

Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith Releases Statement In Support Of Black Lives Matter Movement



Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith released a statement on Sunday afternoon in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and the student-athletes who have used their platform to fight racism.

A message from @OSU_AD

Racism has been declared a public health crisis; hate has no place in civil society.

Over the past decade, Buckeye student-athletes have proactively engaged in issues that have resulted in a shift in our departmental culture...<https://t.co/StWvtwRPYr>

— Ohio State Buckeyes (@OhioStAthletics) June 7, 2020

Here is Smith's full statement:

"Racism has been declared a public health crisis; hate has no place in civil society.

Over the past decade, Buckeye student-athletes have proactively engaged in issues that have resulted in a shift in our departmental culture; issues that were manifest at the same time in the larger society and reflected in the actions of the student-athletes.

"In recent years, several young men in the sport of football made the decision to publicly discuss their personal mental health challenges as a way to help demystify the larger societal conversation about mental health.

"Concurrently, student-athletes in the sport of men's hockey asked the department to support the NHL's initiative entitled: If you can play, you can play. This effort advocated for support for student-athletes of all sexual orientations.

"Student-athletes from many departmental teams have engaged in outreach efforts to support young

people in underserved parts of the community. This service has become embedded as part of the departmental culture and is often carried into the NBA, NFL, NHL, MLB and WNBA by Buckeyes in their professional sport careers.

“All of this activity is initiated and (led) by student-athletes. When student-athletes and/or teams come to us with issues with which they want to engage, we provide them resources and support.

“Now, our student-athletes have expressed a desire to engage in the Black Lives Matter movement that has grown from Minneapolis, across the nation, and around the world.

“The department will continue to support our student-athletes as they participate in activities to eradicate hate and racism in our society. Recently, student-athletes have been active on social media platforms denouncing racism, participating in attention and awareness videos promoting Black Lives Matter, holding peaceful demonstrations (Kneel for Nine) and participating in video calls with their teammates and others.

“The Ohio State Department of Athletics supports the Black Lives Matter movement. We will continue to support our student-athletes as they participate in driving positive change in America so that every person is respected regardless of the color of their skin.”

Smith’s comments are particularly notable after Ohio State basketball player Seth Towns was detained by police late last month while peacefully protesting the death of George Floyd in downtown Columbus. The football team released a video a few days later in which several players and head coach Ryan Day urged fans to fight racism.

Wide receiver C.J. Saunders was arrested on Monday evening for violating a city-wide curfew while protesting near campus, then was among the many student-athletes, coaches and faculty who were involved in a nine-minute kneel just outside the north end of Ohio Stadium on Tuesday.

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