

Meyer suspended three games

By Mitch Stacy
The Associated Press

Ohio State suspended coach Urban Meyer for three games on Wednesday night for mishandling repeated professional and behavioral problems of an assistant coach, with investigators finding Meyer protected his protege for years through domestic violence allegations, a drug problem and poor job performance.

The superstar coach's treatment of his now-fired assistant was also clouded by his abiding devotion to the legacy of former Ohio State coach Earle Bruce, the grandfather of former wide receivers coach Zach Smith and an early coaching mentor for Meyer.

"I gave Zach Smith the benefit of the doubt," Meyer said.

The investigation turned up "a pattern of troubling behavior by Zach Smith: promiscuous and embarrassing sexual behavior; drug abuse, truancy, dishonesty, financial irresponsibility, a possible NCAA violation, and a lengthy police investigation into allegations of criminal domestic violence and cybercrimes," according to summary investigative findings released by the university on Wednesday night.

Meyer knew about at least some of the issues.

The report and punishment culminated a two-week investigation of how Meyer reacted to allegations that Smith abused his ex-wife, Courtney Smith. Zach Smith was fired last month after she asked a judge for a protective order.

Courtney Smith alleged her husband shoved her against a wall and put his hands around her neck in 2015. Zach Smith has never been criminally charged with domestic violence. The university put Meyer on paid leave and began investigating after Courtney Smith spoke out publicly, sharing text messages and photos she traded in 2015 with Meyer's wife, Shelley Meyer. Shelley Meyer is a registered nurse and instructor at Ohio State.

"I followed my heart and not my head," Meyer said, quickly reading a written statement during a news conference after his punishment was announced. "I should have demanded more from him and recognized red flags."

Investigators said Meyer and athletic direc-

tor Gene Smith mismanaged Zach Smith's misconduct and kept him even though he was not an appropriate role model for OSU student-athletes. The review found neither Meyer nor Gene Smith condoned or covered up alleged abuse, but raised red flags of their own:

— Meyer, the athletic director and others throughout Ohio State thought it wasn't their place to do anything about allegations against Zach Smith unless law enforcement took more action like making an arrest or filing charges. Investigators called that a widespread misunderstanding of their reporting obligations.

— Meyer responded to Courtney Smith coming forward to a reporter by asking one of his staffers about changing the settings on his phone to delete text messages more than a year old. Investigators didn't find older messages on Meyer's phone but couldn't determine whether he deleted them before or after the media report.

— Meyer and his wife, Shelley, doubted the veracity of Courtney Smith's allegations of violence and abuse. Urban Meyer called the Smith situation a "he said she said" last month in a text with a former player. He also insisted to investigators he met with Courtney Smith after Zach Smith's 2009 arrest and that she recanted her original story to authorities. Courtney Smith told investigators she never met with Meyer or recanted any allegations.

— In June 2016 at Meyer's urging, Zach Smith was admitted to a drug treatment facility for addiction to an unspecified stimulant prescription drug, the report said, adding that Gene Smith was never told about it.

— Zach Smith ran up a big strip club bill in 2014 with a high school coach in Florida and spent \$600 in personal funds. Meyer reprimanded Zach Smith but didn't report the issue to compliance officers or the athletic director. Investigators said they told the NCAA about the incident.

Trustees discussed how to punish Meyer in a marathon meeting of more than 12 hours Wednesday while Meyer waited in the building. Athletic director Gene Smith — who is not related to Zach or Courtney Smith — was suspended without pay from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Steven Beadury, right, shown making a play on the ball at practice Thursday, is one of Eastern Oregon's key returners this fall.

SOCCER

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Aldo Rivas, Josh Goodman, Elvis Pavon and Aidan Wright are among the returners Mills said will likely play an important role this fall.

"Aidan brings up the level (of play)," Mills said of the EOU goalkeeper. "Aidan comes out well. He's very aggressive. It looks like he's had some good training. He does all the little things right."

Mills also said some newcomers to the team could have an immediate impact, including freshmen Connor Young and Cristian Miramontes, a former La Grande standout.

"If he keeps improving like he is, learning like he is, he's going to step up and be a monumental piece, even this year," Mills said of Miramontes. "He's fighting for a starting spot, and looking good at it."

Mills hopes to lead the Mountaineers to their first-ever appearance in the Cascade Collegiate Conference tournament this fall, and he believes that to be an attainable goal, even in a strong CCC.

"Postseason for us shouldn't be this crazy dream. These boys have been working hard, and if they keep working hard, we can definitely make the (CCC) playoffs," Mills said.

Eastern Oregon Men's Soccer

KEY MATCHES

Today: Whitworth (season opener), Community Stadium, 7 p.m.
Sept. 14: Eastern Oregon at Providence, Montana (CCC opener), 2:30 p.m.
Sept. 21: Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon (CCC home opener), 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 30: Rocky Mountain at EOU, Community Stadium, 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 19: Corban at EOU, Community Stadium, 4 p.m.

Source: eousports.com



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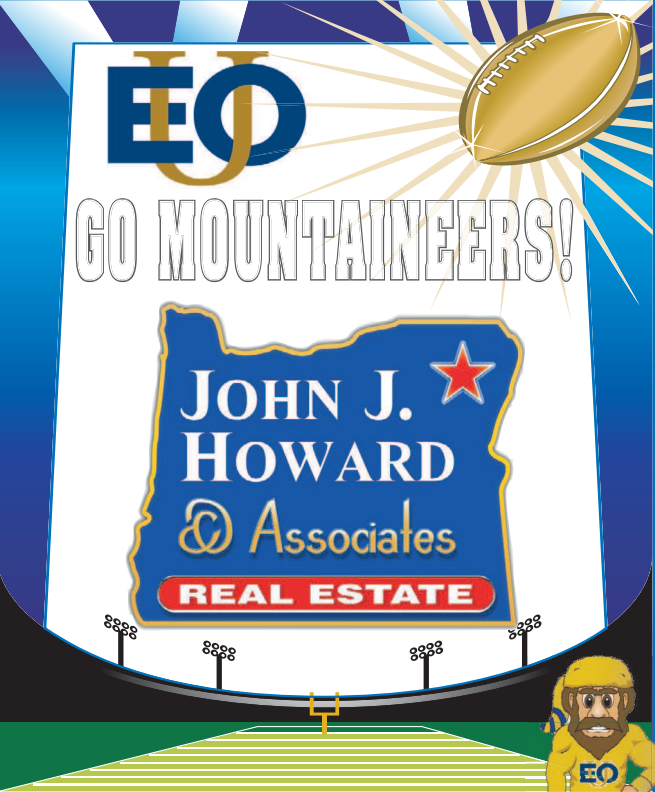


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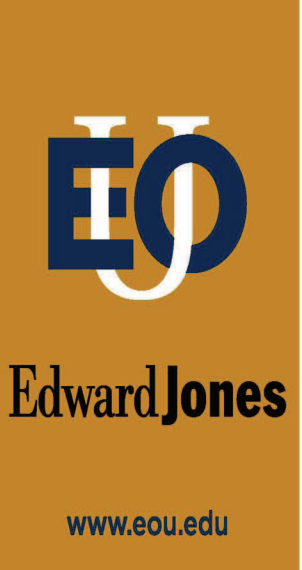
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