

NCAA Notice Of Allegations Reveals Michigan Head Coach Sherrone Moore, Former Wolverines Coach Jim Harbaugh Violated NCAA Rules



Michigan head football coach Sherrone Moore and former Wolverines leader Jim Harbaugh are among seven members from the 2023 football program accused of violating NCAA rules, according to the NCAA's notice of allegations draft obtained by ESPN this weekend.

According to ESPN's Dan Murphy and Pete Thamel, the NOA draft — which could be subject to change — stated that Moore could face a show-cause penalty and potentially a suspension for allegedly deleting a thread of 52 text messages with former Michigan staffer Connor Stalions in October 2023 on the same day that media outlets revealed Stalions as the leader of the Wolverines' alleged elaborate sign-stealing scandal.

Stalions, who reportedly orchestrated efforts by the program to steal the signals of future opponents — including Ohio State, Penn State and Georgia — by purchasing tickets to away games and assigning certain individuals to record opponents' sidelines, resigned from the program on Nov. 3. He is set to appear in a Netflix "Untold" Documentary later this month, where he is set to explain his side of the story on the scandal that Netflix said made him a "viral villain."

The draft states that the texts were recovered via "device imaging" and Moore "subsequently produced them to the enforcement staff." Moore — who served as Michigan's interim head coach for the final three games of the 2023 season following the suspension of Harbaugh, leading the Wolverines to victories over Penn State, Maryland and Ohio State — is accused of committing a Level 2 NCAA violation, according to the draft. He is also considered a potential "repeat violator" of NCAA rules because he reportedly negotiated a resolution to claims that he contacted recruits during a COVID-19 recruiting dead period in August 2023.

While Moore faces a potential Level 2 violation, former Michigan staff members Harbaugh, Chris Partridge, Denard Robinson and Stalions are accused of committing Level 1 violations, the most serious category in the NCAA's enforcement process. The school itself also faces a Level 1 violation charge due to its "pattern of noncompliance within the football program" and its efforts to hinder or thwart the

NCAA's investigation, while the draft also stated that former defensive coordinator Jesse Minter and defensive backs coach Steve Clinkscale — who each joined Harbaugh's staff in Los Angeles this offseason to serve in their same roles — are also accused of recruiting violations that are not related to Stalions.

Harbaugh, who now serves as head coach of the NFL's Los Angeles Chargers after leading Michigan to a national title in the 2023 season, is accused of not cooperating with the NCAA investigation because he denied their request to view relevant messages and phone records from his personal cell phone. According to the draft, Harbaugh could face a "show-cause" restriction if he ever opts to return to college sports.

The draft does not state, however, that Harbaugh was directly involved with the sign-stealing operation or knew about the scheme, but rather that the former Michigan coach failed to actively look for "red flags" regarding Stalions or any other member of the program associated with the scandal. Harbaugh was suspended by the Big Ten for the final three games of the Wolverines' 2023 season as a punishment for his program violating the conference's sportsmanship policy in relation to Stalions' impermissible sign-stealing operation.

As for Stalions, the draft states that investigators used ticket information, film, photographs and interviews to determine that the former staffer had impermissibly scouted at least 13 future Michigan opponents on at least 58 occasions between 2021 and 2023. It also showed that he directed others to scout certain opponents multiple times, including one team that they scouted seven times during the 2022 season.

The investigation revealed that multiple team interns and at least one other full-time employee were aware of Stalions' scheme and participated in it. Stalions reportedly convinced them that these efforts were not in violation of NCAA rules.

The draft also states that the NCAA gathered enough evidence to prove that Stalions disguised himself as a Central Michigan staff member during the Chippewa's season-opening game against Michigan State in 2023 by wearing a bench pass, Central Michigan coaching gear and a disguise. Photos of what then appeared to be Stalions wearing sunglasses on the Central Michigan sideline first circulated throughout social media this fall, but the status of the individual was not confirmed until this weekend's draft was revealed.

The draft did not say how Stalions obtained a bench pass for Central Michigan's sideline, but it did state that Stalions' conduct "seriously undermined or threatened the integrity of the NCAA collegiate model."

Central Michigan and head coach Jim McElwain recently made significant changes to their coaching staff — firing quarterbacks coach Jake Kostner and elevating John Leister from director of football operations to take over the role — but the Chippewas declined to say if the moves were related to the Stalions situation but expressed their desire to cooperate with the NCAA in its investigation.

According to the draft, Stalions failed to cooperate with the entire NCAA investigation, refusing to let the school review his phone while also removing hard drives from the Michigan football offices in October 2023 and giving a football player a sheet containing playcalling signals of a future opponent. Stalions reportedly ordered the player to bring the sheet to a team intern's house until he could retrieve it later.

ESPN attempted to reach out for Stallions to comment, but those efforts were unsuccessful.

Partridge, a former defensive assistant who was fired by Michigan last November, is accused of pressuring a player to lie or mislead NCAA investigators in an effort to “protect” the coaching staff. He is also accused of several Level 2 violations that are not associated with the sign-stealing scandal, including holding on-campus training sessions with at least four prospects during the spring and summer of 2023.

Partridge, Clinksdale and Robinson — who was fired by the program in May after being arrested for drunk driving — are all accused of providing impermissible benefits to recruits in 2023, including paying for a recruit’s meal and providing recruits with team gear.

Clinksdale is accused of helping a recruit get verified on Instagram and writing a \$100 check to a golf charity outing that was led by a recruit’s father, while Partridge, along with Minter, are accused of sending text messages to a recruit who was a high school sophomore

Michigan, who will begin its season on Aug. 31 at home against Fresno State, did provide a comment to ESPN, with a spokesperson for the team saying: ““Our athletic department and university continue to cooperate with the NCAA regarding our ongoing investigation. We do not have an update to share regarding its status at this time.”

Wolverines.com reporter Chris Balas reported earlier this week that Michigan is prepared to fight back against these punishments, which, according to Balas, could include a one-or-two-year postseason ban.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin will have more on this breaking news story as news unfolds.