in deferred compensation in 2006-07. "I'll stay as long as our presidents and ADs think I'm helping the conference make progress," he said.

At some point, the SEC will consider a successor. A top candidate figures to be SEC Executive Associate Commissioner Mark Womack, who now takes on more tasks that reach the desks of SEC presidents and chancellors.

Staying the course might be attractive, especially if Slive leaves the SEC stronger and with calmer winds than when he arrived.

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# D S Simon Vlog Views

Helping the Communications Community Adapt to the Changing Times

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## PR Thought Leader Sabrina Horn

July 25th, 2008

Sabrina Horn, President & CEO of Horn Group, a leading digital communications agency, discusses some of the initiatives she is undertaking at her company, the integration of PR into a more general communications framework and the role that web video plays in her organization.



Some of Sabrina's VlogViews:

"Because of the internet, PR has to become more of a general purpose communications visual medium."

"We are in the business of helping companies deal with change and we don't deal with change very well ourselves sometimes. And so I think as an industry we have to really get ourselves around how PR is changing."

"You're talking about two kinds of business models. An interactive model, which is more projects based and the PR business model, which is more retainer based. And putting those two under the same roof is tricky."

"We see facebook, we see myspace. These are horizontal applications for social networks but, I think we are going to see a massive proliferation of niche, vertically made social networks for specific tribes and groups."

[Horn Group](#)

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## [PR Thought Leader Richard Edelman](#)

July 22nd, 2008

Richard Edelman, President & CEO of Edelman, the world's largest independent Public Relations firm, discusses the future of PR.



Richard Edelman's Three Guiding Principles of PR:

"1. We have to be a global enterprise. So we've made money in the United States and have consistently invested it outside so today we have fifty-one offices around the world."

"2. Public relations is much more than media relations, in fact it's about stakeholder connection."

"3. Trust and transparency. We have to behave in a way so that stakeholders can count on our material as trustworthy and accurate."

[Edelman](#)

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## [Susan Winckler, FDA](#)

July 18th, 2008

Help wanted at the FDA. Susan Winckler, Chief of Staff at the FDA, talks about the 1,300 job openings at the FDA and how they are combating the drop in public trust, in part through a weekly blog by FDA commissioner, Andrew von Eschenbach. Recorded at the exl Pharma communications conference.



Some of Susan's VlogViews:

"We can communicate so much more quickly and we have so much more data at our disposal. Communication and science has led us to know more things and I think that when things are not handled well, it can inspire people to think that things aren't working correctly when really the power to identify an outbreak or identify a problem with a drug shows the success of the industry and not a failure."

"We are hiring about 1,300 folks and some of them are in the communications realm. We need to get better at risk communications and just get better at informing the public what it is we do. In order to be successful, we have to communicate well."

### [Job Postings at the FDA](#)

Check out [Andy's Take](#), the official blog of the FDA commissioner, Andrew von Eschenbach

Search Terms: *Susan Winckler, FDA, job openings, public health*

### **exlPharma Communications Conference Series:**

Michael Rinaldo

Scott Hensley



Gina Moran



Lisa Bodell



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## [Michael Rinaldo on Product Placement](#)

July 18th, 2008

Michael Rinaldo, Senior Vice President, Global Healthcare for Fleishman-Hillard argues for product placement on television for Pharma companies. While the FCC calls for tighter rules on product placement, PR industry thought leader, Michael Rinaldo stakes out a position that Pharma companies should get more involved in this controversial practice. Recorded at the exlPharma Communications Conference.



Some of Michael's VlogViews:

"I think the healthcare companies and the pharmaceutical companies aren't taking enough advantage yet."

"If your telling a public health message, relying only on traditional newspapers, you're not going to get the job done...When you look at the influence of talk shows and entertainment, certain parts of the population especially are tuned in to those very kinds of programs."

"As long as you're putting it through the right filters: Is it done with integrity? Is it done with the patient's best interests in mind? I don't think it's any different from the things we already do."

"Well over sixty percent and even seventy percent of brands on TV shows are tied back to where money has been put on the table."

"If the FCC passed product placement disclosure during the television program, I think it would kill the whole process of what goes on right now on TV and I don't think that creatively, producers would be comfortable with that approach. I would argue that those who are trying to push that forward want to see the whole relationship destroyed."

### [Fleishman-Hillard's Product Placement](#)

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Susan Winckler



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## Adams: Slippery subpoena sparks SEC sideshow

By John Adams

Originally published 10:06 p.m., July 24, 2008

Updated 10:06 p.m., July 24, 2008

HOOVER, Ala. - A media event became a media circus Thursday morning.

Granted, there's a fine line between the two. But you only had to observe the Tennessee and Alabama media scurrying around the Wynfrey Hotel mid-morning to know the line had been crossed.

My introduction to the media frenzy began as I exited Georgia coach Mark Richt's interview session. Another sportswriter informed me that Tennessee coach Phillip Fulmer had been subpoenaed.

Fulmer subpoenaed at SEC football media days? Isn't that story a bit stale?

In 2004, Fulmer was threatened with a subpoena in regard to his testimony to NCAA investigators about Alabama's creative football recruiting. Heeding the advice of his attorney, Fulmer didn't attend the SEC football media days and was fined \$10,000 by the conference office.

He got off easy compared to Alabama, which was hit with a five-year NCAA probation sentence, including a two-year bowl ban.

Alabama's probation sentence has ended. But the legal process seemingly grinds on forever, as evidenced by the latest suit spawned by Alabama collision with the NCAA.

This one is brought to you compliments of Blankenship, Harrelson & Wollitz - a Birmingham law firm dedicated to restoring the reputation and financial well being of used-car dealer Wendell Smith.

Oops. Sorry about the used-car reference, guys. Chris Linton, a clerk with the law firm representing Smith, said their client actually was a wholesale dealer of imported cars.

In NCAA circles, Smith was better known as "a rogue booster," a characterization that stems, in part, from Fulmer's NCAA testimony, according to Smith's attorneys. That seemingly explains their motive for subpoenaing Fulmer "to find out what he knows" in hopes of beating the NCAA in court.

After hearing from both sides by early afternoon, I struggled to decide which made less sense: the law firm's explanation for how and when it served the subpoena or Fulmer's response to questions about the subpoena.

Paraphrasing Fulmer's take: "Subpoena? What subpoena?"

While Fulmer denied any knowledge of the subpoena during the interview sessions, Smith's attorneys described the process in such exquisite detail, I felt as though I were watching it in slow motion.

Fulmer arrived at the Wynfrey Hotel. His car door opened. Attorney Greg Case (an attorney named Case: How good is that?) dropped the subpoena in Fulmer's lap as he extended his legs from the car. As Case walked away, Fulmer picked up the subpoena.

Later in the day, Fulmer acknowledged in a press release that he received a subpoena. He just didn't know what it was at the time. When he exited the car, a stranger threw a piece of paper at him. He picked it up, handed it to UT publicist Bud Ford without looking at it and went on with his day.

Subpoena? What subpoena?

You can't blame Fulmer for trying to avoid the issue at media days. But if he had handled it differently, his credibility wouldn't be in question.

You can blame the attorneys.

Never mind their denials. Their timing couldn't have been more obvious if they had announced it on the hotel marquee.

Linton said his firm had hoped to subpoena Fulmer without any media scrutiny the night before. Its representatives showed up at the hotel and waited outside Shula's Steakhouse in case Fulmer showed up for dinner, he said.

"We were just hoping basically and thinking, 'Shula's is pretty popular with the coaches; if he comes and stays at the hotel, there's a real good chance he will go down (to the restaurant),' " Linton said.

It wouldn't have taken much research to determine that coaches and players often don't stay overnight at media days. Or you could have called the UT Sports Information Office, identified yourself as a Vol fan, and asked when the representatives of your beloved team would arrive in Birmingham. The itinerary wasn't exactly top-secret.

Of course, then you wouldn't have gotten all the media attention.

The media got used. So did the SEC.

But there wasn't much they could do about it.

"Several years ago, we thought it might happen," said Charles Bloom, the SEC's associate commissioner for media. "We were trying to plan on how to deal with it.

"What we came away with is it's a free country, and the judicial process has its points. We couldn't do anything to stop it if it's in a public place."

However, winning the day in the media is nothing like winning in court. My advice to Smith and his dream team: Don't spend the NCAA's money just yet.

The NCAA's investigation of Alabama has fostered three other lawsuits. And not one of the plaintiffs has cashed an NCAA check.

Chasing ambulances is more promising. So is selling cars.

Sports editor John Adams may be reached at 865-342-6284 or [adamsj@knoxnews.com](mailto:adamsj@knoxnews.com).



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## 35+ Examples of Corporate Social Media in Action

July 23, 2008 — 11:38 AM PDT — by Aaron Uhrmacher —

We've discussed some tactics to get your company better engaged with social media. Lest you think there's a limit to how you can connect with business and customer facing audiences, we've assembled this list of more than 35 companies who are experimenting with social media in a host of different ways.

This list is by no means exhaustive, and it represents a wide variety of businesses, industries and social media tools. As you can see, engagement takes many forms. Some are likely to generate more discussions with the company while others might result better connections between customers. Some will fade away over the next 6-12 months while others will continue to grow and evolve.

There are no rules to what form your engagement has to take. Look at your company, identify its strengths, what types of conversations energize employees and determine how you can best grow/shape/build/join your own community.

If you have other examples of corporate social media engagement, please share them in the comments.



### Blendtec

The graphic is a composite image for Blendtec's 'Will It Blend?' campaign. On the left, the text 'Will It BLEND?' is written in large, bold, yellow letters with a red swirl logo above it. Below this, there is a call to action: 'order your totalblender' with a link to order the Total Blender, the same blender used in the 'Will It Blend?' videos. At the bottom left, there are three social media icons: a red 'X' over a home icon labeled 'Don't Try This @ Home', and a green checkmark over a home icon labeled 'Try This @ Home'. On the right, a man in a white lab coat and safety glasses is holding two iPhones. Below him, the text 'iPhone3G Will It Blend?' is visible. At the bottom right, there are two large buttons: one with a red 'X' over a home icon labeled 'DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME', and another with a green checkmark over a home icon labeled 'TRY THIS AT HOME'.

is famous for its bevy of inexpensive “Will It Blend” videos posted on [YouTube](#) and shared by millions.

[Adobe](#) maintains a list of interesting company related websites and conversations on the social bookmarking site Delicious.

[Best Western](#) sponsors a blog, “On the Go with Amy,” where the author travels the country writing about her experiences.

[Cadence](#) recently relaunched its website that now prominently promotes the company’s community.

[Cisco](#) hosts 12 blogs addressing a variety of audiences for their global business.

[Coca-Cola Conversations](#) is a blog written by company historian Phil Mooney that focuses on Coke collectibles.

[Dell](#)



leverages a variety of social media platforms for customer engagement, including an island in the virtual world of Second Life.

[Ford](#) publishes news releases with lots of multimedia content and employs a social media news release format to display them in their newsroom.

[Fujifilm](#) recently launched a social network to build a community of photo enthusiasts around its newest camera.

[GM](#) uses blogs to communicate directly with its customers around topics ranging from design to green tech.

[H&R Block](#) created a Facebook fan site to aggregate its social media activities, engage customers and offer tax advice/resources.

HP used Twitter to power a scavenger hunt at a recent conference.

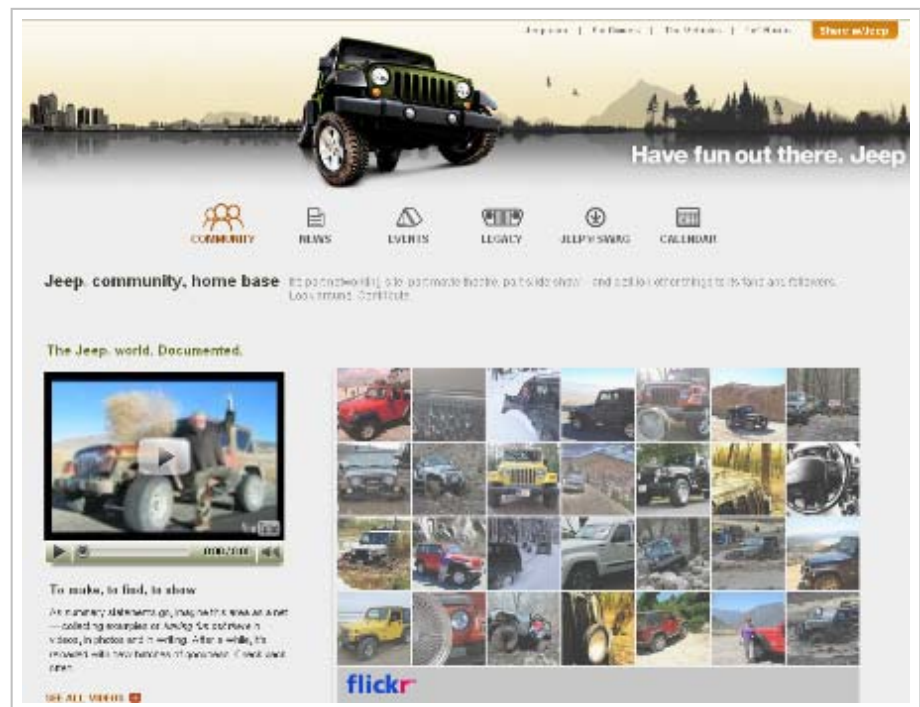
HSBC built the HSBC Business Network to connect entrepreneurs using blogs, videos and forums.

IBM was the first large enterprise to embrace employee blogging and now boasts thousands of blogs related to every facet of its business.

Intel has also developed many social media touch points with its software communities, which includes blogs, Twitter and virtual worlds.

Intuit sponsors the Tax Almanac wiki, where anyone can find and contribute to this resource for tax information.

## Jeep



connects with customers via a community page with links to photos on Flickr, the company's MySpace and Facebook pages and a list enthusiast groups.

JetBlue employs social media as part of its training for JetBlue University, as this video explains.

Johnson & Johnson uses this blog to show another side of the company, with frequent video posts and interviews.

Lenovo launched "Voices of the Olympics Games" to aggregate posts from the athletes competing in Beijing.

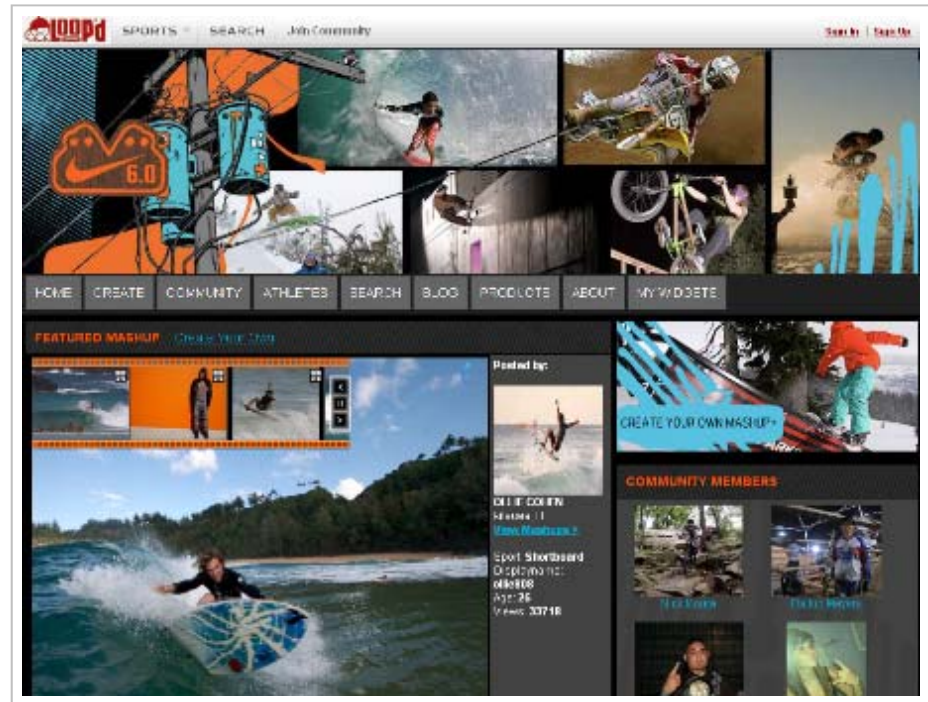
Marriott CEO Bill Marriott posts regular updates and stories from his travels to Marriott properties around the world to fuel the content for this entertaining blog.

McDonalds maintains a blog to highlight the company's corporate social responsibility efforts.

National Geographic uses Google's new virtual world, Lively, to bring people together around its new show, LA Hard Hats.

New York Times is beta testing a Firefox add-on that allows users to share and comment on stories through a decentralized social network.

Nike



started a social community on Loopd to connect athletes interested in surfing, BMX bike racing and similar activities with the brand.

SAP sponsored a global survey of social media professionals to learn more about social media worldwide.

Sears partnered with MTV to create a social network around Back to School shopping.

Southwest Airlines employees share their stories and communicate directly with customers through the "Nuts About Southwest" blog.

Sun CEO Jonathan Schwartz's blog is the example most often cited for what the CEO blog can be.

Starbucks started MyStarbucksIdea so that customers can submit ideas for the company which are then voted on by other users, the best of which will be implemented by the company.

Toyota started its own virtual world to promote its products in Japan (site is in Japanese).

Visa launched The Visa Business Network application on Facebook to connect small business users and to help them promote their businesses to a larger community.

Wells-Fargo



blogs target two audiences; one examines the company's history and the other is for students interested in getting their finances in order.

WWE has a Facebook application , among other social networking tools and widgets, to bring fans closer to the action.

Xerox blogs address several of the company's core B2B constituencies.

Zappos uses Twitter for employees to communicate with Zappos customers about their shared love of footwear.

*[Disclosure: Aaron Uhrmacher works with several Fortune 1000 companies, some of which are included in this list.]*

*Aaron Uhrmacher is a social media consultant at Text 100 Public Relations. In addition to his posts for Mashable, he blogs at: [www.disruptology.com](http://www.disruptology.com) .*

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*Ellen Petry Leanse*

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Good list, thanks. Two I would add: a small telephony company, Ribbit ( [Ribbit.com](http://Ribbit.com) ), that actively twitters, blogs and more with the interested party/developer community...and Whole Foods, whose recent blog post, "We're All A-Twitter," says much about their thinking on social media:

<http://blog.wholefoodsmarket.com/2008/07/we%e2%80%99re-all-a-twitter/>

Thanks for pulling these thoughts together.

Ellen Petry Leanse

<http://twitter.com/chep2m>

*jcunwired*

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## Programs dealing with off-the-field trouble

By Christopher Walsh, Sports Writer

Published: Sunday, July 27, 2008 at 3:30 a.m.

Last Modified: Saturday, July 26, 2008 at 10:45 p.m.

HOOVER | It was a day that Vanderbilt University's George Smith will never forget, and not just because earlier in the afternoon the wide receiver caught his first touchdown pass for the Commodores.



Staff file photo

GETTING INTO TROUBLE

**Jimmy Johns**

(above) Arrested for possession, selling cocaine. The Alabama linebacker was kicked off the team.

**Ryan Perrilloux, LSU**

Suspended for: Trying to use a false ID; involvement in off-campus brawl; violation of team rules. The LSU quarterback was dismissed from the team.

**Freddie Fairchild, Arkansas**

Charged with misdemeanor battery and false imprisonment of a woman. The Arkansas linebacker was dismissed from the team.

**Michael Lemon, Georgia**

**Faces felony charges of aggravated battery. The Georgia sophomore DE was kicked off the team.**

**It was Sept. 24, 2005, and Smith was in an on-campus dorm when a fight broke out including some non-students. While trying to break it up and help usher the visitors into an elevator, one shot him with a pistol in the arm, where some fragments are still scattered.**

**He was lucky, in some ways again. There was no serious damage, Smith missed only two games and continued down the path that now has him as the heart of this year's team. But around the country, people didn't give another college football player being named in a police report a second thought, even if it was mostly a case of wrong place, wrong time.**

**'A lot of guys get themselves into bad situations, it's not always their fault,' Smith said. 'Sometimes you have to realize that you need to surround yourself with people who are going to take care of you. You have to be careful.'**

**'We have a gift. We're playing on a collegiate scholarship. I just pray that guys don't try and abuse that gift, abuse their situation.'**

**For many college football programs this past offseason was a particularly long one, with the overall list of off-field transgressions running the full gamut of charges, including alcohol-related incidents, assault, weapons and drugs. Many days, there were multiple reports from around the country.**

**Take Friday for example. Reports out of Kentucky indicated that junior quarterback Curtis Pulley, who's expected to compete for the starting job this season, was charged last month for marijuana possession, and arrested last week for multiple traffic violations.**

**Wisconsin announced that running back Lance Smith has been suspended from the team. He had been arrested last July following an incident with his girlfriend, and pled guilty to misdemeanor charges of battery and disorderly conduct.**

**In Iowa, the mother of an alleged sexual assault victim released a letter she sent to school officials, claiming they had ignored her daughter when she was harassed after reporting the attack. Former players Cedric Everson and Abe Satterfield go to trial Nov. 3.**

**Add another 24 hours and there's another set of stories. Just another day in college football, and, apparently, a sign of the times.**

**'People grow up different,' Alabama coach Nick Saban said. 'It's an instant coffee, instant tea, instant self gratification. Everything is on the Internet. Everything is a picture. Everything is fast. Everything is quick. There's not the same long-term commitment to something and sticking with it and learning from your mistakes. Very few of the things that our young people do now, do they get consequences for?'**

**'You know, we played checkers when we were growing up, and when you moved the wrong guy, you lost your guy, you got immediate positive or negative self gratification for it and you learn from that. My kids push the restart button. They don't even know if they got blown up. I mean so it's different.'**

Consequently, no program can be considered exempt. Among SEC schools Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee, LSU and Mississippi State have all had recent incidents and/or dismissals, including the defending national champions kicking starting quarterback Ryan Perrilloux off the team.

'Any time you get rid of a student athlete, it's not something that you enjoy,' LSU coach Les Miles said. 'You don't look necessarily at the real positives. I certainly wish him the very best and hope that he takes this lesson and goes on.'

Georgia sophomore defensive end Michael Lemon was dismissed after facing felony charges aggravated battery. He was the seventh Bulldog to be arrested this calendar year.

Arkansas linebacker Freddie Fairchild was dismissed after being charged with misdemeanor battery and false imprisonment of a woman. The Razorbacks were also stung by former standout Matt Jones, a receiver with the Jacksonville Jaguars, being arrested for felony drug possession.

Mississippi State left tackle Michael Brown was one of two players dismissed for firing guns on campus in March.

'That entire situation, I hope we've learned from that,' MSU coach Sylvester Croom said. 'Mike Brown is an excellent person. I think Mike was on the Dean's list the previous semester, an excellent student. In the spur of a moment, he made a bad decision. That's what we get our players to understand. I'm not making excuses, let's make sure you understand that.'

'There were things that myself and my teammates did in college that if these guys did them today, it would be horrifying. But the public has so much access to what goes on so much quicker, that a guy in a split second can change his entire course of his life just by a decision that he makes.'

Of course, Alabama still has an emotional black eye over the arrest of linebacker Jimmy Johns, the former Mr. Football in Mississippi, for allegedly selling cocaine. He was the tenth Crimson Tide player (including walk-ons) arrested since Saban arrived in Jan. 2007.

'Everybody has consequences for their actions,' said Crimson Tide safety, and co-captain, Rashad Johnson, who himself was arrested during the offseason (the charges have since been dismissed). 'We took it and moved on. We're not trying to dwell on the past.'

'We're still trying to get guys to do the right things.'

Thesis papers could be written on this subject, but coaches point out that even though they make more money than ever before their hands are still tied at times by the NCAA, with limited access to players during the offseason.

Like teachers, coaches can say be mindful all they want, but that doesn't mean the message gets through, or that incidents won't happen.

'They talk to us all the time about doing the right thing, doing this, doing that, not being in the wrong place at the wrong time,' Mississippi State linebacker Jamar Cheney said. 'That's just how it is.'

So the coaches have to rely on preaching self-responsibility and recruiting – which is a always a

**challenge considering the game's win-at-all-costs mentality.**

**'We don't thrive on other people's misfortunes,' Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville said. 'You gotta sell your own program. As I tell our fans and our football team, you know, if you start worrying about other people, then you're not gonna do your job.'**

**'Philosophically, we are there to help players,' Saban said. 'You know, we're gonna take every player and try to get him to reach his full potential. Everybody has a responsibility and an obligation for their own self-determination, but we're there to support and help those players to do that. That's our philosophy.'**

**However, one rarely hears about things on the flip side. Like Vanderbilt safety Reshard Langford working with inner-city kids at the Martha O'Brien Center in Nashville, or even Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow's mission work abroad.**

**Granted, Tebow might talk about it, but there haven't been too many reporters on hand during his visits to places like Thailand and the Philippines.**

**'Yeah, we know you're great in football, but take that greatness, your platform, use it to influence other people,' Tebow said. 'Use it for good. I think that's definitely something that our team has really picked up on. We got guys going to the hospitals and doing all kinds of things and really giving up a lot of their free time, changing people's lives. That's much more important than football. Sometimes it's hard for people to see because football becomes people's world. It's everything. And then they can't even see outside of it.'**

**'You know, there's a lot of leaders out there. But, unfortunately, there aren't a lot of good ones.'**

**Smith may have been the real story of SEC Media Days, but hardly drew a crowd when it was his turn to talk. In addition to being shot, as a freshman in 2004 he was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a rare neurological disease that nearly took his life.**

**'It's an inflammation of the spinal cord,' Smith said. 'It shut down my whole nervous system. I was in ICU for a month and a half. Lost 30 pounds. For a while, I was preparing for the next step in life.'**

**Many people who are diagnosed don't recover or walk again. It began with some tingling and within a couple of days his whole left side was numb.**

**Smith keeps photos of himself fighting for his life in the hospital on his cell phone.**

**'I try and remind myself at least once a week, look at the pictures, especially as we get closer to the season,' he said. 'I try and remind myself how far I've come, how much I've worked, be a leader on this team and do better.'**

**'Day in, day out, don't take anything for granted.'**

**Like being named a team co-captain for the upcoming season.**

**'It's part of the responsibility of being a collegiate athlete,' he said. 'You're a role model for kids and a lot of fans out there.'**