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Tiger-Cats should never have hired Art Briles: Editorial

The team's leadership ought to reaffirm their commitment to fighting violence against women and then put some money where their mouth is.



Former Baylor coach Art Briles will not be joining the Tiger-Cats as an assistant coach after all. Less than 12 hours after the Tiger-Cats announced that Briles would be joining as assistant head coach of offense, the league and team responded to public backlash and let the 61-year-old coach go. (LM OTERO / AP)

By **STAR EDITORIAL BOARD**

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When the Canadian Football League announced its [policy](#) to prevent violence against women in 2015, women's organizations cheered - and for good reason.

As Tracy Porteous, executive director of [Ending Violence Association of B.C](#) said at the time, “Violence against women has long thrived in the shadows, so when organizations, especially those led by men, step forward to ask, ‘What can we do to end the silence?’ it shines an important light on a subject most people don’t know what to do with.”

So what, then, can the management of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats have been thinking when they announced early on Monday that they had hired Art Briles? And why did it take the swift and angry public backlash to make the organization understand just how terrible an idea this was?

If you haven’t heard of Briles, here’s how the Star’s Bruce Arthur [describes](#) him: “the disgraced former coach at Baylor University who was fired after dozens of allegations of rape, harassment, stalking and assault by his players surfaced despite his best efforts.”

An organization committed to fighting violence against women should have no place for such a person, as at least one of the team's major sponsors seems to understand. Barry’s Jewellers quickly condemned the hiring, calling it out for what it was: an effort to turn around a losing team at the expense of the safety of women.

“Mr. Briles may or may not have a valid coaching track record, but to choose the chance of winning football over the importance of values goes beyond our core values and is absolutely not acceptable,” Barry’s said in a statement.

Thankfully, the Ticats came to their [senses](#) after heated discussions with the league and announced on Monday night the hiring would not go ahead. But it should not have taken the wrath of their sponsors, fans and sports writers across North America to make them reconsider.

On Tuesday, Ticats CEO Scott Mitchell called the aborted hiring "a poor decision that in retrospect shouldn't have been made." To show he means it, the team should take a page from the National Football League’s playbook.

After it came to light in 2015 that the NFL had tried to cover up a case of domestic abuse by Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice, the league apologized and made significant investments in raising awareness about domestic violence, including by donating a public service advertisement during that year's Super Bowl to the anti-violence [organization](#) NO MORE.

The Ticats should follow suit. The league was right two years ago to make a public commitment to fight violence against women. Sports leagues have enormous influence on their many fans and therefore have a special responsibility to set a good example. The Hamilton Tigercats say they now understand this. They should leave no doubt and put some money where their mouth is.