

November 21, 2011

Craig Pirrong juxtaposes Solyndra and Keystone.

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On the other hand: Using every regulatory power available to stymie the investment of private capital freely provided in economically viable projects that will produce large amounts of energy now and into the future, pursuant to highly speculative—and dubious—theories about the environmental impact of these projects.

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Charles Krauthammer writes on pipeline politics.

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It’s hard to think of a more clear-cut case of putting politics over nation. This from a president whose central campaign theme is that Republicans put party over nation, sacrificing country to crass political ends.

Nor is this the first time Obama’s election calendar trumped the national interest:

- *Obama’s decision to wind down the Afghan surge in September 2012 is militarily inexplicable. It comes during the fighting season. It was recommended by none of his military commanders. It is explicable only as a talking point for the final days of his reelection campaign.*
- *At the height of the debt-ceiling debate last July, Obama pledged to veto any agreement that was not long-term. Definition of long term? By another amazing coincidence, any deal large enough to get him past Election Day (and thus avoid another such crisis next year). ...*

More on the misplaced pipeline priorities of this president from [Daniel Henninger](#). *The decision by the Obama administration to "delay" building the Keystone XL pipeline is a watershed moment in American politics. The implication of a policy choice rarely gets more stark than this. Put simply: Why should any blue-collar worker who isn't hooked for life to a public budget vote for Barack Obama next year?*

The Keystone XL pipeline would have created at least 20,000 direct and indirect jobs. Much of this would have been well-paid work for craftsmen, not jobs as hod carriers to repave the Interstate.

On a recent trip to Omaha, Neb., Mr. Obama signaled where his head was on the pipeline during a TV interview: "Folks in Nebraska, like folks all across the country, aren't going to say to themselves, 'We're going to take a few thousand jobs if it means our kids are potentially drinking water that would damage their health.'" Imagine if he'd been leading a wagon train of workers and farmers across the Western frontier in 1850.

Within days of the Keystone decision, Canada's prime minister, Stephen Harper, said his country would divert sales of the Keystone-intended oil to Asia. Translation: Those lost American blue-collar pipeline jobs are disappearing into the Asian sun. Incidentally, Mr. Harper has said he wants to turn Canada into an energy "superpower," exploiting its oil, gas and hydroelectric resources. Meanwhile, the American president shores up his environmental base in Hollywood and on campus. Perhaps our blue-collar work force should consider emigrating to Canada.

Recall as well the president's gut reaction in 2010 to the BP Gulf oil spill: an order shutting down deep-water drilling in U.S. waters. The effect on blue-collar workers in that industry was devastating. ...

[Neal Boortz](#) weighs in too.

Barack Obama has taken to micro-managing our economy by picking the winners and losers. Not only has he chosen "green energy" but he has selected which companies within the industry will benefit from Obama's piggy bank. And it turns out that if you wanted a piece of the government's green energy piggy bank, you would have better luck if you had ... donated to Barack Obama's campaign!

A new list of green energy loans doled out by the Obama administration reveals that 80% of the \$20.5 billion in energy department loans [went to Obama's top donors](#). Don't you think that this is just a bit strange? This, my friends, is what you would call crony capitalism – using someone else's money (the tax payers) to reward personal relationships (in this case, for political gain). ...

It was two weeks ago when we ran a piece on LSU football. WSJ has another. This time on **[Brad Wing the improbable freshman punter from Australia](#)** who is on his way to becoming a college football legend.

Brad Wing is king of the campus at LSU.

Classmates wear T-shirts that allude to his "swag." Posters of his infamous 44-yard run against Florida, during which he drew a penalty flag for spreading his arms like an airplane, adorn

storefront windows. Just this week, he hit Facebook's 5,000-friend limit and had no choice but to start his own "fan" page.

None of this should be terribly surprising. Wing, after all, plays football for the No. 1-ranked Tigers. But here's the weird part: He's the punter.

While LSU has emerged as the national-title favorite because of its merciless defense, Wing—a 20-year-old from Australia with an unorthodox style—has played an enormous role. He's helped produce arguably the most staggering statistic in college football this season: LSU's opponents have totaled a mere seven return yards on his 39 punts. In other words, against LSU, teams can expect to gain about six inches each time Wing boots a punt.

It isn't sexy, but this is the sort of edge that can separate a national-title contender from an also-ran, particularly in the brutally tough Southeastern Conference, whose teams have won the last five national championships. Every elite SEC team recruits powerful linemen and athletic running backs and receivers. Punters? Not such a priority.

But when it comes to field position, no player has a greater impact—and more coaches appear to be coming to that realization. Wing is Exhibit A. ...

Here's more on Brad Wing from [Sports Illustrated](#). "After all the buildup, Game of Century decided by ... kickers."

... After all that buildup and all that pounding, the two best defenses in the country nullified two decent offenses. In the end, a 5-foot-11, 183-pound walk-on kicker and an Australian punter decided a game contested -- for the most part -- by 300-pound men beating the stuffing out of one another. Alleman made three short kicks (19, 30 and 25 yards), while his Alabama counterparts, Cade Foster and Jeremy Shelley, failed to score on four of six kicks. One was blocked, and the average distance of the three misses was 48.7 yards. Meanwhile, Wing, the former Australian rules football player best known prior to Saturday for having a trick-play touchdown against Florida called back for taunting, was LSU's most valuable player. He pinned Alabama inside its own five-yard line twice, and he crushed a 73-yarder that flipped the field in the fourth quarter at a point when the exhausted Tigers defense probably couldn't have defended a short field.

Alleman and Wing would like the world to know that they were all for a fake at the end of the first half -- which is probably why they kick and don't coach. Wing said the conversation with Miles was more motivational and less tactical. "If he'd [asked about a fake], we would have said yes," Wing said. "We would have done something stupid." Miles, in spite of his reputation for brass calls, chose the sure points. ...

... When the teams went to overtime, it seemed pretty clear the end zone was off-limits. Montgomery's third-down sack of AJ McCarron forced Foster to kick a brutal 52-yarder into the wind. The kick died short of the crossbar. "It just came down to who executed on the chances they had," Alabama linebacker Courtney Upshaw said. "They did."

On the Tigers' possession, LSU's offense finally moved the ball a little. Michael Ford took the Tigers to the seven-yard line on an option pitch. Everything Alleman visualized was about to

come true. Miles, Mr. Play-It-Safe, called for the field goal on third down. That way, if the snap went awry, Wing could fall on it and the Tigers could try again.

Just before he called for the snap, Wing looked back at Alleman. "You ready to go?" Wing asked. "You know it," Alleman answered.

Snap. Hold. Kick. Celebration.

Daniel Hamermesh explains how economics can be fun. There is a lot more than this example, but you must follow the link.

Is economics actually fun?

Oh gosh, yes! Of course it's fun. Partly because it's relevant, but partly because there are an awful lot of things that are basically just fun stories. I wrote a book, [Economics is Everywhere](#), which contains stories from my life and things I see, designed to illustrate economic ideas. Some of them are just hilarious. And it's not just me, whose humour is sort of weird, I admit. Almost anyone can read them and get a good laugh out of them, while learning something. And that's the best way to teach, I think.

Can you give me your favourite example?

I have lots of favourites! It's like choosing among my children. How off-colour are you allowed to be on this?

It's completely up to you.

Every year 500 students in my introductory economics class have to write a story like the ones in my book. Last year one student wrote that it was three in the morning on a Sunday, and she was in the dormitory lounge having been "sexiled". Her roommate had thrown her out of the room, for reasons that are implicit in that term. She argued that this was a wonderful example of what we call "externalities" – her roommate and the roommate's boyfriend were making so much noise it was impossible to sleep there. Moreover, they were also disturbing people down the hall, because the walls are so thin. There's also the question of who owns the rights to the room – this is called an issue of "property rights". So what the girl illustrated was both the concept of an externality, and the notion of property rights in a very cute way. I thought that was a winner. It's not the best, but it's well up there. The top 10 each year out of the 500 get extra credit, and I steal a few stories for my book too, with full credit to them. ...

Streetwise Professor

[Energy in the Executive Stymies Energy In America](#)

by Craig Pirrong

The last 10 days have seen events that illustrate the idiotic alpha and omega of the Obama administration's energy policy. These tell you everything you need to know about its complete inversion of priorities, and its utter incomprehension of how energy, markets, and government work—or don't.

On the one hand, there is the Congressional testimony of Energy Secretary Steven Chu defending the \$500 million plus Solyndra debacle, [news about a Kennedy company with equally illusory prospects](#) receiving a federal loan guarantee almost three times as large, and [reports that 80 percent of Department of Energy “green energy” loans went to Obama donors](#).

On the other, there is the administration’s delay in approving the Keystone XL pipeline, and yesterday’s announcement that the USDA was imposing a six month delay on auctioning shale gas properties in the Wayne National Forest in Ohio to further “study” the surface impacts of hydraulic fracking.

Note the contrast.

On the one hand: An unshakable commitment to throw vast sums of money extracted by coercion from American citizens at delusional, patently uneconomic projects that will produce little energy, and which just oh-so-coincidentally (It is a coincidence! Really! Chu says so!) happen to be owned by Obama donors.

On the other hand: Using every regulatory power available to stymie the investment of private capital freely provided in economically viable projects that will produce large amounts of energy now and into the future, pursuant to highly speculative—and dubious—theories about the environmental impact of these projects.

The mental vacuum in which these environmental impacts are conceived is beyond belief. Are trade-offs considered? Surely you jest. In the case of Keystone, for instance, the administration did not give the slightest inkling that it had considered the George Bailey question: What would happen if Keystone was not born? Would there be a greater reliance on the use of seaborne oil transportation, which is far more environmentally risky than pipeline transport? Would it result in greater off-shore oil production in the Gulf? (You’d think that the Mocondo experience would make that a particularly salient issue to an allegedly environmentalist administration. You’d be wrong.) Would it result in the building of a pipeline in other environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., the Canadian Rockies), over which the oil would be transported and *then* put on environmentally riskier tankers?

In other words, lavishing billions on unicorn fantasies flogged by political and ideological allies, and throwing regulatory roadblock after regulatory roadblock at real, viable projects. And both the lavishing and the blocking based on literally incredible environmental theories.

In Federalist #70, Alexander Hamilton extolled “energy in the executive.” In the past days we have seen an executive devoting all its energies, positive and negative, to pushing some projects that will produce no energy, and to thwarting others that will. An energetic twofer: they will make us poorer, by making energy more expensive, and they will not help the environment—and will quite plausibly make the environment worse.

That kind of energy we can very much do without.

Washington Post

Obama's politically strategic inaction

by Charles Krauthammer

In 2008, the slogan was “Yes We Can.” For 2011-12, it’s “We Can’t Wait.” What happened in between? Candidate Obama, the vessel into which myriad dreams were poured, met the reality of governance.

His near-\$1 trillion stimulus begat a stagnant economy with 9 percent unemployment. His attempt at Wall Street reform left in place a still-too-big-to-fail financial system, as vulnerable today as when he came into office. His green-energy fantasies yielded [Solyndra cronyism](#) and a cap-and-trade regime not even a Democratic Congress would pass.

And now his signature achievement, [Obamacare, is headed to the Supreme Court](#), where it could very well be struck down. This comes just a week after its central element was overwhelmingly repudiated (by a 2-to-1 margin) by the good burghers of Ohio.

So what do you do when you say you can, but, it turns out, you can't? Blame the other guy. Charge the Republicans with making governing impossible. Never mind that you had control of Congress for two-thirds of your current tenure. It's all the fault of Republican rejectionism.

Hence: “We Can’t Wait.” We can’t wait while they obstruct. We can’t wait while they dither with my jobs bill. Write Congress today! Vote Democratic tomorrow!

We can’t wait. Except for certain exceptions, such as the 1,700-mile trans-USA [Keystone XL pipeline](#), carrying Alberta oil to Texas refineries, that would have created thousands of American jobs and increased our energy independence.

For that, we can wait, it seems. President Obama [decreed that any decision](#) must wait 12 to 18 months — postponed, by amazing coincidence, until after next year’s election.

Why? Because the pipeline angered Obama’s environmental constituency. But their complaints are risible. Global warming from the extraction of the Alberta tar sands? Canada will extract the oil anyway. If it doesn’t go to us, [it will go to China](#). Net effect on the climate if we don’t take that oil? Zero.

Danger to a major aquifer, which the pipeline traverses? It is already crisscrossed by 25,000 miles of pipeline, enough to circle the Earth. Moreover, the [State Department had subjected Keystone to three years](#) of review — the most exhaustive study of any oil pipeline in U.S. history — and twice concluded in voluminous studies that there would be no significant environmental harm.

So what happened? “The administration,” reported the New York Times, “had in [recent days been exploring ways](#) to put off the decision until after the presidential election.” Exploring ways to improve the project? Hardly. Exploring ways to get past the election.

Obama’s decision was meant to appease his environmentalists. It’s already working. The president of the National Wildlife Federation told The Post (online edition, Nov. 10) that thousands of environmentalists who were galvanized to protest the pipeline would now support

Obama in 2012. Moreover, a source told The Post, Obama campaign officials had concluded that “they do not pick up one vote from approving this project.”

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- At the height of the debt-ceiling debate last July, Obama pledged to veto any agreement that was not long-term. Definition of long term? By another amazing coincidence, any deal large enough to get him past Election Day (and thus avoid another such crisis next year).
- [On Tuesday it was revealed](#) that last year [the administration pressured Solyndra](#), as it was failing, to delay its planned Oct. 28 announcement of layoffs until Nov. 3, the day after the midterm election.

A contemporaneous e-mail from a Solyndra investor noted: “Oddly they didn't give a reason for that date.” The writer was obviously born yesterday. The American electorate was not — and it soon gets to decide who really puts party over nation and reelection above all.

We can't wait.

WSJ

Obama Abandons (Private) Labor

The Keystone decision is a signal to blue-collar workers that this is no longer their fathers' Democratic Party.

by Daniel Henninger

The decision by the Obama administration to "delay" building the Keystone XL pipeline is a watershed moment in American politics. The implication of a policy choice rarely gets more stark than this. Put simply: Why should any blue-collar worker who isn't hooked for life to a public budget vote for Barack Obama next year?

The Keystone XL pipeline would have created at least 20,000 direct and indirect jobs. Much of this would have been well-paid work for craftsmen, not jobs as hod carriers to repave the Interstate.

On a recent trip to Omaha, Neb., Mr. Obama signaled where his head was on the pipeline during a TV interview: "Folks in Nebraska, like folks all across the country, aren't going to say to themselves, 'We're going to take a few thousand jobs if it means our kids are potentially drinking water that would damage their health.'" Imagine if he'd been leading a wagon train of workers and farmers across the Western frontier in 1850.

Within days of the Keystone decision, Canada's prime minister, Stephen Harper, said his country would divert sales of the Keystone-intended oil to Asia. Translation: Those lost American blue-collar pipeline jobs are disappearing into the Asian sun. Incidentally, Mr. Harper has said he wants to turn Canada into an energy "superpower," exploiting its oil, gas and hydroelectric resources. Meanwhile, the American president shores up his environmental base in Hollywood and on campus. Perhaps our blue-collar work force should consider emigrating to Canada.

Recall as well the president's gut reaction in 2010 to the BP Gulf oil spill: an order shutting down deep-water drilling in U.S. waters. The effect on blue-collar workers in that industry was devastating. Writing in these pages this week, Alaska GOP Sen. Lisa Murkowski described how Mexico, the Russians, Canada and even Cuba are moving to exploit oil and gas deposits adjacent to ours, while the Obama administration slow-walks new drilling permits.

No subject sits more centrally in the American political debate than the economic plight of the middle class. Presumably that means people making between \$50,000 and \$175,000 a year. The president fashions himself their champion.

This surely is bunk. Mr. Obama is the champion of the *public-sector* middle class. Just as private business has become an abstraction to the new class of public-sector Democratic politicians and academics who populate the Obama administration, so too the blue-collar workers employed by them have become similarly abstracted.

You would think someone in the private labor movement would wake up and smell the tar sands. Last week's Big Labor "victory" in Ohio was about spending tens of millions to support state and local government workers. Many union families attached to the state's withering auto plants no doubt voted with their public-sector brothers in solidarity. But why? Where the rubber hits the road—new jobs that will last a generation—what does this public-sector vote do for them?

Many farmers, ranchers and timber workers went Republican years ago over an increasingly ideological and uncompromising Democratic environmentalism that was wrecking their livelihoods. Now the same thing is happening to blue-collar workers. Mr. Obama from his first days made clear his hostility to carbon production. At best he views much of the private blue-collar work force as carbon enablers for whom he himself will create a new harmony of "green" industries. That would be Solyndra.

Solyndra isn't just a fiasco. It's a clear warning that launching new industries onto the big muddy of massive public subsidies is fraught with economic and political problems.

The Democratic promise to private blue-collar workers has been that the party would use its clout to in effect "manufacture" new jobs out of public budgets—high-speed rail projects, school construction and the like. But surely that's gone aglimmering.

Wisconsin, Ohio, New Jersey, New York and California—whose blue-collar families traditionally hand those states to Democratic candidates—are all locked in budgetary death struggles to pay for their *public* workers. That conversation is about generations-long budget commitments. There isn't going to be anything large left over for "public-private" job schemes.

There's little hope that anyone in the leadership of the traditional union movement, public or private, would entertain a rethinking of their historic ties to the Democratic Party. But younger workers should. The economic crisis of the past two years is no blip. In some construction unions, unemployment is well over 25%. The only force out there that can create real jobs over the longer term is the strongest private economic growth the U.S. can muster. The past three years of a Democratic administration's economic policies have the U.S. mired in a growth rate rotating like a forgotten flywheel around 2%.

America's workers, no matter the color of their collars, desperately need a higher economic growth rate than decisions such as the delay on Keystone are going to give them. The Keystone shuffle should make clear to many middle-class workers that this is no longer their fathers' Democratic Party. It's going in a different direction, toward the clouds. This may be the year to open negotiations with the alternative.

Neal Boortz [Green Jobs](#)

Barack Obama has taken to micro-managing our economy by picking the winners and losers. Not only has he chosen "green energy" but he has selected which companies within the industry will benefit from Obama's piggy bank. And it turns out that if you wanted a piece of the government's green energy piggy bank, you would have better luck if you had ... donated to Barack Obama's campaign!

A new list of green energy loans doled out by the Obama administration reveals that 80% of the \$20.5 billion in energy department loans [went to Obama's top donors](#). Don't you think that this is just a bit strange? This, my friends, is what you would call crony capitalism – using someone else's money (the tax payers) to reward personal relationships (in this case, for political gain).

Since Obama has chosen green energy, what does this mean? Other industries are deemed the "losers." For example, oil and gas exploration? Losers. This doesn't fit into Obama's goal of supporting the industries he wants to see thrive. Just take a look at the Keystone Pipeline ... this is an energy project that could have resulted in 20,000 jobs in America. But this didn't fit into Obama's agenda. It wouldn't A) Be a "green" job and B) Help him get re-elected. Meanwhile, who suffers? The middle class. People who want to work and pay taxes are instead not getting jobs and then seeing the job creators' taxes being used to fund "green" energy projects.

Don't get me wrong .. green energy is not a bad thing. But the president should not be trying to force Americans into a market they are not yet ready to invest and explore. Let the market take us there naturally. Just take a look at what happened when the government went and [spent](#)

[\\$500 million for “green” job training](#). At the end of the day, the number of trainees who landed green jobs was equivalent to only 10% of the Department of Labor’s own goal. Even worse, only 2% landed jobs for six months or longer. Or how about the \$5 billion in stimulus funds that went to “weatherize” homes, where more than 50% of them failed inspections because of substandard workmanship.

When Barack Obama nominates a self-described Communist to be a green jobs czar (Van Jones), that should have been our first clue that his intent was not to create jobs but to implement a command economy by rewarding his political backers with your tax dollars.

WSJ

An Aussie Who Rules at Football

LSU's Wing Bedevils Opponents With Unorthodox, Unreturnable Punts; the 73-Yard Bomb

by Scott Cacciola



Brad Wing, LSU's punter, during the top-ranked Tigers' 9-6 win over then-No. 2 Alabama on Nov. 5.

BATON ROUGE, La.—Brad Wing is king of the campus at LSU.

Classmates wear T-shirts that allude to his "swag." Posters of his infamous 44-yard run against Florida, during which he drew a penalty flag for spreading his arms like an airplane, adorn storefront windows. Just this week, he hit Facebook's 5,000-friend limit and had no choice but to start his own "fan" page.

None of this should be terribly surprising. Wing, after all, plays football for the No. 1-ranked Tigers. But here's the weird part: He's the punter.

While LSU has emerged as the national-title favorite because of its merciless defense, Wing—a 20-year-old from Australia with an unorthodox style—has played an enormous role. He's helped produce arguably the most staggering statistic in college football this season: LSU's opponents have totaled a mere seven return yards on his 39 punts. In other words, against LSU, teams can expect to gain about six inches each time Wing boots a punt.

It isn't sexy, but this is the sort of edge that can separate a national-title contender from an also-ran, particularly in the brutally tough Southeastern Conference, whose teams have won the last five national championships. Every elite SEC team recruits powerful linemen and athletic running backs and receivers. Punters? Not such a priority.

But when it comes to field position, no player has a greater impact—and more coaches appear to be coming to that realization. Wing is Exhibit A.

"It's almost like you walk into a garage sale and see a Picasso sitting in the corner, and nobody else really knows what it is," said Thomas McGaughey, LSU's special-teams coordinator. "So you sprint over there and grab it. That's what I did with Brad."

What sets Wing apart from other punters is he isn't one of them. A native of Melbourne, the left-footed Wing grew up playing Australian Rules Football, where precise punting and goal kicking are the game's most important skills.

Through a variety of intricate techniques, including the "banana" kick, the "torpedo," the "floater" and the "mongrel," Aussie Rules players can punt with pinpoint accuracy from the acutest angles. The most common type is the "drop punt." Unlike the traditional punt, where the kicker connects with the belly of the ball to create an aerodynamic spiral, the drop punt is struck near the point so that it spins end over end, imparting greater accuracy and a more predictable bounce.

The drop punt—not to be confused with a rugby-style punt, which is more of a short, line-drive kick—has made cameos in the U.S. The Detroit Lions' Ben Graham, one of a handful of Australians who have punted in the NFL, relies on it. But he's more or less the exception.

While football coaches are always searching for the next defensive or offensive innovation, many are curiously resistant to change when it comes to punting. The emphasis has long been on hang time, a metric that gained traction when Ray Guy entered the NFL in 1973.

Guy made a habit of puncturing the mesosphere with his soaring punts. His hang time often eclipsed five seconds, which provided his team's coverage unit with more than enough time to sprint downfield and surround the return man. His success gave rise to a familiar credo: Just punt it as high and as far as possible.

But this wasn't for the best. David Wing, Brad's father, said this trend came at the expense of accuracy and strategy. "You had a million kids just trying to hit for hang time," said Wing, a former Aussie Rules player who had a brief tryout as a punter with the Lions in the 1990s.

Brad Wing not only can punt for hang time when employing the traditional spiral style—he also can dramatically angle his punts and land them three or four yards from the sideline, away from returners.

For most American punters, directional punting is a high-wire act. Misfire the punt toward the center of the field, and it sets up an easy return. Launch one at too wide of an angle, and it probably sails out of bounds.

"It's extremely difficult to be consistent with directional punting," said Sean Landeta, a former NFL punter and three-time All-Pro selection. "If you literally—and I mean literally—turn a couple of inches too far to the right, you can hit a wonderful punt, but it'll go out of bounds at the 40 instead of the 20."

Wing seldom has such issues. His greatest asset, coaches and teammates say, is his precision, not his leg. Wing said he typically can land the ball within five yards of his target when he uses the drop punt. "He can place it wherever he wants," said Drew Alleman, LSU's kicker.

Kenny Guillot, who coached Wing for one season at Parkview Baptist School in Baton Rouge, recalled how Wing once plopped a punt in a small puddle 45 yards downfield. "It wasn't luck," Guillot said.

It's been more of the same at LSU, where Wing has put more than half his punts this season (20 of 39) inside the 20-yard line. On the year, he's averaging a solid 42.9 yards per punt—despite often being called on to hit shorter punts that pin opponents deep in their own territory.

"I've been in the NFL, and I've seen some really good punters," McGaughey said. "But I've never seen a guy who can control the ball like he can."

In the biggest game of the season thus far—LSU's 9-6 win over then-No. 2 Alabama on Nov. 5—Wing was as big a factor as any of the future NFL picks on the field. He bombed a 73-yard punt in the fourth quarter, preventing Alabama from making a short drive for a go-ahead score. The Tigers downed four of his six punts inside Alabama's 20-yard line. The Crimson Tide amassed a grand total of zero return yards.

While Wing's 73-yarder made headlines, his first punt set the tone—a delicate drop punt from the Alabama 42 that dribbled out of bounds at the 5. Wing said he put only a slight rotation on the ball so it would pitch forward toward the end zone. Punting has become a science for him: He's able to dictate the rate of rotation by dropping the ball at different angles before he makes contact with his foot.

McGaughey said it takes "millions of reps" to manipulate the ball with such expertise. Which Wing has: He's been punting since age 5. He spent countless hours with his younger brother, Thomas, booting an Australian football—a wider, rounder cousin of the American football—between a pair of lampposts in their Melbourne neighborhood. "We'd be out there all day and all night," Wing said.

His dreams of playing professional football in Australia died three years ago when he got cut from his club team, the Sandringham Dragons. He said he could understand why his coaches made that decision: "I never really liked to run a lot."

But there was an alternative. The Wings had family friends in Baton Rouge; they offered to host Brad, who could spend his senior year of high school at Parkview Baptist and see what he could do as a punter. Soon enough he was named all-state, though he had no clue what that meant. He also found himself being chatted up by some dude in a baseball cap. (He had to be told it was LSU coach Les Miles.)

Alleman, the kicker, said Wing made an immediate impression after he enrolled at LSU with his short shorts, cut-off T-shirts and Buddy Holly glasses. "He must be Australian," Alleman recalled thinking.

After sitting out last season as a true freshman, Wing made his debut at the intrasquad spring game in April and did well, averaging over 40 yards per punt. What made his performance noteworthy was that he punted all game using his right foot. Yes, he's ambidextrous—with his feet. "It's almost sick," McGaughey said.

David Wing said the coaching staff had his son punt with his right foot to throw off Oregon, LSU's opponent in the season opener. Few people knew it at the time, but Brad Wing was just getting started.

Sports Illustrated

After all the buildup, Game of Century decided by ... kickers

by Andy Staples

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. -- Contrary to the rumor pulsing through the postgame interview room Saturday night, LSU coach Les Miles did not discuss a fake field goal when he huddled with kicker Drew Alleman and holder/punter Brad Wing during a timeout shortly before halftime of LSU's 9-6 overtime win against Alabama. "There was never a chance," Miles said, "that we were going to fake a thing tonight."

Alleman booted a trick-free 19-yard chip shot through the upright, and the Tigers went to the locker room tied at three. Two hours later, Alleman knocked through a 25-yarder, and the Tigers stormed the field to celebrate their affirmation that they are the undisputed No. 1 team in the nation.

After all that buildup and all that pounding, the two best defenses in the country nullified two decent offenses. In the end, a 5-foot-11, 183-pound walk-on kicker and an Australian punter decided a game contested -- for the most part -- by 300-pound men beating the stuffing out of one another. Alleman made three short kicks (19, 30 and 25 yards), while his Alabama counterparts, Cade Foster and Jeremy Shelley, failed to score on four of six kicks. One was blocked, and the average distance of the three misses was 48.7 yards. Meanwhile, Wing, the former Australian rules football player best known prior to Saturday for having a trick-play touchdown against Florida called back for taunting, was LSU's most valuable player. He pinned Alabama inside its own five-yard line twice, and he crushed a 73-yarder that flipped the field in the fourth quarter at a point when the exhausted Tigers defense probably couldn't have defended a short field.

Alleman and Wing would like the world to know that they were all for a fake at the end of the first half -- which is probably why they kick and don't coach. Wing said the conversation with Miles was more motivational and less tactical. "If he'd [asked about a fake], we would have said yes," Wing said. "We would have done something stupid." Miles, in spite of his reputation for brass calls, chose the sure points.

Besides, Miles knew LSU had an X-factor from Down Under. "Brad is probably one of our most secret weapons," LSU defensive end Sam Montgomery said of Wing.

We should have realized it when Wing ripped off that touchdown run against Florida, but it became abundantly clear Saturday that Wing is no ordinary punter. The redshirt freshman, whose father, David, punted briefly for the Scottish Claymores of the World League of American Football, left Melbourne to attend Parkview Baptist in Baton Rouge (9,246 miles from home) for his senior year of high school. With Wing came an Aussie rules sensibility. How Aussie? When Wing first arrived in the States, he couldn't resist calling out the heavily protected American players. "What are these pads and helmets for?" Wing said. "Let's take them off and play." His new teammates' response? "They didn't think that was too funny," Wing said.

But they loved Wing's ability to trap opponents deep in their own territory. On 19 of his 37 kicks, he has forced the opposition to start inside the 20. He did it on four of six kicks Saturday. On the possessions that Alabama began on Wing kicks inside the 20, the Crimson Tide scored three points. Except for a hideous shank in the third quarter, Wing's accuracy was uncanny. He credits Aussie rules football for that. "You see a quarterback throwing a spiral pass," Wing said. "That's how we pass -- with the foot. I've been doing that since I was three or four years old."

Wing's finest moment came in the fourth quarter. LSU had taken over on its own one-yard line after Eric Reid outwrestled Alabama tight end Michael Williams for a ball thrown by receiver Marquis Maze, who had taken the snap in a Wildcat formation. (Noodle that for a second; Les Miles was the risk-averse one, and Nick Saban's staff dipped into the bag of tricks.) With Alabama's defense crushing everything that moved, the Tigers didn't bother trying to get the ball a long way down the field. They merely wanted to keep from standing in the end zone when the ball was snapped.

With LSU facing fourth-and-two from its own nine, Alabama attacked the kick. That was a safe, smart play. A block would have produced points from a safety, touchdown or incredibly short field, and even an excellent kick would give the Crimson Tide the ball at midfield. With a wall of beef coming at him, Wing didn't flinch. After all, he was accustomed to people trying to kill him when he kicked back home. "You see me back there sometimes holding the ball for a bit longer," Wing said. "I'm just so used to kicking the ball under pressure."

The ball exploded off Wing's foot. It carried so far that Alabama returner Marquis Maze misjudged it and let it sail over his head. By the time it stopped, the ball was on the Alabama 18. Alabama's short field had turned into an impossibly long one. "This game showed the world how important field position is," LSU's Montgomery said.

Meanwhile, Alleman waited his turn. The way the game was going, he was certain the outcome would ride on his right foot. Before he went to sleep every night this week, Alleman stared at the ceiling and ran through scenarios. Down one, four seconds on the clock. Down two, one second on the clock. He had already envisioned what was to come.

When the teams went to overtime, it seemed pretty clear the end zone was off-limits. Montgomery's third-down sack of AJ McCarron forced Foster to kick a brutal 52-yarder into the wind. The kick died short of the crossbar. "It just came down to who executed on the chances they had," Alabama linebacker Courtney Upshaw said. "They did."

On the Tigers' possession, LSU's offense finally moved the ball a little. Michael Ford took the Tigers to the seven-yard line on an option pitch. Everything Alleman visualized was about to come true. Miles, Mr. Play-It-Safe, called for the field goal on third down. That way, if the snap went awry, Wing could fall on it and the Tigers could try again.

Just before he called for the snap, Wing looked back at Alleman. "You ready to go?" Wing asked. "You know it," Alleman answered.

Snap. Hold. Kick. Celebration.

The Browser

[Economics is Fun](#)

by Daniel Hamermesh

Yes, really! Have you ever been "sexiled"? Or used game theory, without realising it, to get someone to do the dishes? The economics professor explains how his discipline creeps into all kinds of unlikely areas

Is economics actually fun?

Oh gosh, yes! Of course it's fun. Partly because it's relevant, but partly because there are an awful lot of things that are basically just fun stories. I wrote a book, [Economics is Everywhere](#), which contains stories from my life and things I see, designed to illustrate economic ideas. Some of them are just hilarious. And it's not just me, whose humour is sort of weird, I admit. Almost anyone can read them and get a good laugh out of them, while learning something. And that's the best way to teach, I think.

Can you give me your favourite example?

I have lots of favourites! It's like choosing among my children. How off-colour are you allowed to be on this?

It's completely up to you.

Every year 500 students in my introductory economics class have to write a story like the ones in my book. Last year one student wrote that it was three in the morning on a Sunday, and she was in the dormitory lounge having been "sexiled". Her roommate had thrown her out of the room, for reasons that are implicit in that term. She argued that this was a wonderful example of what we call "externalities" – her roommate and the roommate's boyfriend were making so much noise it was impossible to sleep there. Moreover, they were also disturbing people down the hall, because the walls are so thin. There's also the question of who owns the rights to the room

– this is called an issue of “property rights”. So what the girl illustrated was both the concept of an externality, and the notion of property rights in a very cute way. I thought that was a winner. It’s not the best, but it’s well up there. The top 10 each year out of the 500 get extra credit, and I steal a few stories for my book too, with full credit to them.

But economics is hard isn’t it? To be a practitioner, you have to be good at maths, for example.

Keynes had a wonderful line, that you have to be good at maths but not too good, you have to be good at history but not too good, and you’ve got to be good at philosophy but not too good. I really think that’s the case. I’ve seen people who are superb at maths, who really have no intuition at all and can’t think like an economist, even though they can solve the most abstruse math problems. You can’t be too good at anything, or you wouldn’t be doing this.

OK, but it’s a question of degree. When I went to Harvard as a graduate student, economist Jeff Sachs was teaching a class on the inequality of nations, why some nations are so rich and some so poor. I wasn’t studying economics, but I went along to the first class. He started talking about what he was going to teach, and I thought, “Wow this is so fascinating, I can’t believe my luck that I’m here.” Then after 15 minutes of preamble, he started the actual class by writing an equation on the board.

At the higher level of course that’s true. It’s going to be more abstruse. I teach [econometrics](#) and even there I like to think that I can pick sufficiently neat examples to get across the ideas and the techniques that are still fun. But at the introductory level, to my mind, there’s no excuse for kids being bored. If they are, if people tell me it’s the most boring class they ever took (as my son did when he took it at Yale, I think partly to make me feel bad) it’s just bad teaching, that’s all. Of which there is much in my business.

I have to say, your book *Economics is Everywhere* really helped me understand things. Like comparative advantage, which I think is a counterintuitive concept for non-economists. There was a funny [blogpost](#) about it by economist David Glasner. He wrote that “even most students who can correctly answer an exam question about comparative advantage don’t believe a word of what they write”. But when I read your example, about the swimming relay team, I thought, “Aha. Now I get it.”

I got that example from a student who raised his hand in class. The best examples are the ones I get from the kids.

Is it because they understand what’s hard to understand?

Suddenly something clicks in their minds. I’ve gone through something theoretically and they realise that something in their own lives is an illustration of it, and that’s exactly what I want.

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KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE



THE PROBLEM IS AMERICA HAS GOTTEN A LITTLE LAZY.



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