

# Ohio State Releases Summary Of Findings, University Actions Regarding Meyer, Smith Suspensions



Ohio State announced suspensions for head football coach Urban Meyer and athletic director Gene Smith on Wednesday night, capping a 14-day investigation regarding the handling of domestic abuse allegations against a former assistant coach.



Ohio State president Michael Drake. Credit: Tim Moody/BSB

The decision came after a board of trustees meeting that surpassed 10 hours at the Longaberger Alumni House in Columbus. Along with the announcement of the suspensions, the university released a summary of the findings of the investigation.

Meyer has been on paid administrative leave since Aug. 1. The allegations, which were against wide receivers coach Zach Smith, stemmed from a 2015 incident that was investigated by the police. No charges were ever filed and Smith was not arrested at the time.

Smith was fired by Meyer on July 23.

The investigation concluded that Smith and Meyer, while they did not condone or cover up any domestic violence incidents, did not fully understand their reporting obligations regarding the incident.

Meyer will be suspended without pay through Sept. 2, the day after Ohio State opens the season against Oregon State in Columbus. He will also be suspended on Sept. 8 when Ohio State hosts Rutgers and on Sept. 15 when the Buckeyes face TCU in Arlington, Texas. Gene Smith will be suspended from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16. The suspensions will be unpaid.

The summary provided by the university at Wednesday's press conference can be found below. The full report can be found [here](#).

#### SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS AND UNIVERSITY ACTIONS

1. The Board of Trustees appointed a Special, Independent Working Group ("Working Group") to oversee an independent investigation of allegations that Coach Urban Meyer failed to act appropriately regarding alleged abuse by Zach Smith of his former wife and related allegations that he misrepresented his knowledge of the alleged events at the Big Ten Media Days.
2. The Working Group included three Trustees of Ohio State: Janet Porter, Alex Fischer and Alex Shumate. The Working Group also included three prominent non-Trustees: JoAnn Davidson, former Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives; Craig Morford, former Acting Deputy U.S. Attorney General, and Carter Stewart, Esq., former United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio. The University thanks each of these six individuals for the many hours they have spent reviewing these issues in the last two weeks.
3. The Trustees retained Mary Jo White, Esq., former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and former Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as her law firm, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, to conduct a detailed investigation of the allegations (the "Independent Investigatory Counsel"). Ms. White and her firm were selected because of their unquestioned independence and their expertise in prior investigations of this nature. Ms. White and her partner, David Sarratt, led the investigation.
4. In undertaking their review, the Independent Investigatory Counsel interviewed more than 40 witnesses, some multiple times. They reviewed over 60,000 e-mails and 10,000 text messages, in addition to relevant media reports, police reports, court filings, the employment contracts of Coach Meyer and Athletic Director Smith, and relevant OSU rules and policies, NCAA and Big Ten rules, and applicable state and federal laws.
5. Upon completion of the Independent Investigatory Counsel's work, the Working Group received their report, found it to be complete, professional and credible, and formally accepted it.

## 6. Key findings from the independent review:

1. On the University's overriding concern of assuring that spousal abuse is neither ignored nor condoned, the findings are: Coach Meyer has "a sincere commitment to the Respect for Women core values that he espouses and tries to instill in his players." The Independent Counsel also concluded that Coach Meyer would not hesitate to terminate any coach if spousal abuse was established:

"We believe [Coach Meyer] as did Zach Smith, that if [Coach Meyer] ever came to learn or believe that Zach Smith had physically abused his wife, Coach Meyer would have fired Zach Smith or any other coach on the spot."

1. Although Coach Meyer and Athletic Director Smith failed to adhere to the precise requirements of their contracts when they concluded that they needed to await a law enforcement determination to file charges before they reported the otherwise disputed claims of spousal abuse against Zach Smith, they did so based upon a good faith belief that they did not have sufficient information to trigger a reporting obligation or initiate a disciplinary action in the absence of law enforcement action. Other than their misunderstanding of the requirements triggering reporting obligations, neither Coach Meyer nor Athletic Director Smith violated any policy, rules, law or contractual obligation in connection with the alleged domestic abuse claims against Zach Smith.
1. A number of the other witnesses who were interviewed had the same understanding as that of Coach Meyer and Athletic Director Smith as to the events required to trigger University reporting obligations. The University therefore will undertake steps to make its requirements clearer and implement additional training to reinforce them.
1. Although Coach Meyer made significant misstatements about his knowledge of the 2015 events relating to Zach Smith and his former wife at the Big Ten Media Days, they were not part of a deliberate cover-up effort to keep Zach Smith on the coaching staff in the face of evidence of domestic violence by him that Athletic Director Smith and Coach Meyer credited.
1. The investigation identified multiple other examples of inappropriate conduct by Zach Smith while employed as an assistant football coach, some known by Coach Meyer and/or Gene Smith and others on the football staff. Coach Meyer and Athletic Director Smith's efforts to help Zach Smith overcome his personal issues went too far in allowing him to remain as an employee in the face of repeated misconduct.

## 7. University actions based upon the independent review:

The President and the members of the Board of Trustees of the University have received the Report of the Independent Investigation and find it to be complete, professionally done and credible. The President has consulted with the Board of Trustees and based upon these independent findings, the University accepts the findings of the report and, based on them, takes the following action:

Although neither Urban Meyer nor Gene Smith condoned or covered up the alleged domestic abuse by Zach Smith, they failed to take sufficient management action relating to Zach Smith's misconduct and retained an Assistant Coach who was not performing as an appropriate role model for OSU student-athletes. Permitting such misconduct to continue is not consistent with the values of the University and reflects poorly on Coach Meyer, Athletic Director Smith, and the University. Their handling of this matter did not exhibit the kind of leadership and high standards that we expect of our Athletic Director, Head Coach, Assistant Coaches and all on the football staff. Urban Meyer is suspended through September 2, 2018, and for the games on September 1, 8 and 15 without pay. Gene Smith is suspended without pay from August 31-September 16.

## **MORE ON THE STORY**

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- REPORT: OSU Will Publicize Findings Of Investigation
- REPORT: Meyer, AD Smith Met With Investigators Multiple Times
- Ohio State Sets Meeting To Discuss Urban Meyer Situation
- What's Next For Ohio State After Investigation?
- Investigation To Be Completed Sunday
- Ohio State President Michael Drake Comments On Meyer Investigation
- How Will Investigation End For Head Football Coach Urban Meyer, Ohio State?
- Zach Smith Meets With Ohio State Investigators
- OSU Investigative Team Meets With Courtney Smith
- REPORT: Zach Smith Arrested In 2013 For OVI
- Recent Revelations Won't Impact Meyer's Status
- Conflicting Reports From Snook, McMurphy Complicate Latest Smith Findings
- Reviewing The Zach Smith/Urban Meyer Situation
- Breaking Down Potential Resolutions To Meyer Investigation
- Lynn Bruce Says Courtney Smith Vowed To 'Take Urban Meyer Down' With Zach Smith
- Tennessee Jeff, Ezekiel Elliott's Father Headline Urban Meyer Supporters At Ohio State Rally
- Courtney Smith's Attorney Comments On Investigation, Says Ohio State 'Never Contacted' Her Client
- Meyer Investigation To Be Completed Within 14 Days
- Former OSU WR Coach Zach Smith Says AD Gene Smith Knew Of Allegations
- Meyer releases statement, explains actions
- Zach Smith CPO Hearing Postponed To September
- Meyer Placed On Paid Administrative Leave
- REPORT: Meyer's Wife Knew Of 2015 Allegations Against Smith

- Ohio State Fires Zach Smith

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