

Big Ten Suspends Michigan Head Coach Jim Harbaugh From Coaching In Games For Remainder Of Regular Season



The Big Ten announced Friday that it has suspended Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh from coaching in games for the remainder of the regular season as a result of Wolverines' prohibited in-person scouting of opponents.

While Harbaugh will not be on the sidelines for the Wolverines for at least the next three games, he will be allowed to coach Michigan during the week.

"The Big Ten Conference announced today that the University of Michigan has been found in violation of the Big Ten Sportsmanship Policy for conducting an impermissible, in-person scouting operation over multiple years, resulting in an unfair competitive advantage that compromised the integrity of competition," a statement from the conference read.

"Big Ten Conference Agreement 10.01 states in part that 'The Big Ten Conference expects all contests involving a member institution to be conducted without compromise to any fundamental element of sportsmanship. Such fundamental elements include integrity of the competition, civility toward all, and respect, particularly toward opponents and officials.'"

The suspension comes over three weeks after it was initially reported that former Michigan recruiting analyst Connor Stalions - who has since resigned - created a sign-stealing network for the Wolverines that included the purchase of nearly 40 tickets to games of Michigan's future opponent, tickets that he would then distribute to others and pay them to attend games and record opposing teams signs and signals.

Harbaugh has claimed throughout the process that he was unaware of any sign-stealing schemes going on within the program, though that would not matter in the eyes of the NCAA - which continues to investigate the situation, with the investigation not expected to finish until next year - as head coaches are considered responsible for whatever happens within their programs.

"I do not have any knowledge or information regarding the University of Michigan football program illegally stealing signals, nor have I directed any staff member or others to participate in an off-campus

scouting assignment," he said on Oct. 19. "I have no awareness of anyone on our staff having done that or having directed that action."

Commissioner Tony Petitti sent a notice of disciplinary action earlier this week, to which the Wolverines responded with a 10-page letter that asked Petitti to respect due process while the NCAA continues its investigation, and said that Petitti does not have the power to suspend Harbaugh under the Big Ten's sportsmanship policy. In the letter, Michigan also argued that any potential sanctions before the investigation concludes would break the Big Ten's bylaws, which could lead to a legal response from Michigan.

Michigan is currently ranked third in the College Football Playoff rankings and will visit No. 7 Penn State on Saturday for a noon kickoff. Harbaugh's expected suspension would force him to miss the Wolverines' regular-season finale against Ohio State.