BenFred: Mizzou's lack of leadership apparent in Wren Baker limbo
By Ben Frederickson St. Louis Post-Dispatch

If there’s a crisis within the University of Missouri athletics department today, who’s in charge?

That question went unanswered Wednesday.

Former athletics director Mack Rhoades is two weeks into his Baylor debut.

Soon to be former interim athletics director Wren Baker didn’t return a voicemail.

The voice that answered the phone at the office of interim chancellor Hank Foley said Foley was not only out of the office, but on vacation.

A spokesman for the athletics department referred the Post-Dispatch to a spokesman for the university, and that call was not returned before the paper you’re reading went to press.

Baker’s hiring as athletics director at North Texas will be approved during a teleconference of UNT regents on Friday, according to the Denton Record-Chronicle. ESPN, FootballScoop.com and CollegeAD.com (believe it or not there is an entire website dedicated to the comings and goings of athletics departments) have reported the same. This wasn’t really a bolt out of the blue. Baker was reported to be a North Texas finalist on Tuesday. Yet Mizzou is still telling people with questions to contact North Texas.
Who’s the boss?

Crickets are chirping at Jesse Hall.

It’s not a hard question, really. Perhaps the university has some sort of contingency plan in place. But an inability to provide coaches, student athletes, boosters, fans and taxpayers with some sort of answer has become the latest example of a worrisome lack of leadership on the CoMo campus.

Baker seemed like a sensible interim choice after Rhoades bolted. He had set deeper roots than his boss during his short time at the school. But by leaving the ship he agreed to steer for a while, he leaves Mizzou with egg on its face once again. The most important condition for the interim position should have been that the person wouldn’t do this.

Most figured the man Rhoades hired from Memphis to be his deputy director of athletics would get a serious shot at losing his interim tag. He either determined that wasn’t the case, decided he didn’t want to pass on North Texas while waiting to find out, or simply didn’t want to be at Mizzou.

Baker’s decision isn’t nearly as big of a head-scratcher as Rhoades’. If he wasn’t going to replace Rhoades full-time, this is a step up. There was no guarantee a new AD would keep him around, after all. He’s an Oklahoman with a wife from northern Texas. It makes sense. Mizzou’s lack of response makes none.

University leadership is in a tough spot, with an interim system president and chancellor. That said, some fixes are pretty obvious. If Baker has interviewed for the North Texas job and is awaiting his introduction in Denton, he’s probably not giving his undivided attention to Mizzou, right? But nothing has been done.

Baker is either your interim athletics director, or he’s not. No offense to Baker, but the job he’s departing doesn’t really owe him the courtesy of letting him finish his North
Texas vetting process before replacing him. Letting a situation like this linger suggests no one in a position of power seems to realize how ridiculous it looks.

Perhaps Tigers football coach Barry Odom can stop recruiting and spend some time helping Baker load his U-Haul. Basketball coach Kim Anderson can’t, because he’s preparing to take his team on an exhibition trip to Italy, the kind of tour that might need the oversight of someone who isn’t preparing a speech for his introduction elsewhere. New baseball coach Steve Bieser might have some empty boxes left over from his move, though he probably wants to hold on to them until he finds out the name of his next boss.

Imagine the discussions taking place between these coaches and others.

By now, Foley should have thanked Baker for his services and named an interim athletics director who isn’t looking to leave. Longtime members of the department include executive associate AD and senior woman administrator Sarah Reesman, executive associate AD Tim Hickman and executive associate AD Bryan Maggard. Once that’s taken care of, circle the wagons and resume the search for an AD who welcomes the challenge of working to stabilize Mizzou. Here’s hoping Foley’s vacation includes canvassing the country to interview loyal candidates.

Two weeks ago, Baker told the Post-Dispatch about his fundraising initiatives and his plan to move Mizzou forward until a permanent athletics director was announced. Many thought he would wind up with the job. “I’m not built to sit around in neutral or tread water,” he said. Clearly not. His plan changed. His bosses at Mizzou seem to lack one.

All signs point toward Baker taking off.

The deafening silence from the place he’s leaving makes one wonder if anyone else is home.
How menopause 'crushes your motivation to exercise': Brain changes mean 'many women feel less pleasure and reward from their workout in later life'

Generated from News Bureau press release: “Deactivation of Brain Receptors in Postmenopausal Women May Lead to Lack of Physical Activity”

For many women, working out is completely different after menopause hits. They feel lethargic, unmotivated, and don't get the same buzz from a run or a zumba class as they did before.

But scientists have struggled to offer a specific reason for this, aside from general hormonal changes.

Now, however, a team at the University of Missouri has identified a link between ovarian hormones and dopamine levels in the brain, which make exercise feel so good.

It could signal the start of new research to help women treat overwhelming lethargy and improve their motivation to stay active.

'Postmenopausal women are more susceptible to weight gain and health issues,' said Dr Victoria Vieira-Potter, who specializes in nutrition and exercise physiology at MU. 'This is especially frustrating for women, who already are dealing with significant changes to their bodies.

'We found that the decrease in physical activity that leads to weight gain may be caused by changes in brain activity.'

The menopause, which tends to strike by the early 50s, can cause mood swings, depression and anxiety.

In many cases, it affects a woman's drive to move, and many women gain weight during this time.

To examine this side effect, Dr Vieira-Potter's study tracked the physical activity of rats - some that were physically fit and some that were not. First they monitored their fitness levels and the level of activity in the pleasure center of their brains. Then they removed their ovaries to mimic the effects of menopause, when women stop producing estrogen in such significant quantities. Both groups - no matter how physically active they were before - showed dramatic reductions in their motivation to run on a running wheel.
All of the rats also experienced a drop in the amount of dopamine in the pleasure center of their brain. It suggests the hormonal changes experienced during menopause could impact on the brain, and that could be the process that hampers physical activity.

'We found that in both groups of rats, the hormonal changes from menopause led to changes in the brain that translated to less physical activity,' Dr Vieira-Potter said. 'The findings confirm previous evidence in humans and rodents that weight gain that occurs after menopause is likely due to decreased overall physical activity rather than increased energy intake from diet. Understanding what is causing the decrease in activity and subsequent weight gain may allow us to intervene, possibly by activating dopamine receptors, to preserve the motivation to be physically active.'

Protein in breast milk protects fragile preemies

A manufactured form of lactoferrin, a naturally occurring protein in breast milk, can help protect premature infants from a type of staph infection, report researchers.

Full-term babies receive natural protection from their mothers that helps them fight off dangerous infections. However, babies born prematurely lack protective intestinal bacteria and often are unable to be nursed, causing their infection-fighting capabilities to be underdeveloped.

“Babies born with low levels of protective intestinal bacteria are at an increased risk of devastating and sometimes deadly infections,” says Michael Sherman, professor emeritus in the department of child health at the University of Missouri School of Medicine and lead author of the study.
“Our study found that giving very-low-birth-weight premature infants a manufactured form of lactoferrin can virtually eliminate the germ that causes a staph infection known as staphylococcus epidermidis.”

The researchers studied the immune systems of 120 premature infants in the neonatal intensive care units at the University of Missouri Women’s and Children’s Hospital and the University of Southern California Children’s Hospital Los Angeles between July 2009 and January 2012. Infants in the trial weighed between 1 pound, 10 ounces, and 3 pounds, 4 ounces, at birth. Sixty of the infants received lactoferrin via a feeding tube twice a day for 28 days to simulate receiving mother’s milk while nursing.

To understand the protein’s role in the development of protective intestinal bacteria, the researchers examined fecal matter of the infants. The researchers found that germs responsible for the colonization of staph infection were virtually eliminated in the newborns who received lactoferrin.

“These germs are the most common cause of in-hospital bloodstream infections in premature babies, causing up to 50 percent of infections,” Sherman says. “As physicians, we’ve had limited knowledge of how lactoferrin affects the development of protective intestinal bacteria. Our study shows that it can modify germs in the bowel of infants, and those germs can protect premature babies from staph infections.”

As part of the study, patients received lactoferrin at no cost. According to Sherman, lactoferrin can cost an estimated $25 to $500 per dose, though an infection can extend an infant’s hospital stay by 10 to 14 days at a cost of $40,000 to $56,000.

Though it is too early to recommend lactoferrin as a standard treatment protocol in NICUs across the country, the researchers say more research could shed light on its role in preventing infections.

“These vulnerable babies need all the support they can get to fight off infections,” Sherman says. “Our results justify the need for a large-scale trial of lactoferrin, as well as its counterpart derived from cow milk, bovine lactoferrin.”

The study appears in the Journal of Pediatrics. The National Institutes of Health and the Gerber Foundation supported the work. The authors received an honorarium to serve as members of the Mead Johnson Pediatric Institute Bioactive Expert Panel to write the manuscript. The sponsor had no involvement in preparing the manuscript, and the authors are entirely and exclusively responsible for its content.

Additional researchers contributed from the University of Missouri’s Sinclair School of Nursing; Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children in Honolulu, Hawaii; and Prolacta in Los Angeles and University of California, Los Angeles.
Food industry, which opposed GMO labeling, now embraces it

By David Nicklaus St. Louis Post-Dispatch

It’s funny how political winds can shift.

Congress has passed a law requiring mandatory disclosure of genetically modified food ingredients, something the food and agriculture industries have long opposed. Big Food, however, seems overjoyed, while groups that pushed for a labeling law are expressing disappointment.

Just Label It, an advocacy group backed by organic food producers, says the bill passed two weeks ago is filled with loopholes and “falls short of what consumers rightly expect.”

The group is especially angry about a provision that lets food companies disclose their genetically modified ingredients by printing a QR code, which is readable by a smartphone. It would direct consumers to a website with the ingredient information.

For the anti-GMO crowd, that amounts to hiding the information where most people will never see it.

The food industry likes the flexibility. Pamela Bailey, chief executive of the Grocery Manufacturers Association, called the bill “the right solution to increase disclosure of information that consumers are seeking without stigmatizing a safe technology.”

Companies also are pleased that the bill, which awaits President Barack Obama’s signature, would invalidate a stricter Vermont law. Their biggest nightmare was having to comply with a patchwork of state labeling requirements.

Monsanto CEO Hugh Grant said in a statement that the national law “provides certainty for farmers, consumers and anyone involved in how food is produced, marketed and sold.”

That certainty comes at a cost. Companies will have to redesign their labels, and they’ll have to worry about how consumers might react to the new information.

“A huge portion of the population is not concerned about GMOs,” says Carmen Bain, an assistant professor of sociology at Iowa State University. “There is a small but important
segment of consumers who are. If you’re a food company and margins are low or growth is flat, you care about that segment.”

Hershey, for example, said last year that it will stop buying sugar made from beets, most of which are grown from genetically modified seed. If that fact has to be noted on product labels, more candy companies may follow Hershey’s lead.

Also uncertain is how activist groups will change their tactics. Bain thinks they may target companies that rely on the QR codes, accusing them of trying to hide important information.

So far, the food industry isn’t complaining about the cost of implementing the new law. “I think there is going to be a cost, but I don’t think it’s going to be an overbearing cost,” says Joe Parcell, professor of agricultural economics at the University of Missouri.

Printing the words “partially produced with genetic engineering” doesn’t cost much. Nor does developing a QR code and accompanying website, but a company could spend millions of dollars if it decides to revamp its supply chain to avoid genetically modified ingredients.

Companies that do so may also be exposing themselves to legal liability. The new law doesn’t authorize any specific fines for labeling violations, but food companies should expect anti-GMO groups to run tests and sue over anything that looks like a misstatement.

Those activists may be complaining about the law now, but Bruce Chassy, emeritus professor of food science and nutrition at the University of Illinois, thinks they have just won a major victory.

“It drives companies to go organic and puts people on the defensive about a perfectly safe technology,” said Chassy, who has been a longtime advocate of GMOs. “They have to say for public consumption that they don’t like the bill, but I think they’re laughing up their sleeves.”

Former athletics director Mike Alden talks state of Mizzou Athletics

Alden: “Missourians expect that; they want to see their athletic director in their community.”

Families, friends and former coaches gathered Thursday at Hickman High School, the alma mater of Missouri wrestler J’den Cox, and there, clad in gold, was former athletic director Mike Alden.
Alden, who now is an associate teaching professor in the Department of Educational, School & Counseling Psychology at Missouri, said he got a call Thursday morning from Cathy Cox, J’den’s mom, asking him to come out. Alden said he had some events planned but canceled them because of how much he admires Cox’s family.

Alden held the Tigers’ athletics chair for 17 years, so he spoke to reporters on Thursday about Cox, first-year football coach Barry Odom and the athletics director position. Here’s what he had to say:

**On the joy Alden takes in seeing the athlete and person Cox has come to be…**

**Mike Alden:** I think when you have the opportunity to observe a young man like J’den Cox, you know there’s so much more to him than simply one of the best wrestlers in the world. His character and the way that he conducts himself in the community and throughout the world is something I think all of us can expect, admire and learn from.

**On what interaction was like with Cox when Alden was the athletic director…**

**MA:** I knew J’den when he was in high school. During the recruiting process with Cathy and his dad, I had an opportunity to spend quite a bit of time with him, and I’ve watched J’den grow up in Columbia, Missouri. To be able to watch him grow as a young man, to mature in his faith, to mature in his academic pursuits — it’s been exciting and humbling for me, just to be able to watch that and how proud all of us are of the way he represents our community.

**On his reaction to the news of former athletics director Mack Rhoades leaving and the reports that former deputy athletic director and current interim athletic director Wren Baker, too, is on his way out…**

**MA:** You become surprised when those types of things take place, and certainly you want to take a look at the longevity and continuing to have things move forward and in a positive direction. However, those kinds of things take place. People make decisions for whatever reasons, but the one thing that gives me confidence on what we’re doing in the athletic program at Mizzou is a certain layer of folks that continue to work hard each and every day and are doing great things with regards to the athletic program. So, as the institution goes out and identifies the next athletic director, your confidence comes from the infrastructure that you already have in place that’s been there for quite some time that’s going to continue to move the ship forward. However, you got to find stability and we’ll be able to do that. Mizzou is going to attract an outstanding candidate, I’m sure of it, and I know I look forward to the next step.

**On the possibility of being the interim athletics director and people throwing this name out on Twitter…**

**MA:** It’s flattering when people [mention your name in part of these things]. You know, maybe we had done quite a few things in a positive way, but for me, my focus is what we’re trying to do in the College of Education and with international engagement. However, any opportunity that I
get, if someone has some questions or I can be of assistance, I’m always there for them. Mizzou
knows that we love the institution, so I try to be as supportive as I can in whatever way I can.

On what Barry Odom has done thus far and what he’s going to do....

**MA:** I believe Barry Odom is a heck of a football coach and is going to be a great football coach
for Mizzou. I’ve known him since he was a junior in college and I really like the way I’m
watching Barry put his stamp on the program. Not only from his staff that he’s been able to
develop, but certainly from a programmatic standpoint, from an impression standpoint, from a
recruiting standpoint — I think he’s doing a lot of really solid things. He’s built off the successes
that we’ve had and is adding his stamp to it and his mark on it, which you need to do. So, I think
step-by-step he’s going to continue to build this program into one that is very successful. We had
a lot of success under his predecessor and I believe that Barry, over the course of some time, is
going to deliver some real exciting results.

On what he thinks are the important traits for the new athletic director to be successful...

**MA:** There’s a number of important traits. There are three: One is that you have to be connected
with people throughout the state of Missouri. Missourians expect that; they want to see their
athletic director in their community. They want to make sure that person is visible and doing a
variety of things. A second characteristic is you want to look at someone who has great
mentoring capabilities to be able to grow and develop the staff to be outstanding in everything
they’re trying to do and that they can overachieve — no different than a coach doing that with
their student-athletes. And then finally, you want to identify that athletic director that truly wants
to be at Mizzou. This is a destination spot, it really is. It’s an SEC job, a great institution, a great
job and everything in the state of Missouri centers around Mizzou, so those three things are
critical.

On what a deep run in these Olympics for Cox could do for the overall face of Mizzou
Athletics...

**MA:** I think it’s immeasurable, what this already is going to be doing for the University of
Missouri. When you see Mizzou on the world stage through the window of an outstanding
wrestler and person like J’den Cox, that immediately is bringing a great value added component
to our institution. As he gets exposure meeting people throughout the world, as an advertising
vehicle and a connection vehicle, I think it’s going to be exponentially exciting to see what he
can do not only for Mizzou but for our community and for our state. He’s an example of what
we’re all trying to accomplish here, and it gives us a chance to have a lot of people connect with
what we’re trying to do at Mizzou in a positive way.