

WATCH: Full Urban Meyer Monday Press Conference Video With Transcript



Back at Ohio State with full-time duties as head coach, Urban Meyer met the media Monday in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center's team room for his game-week press conference ahead of Saturday against Tulane.

As he returned from the three-game suspension, though, questions remained since Meyer's previous public appearance Aug. 22 at Longaberger Alumni House. In roughly 56 minutes, Meyer opened up on a wide range of topics.

From his investigation and subsequent suspension to how the No. 4 Buckeyes (3-0, 1-0 Big Ten) performed without him on the sideline prior to the Green Wave (1-2), a 3:30 p.m. kickoff at Ohio Stadium on Big Ten Network, he discussed plenty on and off the field. The full video and transcript can be found below.

Urban Meyer

COACH MEYER: Hello. I'd like to share a couple of thoughts on the game first before we get started here. And that is first of all an incredible effort by our team in Dallas. Coach Patterson has been a friend for over 20 years. Incredible respect for that team. That certainly is a top-10 program, top-10 team. First time we got to coach against him. But you saw it Sunday when we started preparation for them.

To go down there in that environment and play the way they played, just very proud of them. The champions on defense were Nick Bosa, B.B. Landers, Jonathon Cooper, Davon Hamilton, Malik Harrison and Jordan Fuller. They played exceptional. Player of the game was a guy that scored a touchdown — I've got to read the stats for Dre'Mont: Three tackles, two assists, two tackle for loss, seven quarterback hurries, one knock down, one pass broken up, one interception and one touchdown. Hell of a day.

On offense, offense you had offensive line, all of them. Played very well. Very much improved group. Isaiah Prince, Michael Jordan, Thayer Munford and Demetrius Knox, he's done so well. Malcolm Pridgeon, first-time starter against that defense. J.K. Dobbins had a great day. Post-contact yardage was awesome. He had 121 total yards.

And the wide receiver group was outstanding — K.J. Hill had six interceptions; Johnnie Dixon; Bin Victor, he didn't have any catches, but he really started to come on, threw himself in there on some

great blocks.

Terry McLaurin, one of the most unselfish players I've ever been around. Start to throw him in the Evan Spencer category, and Parris Campbell. Player of the game was Dwayne Haskins, 24-of-38 for 344 yards, three total touchdowns. Really played very well.

On the kicking game, Johnnie Dixon was the player of the game. Went down, punted inside the 10, 39-yard kickoff return and 17 production points. The other guy who is playing exceptional, Jahsen Wint. These two did very well. I'll talk about that here in a second. That's the champions.

And also playing to win, — we're playing to win in big games especially on the road against elite personnel. This was followed pretty much to a "T" against an explosive offense and very good defense.

But the play of the win — we had two defensive scores. And our defense, which we'll count the punt block part of the defensive play now. Two scores and turn the ball over on the 25-yard line. And the offense scored two plays later. That's a 21-point switch, shift. I'm not sure you win that game without that.

TCU started 13 of their 14 drives inside their own 25, nine of those inside their own 20. They have a punt returner and kick returner that is one of the best I've seen, certainly in the last 10 years, named Turpin.

We knew that going in. Kind of took your breath away as you're getting ready to watch him play. He had three kickoff returns for just 56 yards. That's under 20 yards a return and zero punt return yards.

The amount of time and effort that our players put into that was phenomenal. Justin Hilliard, Dante Booker, Marcus Williamson, Keandre Jones, Jahsen Wint, Jeff Okudah, Terry McLaurin are just some guys that I have so much appreciation for their unselfishness for that phase of the game, which is obviously important.

I want to thank the Buckeye Nation for the support down in Texas. It's the third time we've been down there since '14. And the support was awesome.

I also want to thank Coach Day. I knew Coach Day was a difference-maker when we hired him. I followed his career. He was with me in Florida.

His professionalism and what he's done has been phenomenal and the rest of our staff, with Coach Schiano, Kevin Wilson, the other coaches, have been tremendous.

But most important I want to thank our players. And it was very hard to watch because it was such an intense game but it seemed as the game got tougher, our players got better. And that's because of good people, brotherhood and most importantly a very good team.

This was the first time I've had a chance to visit with you since media day. And I want to start off by apologizing for that performance.

I want to be really clear that there is zero intent to mislead. The report found that. I did not answer questions with the accuracy that I should have. I did listen closely to the questions.

And I want to explain why. Late the night before, the press conference, in Chicago, I received a text

message. And the message asked me would I like to comment on a felony assault arrest in 2015 of Zach Smith. I was shocked.

I had no recollection of a felony assault arrest. I immediately sent a group text out to people, and the people were Gene Smith, Jerry, our assistant athletic director, I recall, and then a couple people back here at the office. And to paraphrase the text, it was: I do not recall the events of 2015; please advise. I do not want to be wrong at media day.

And that was out there. And that's what I sent out.

And about an hour later, I get a phone call from a staff member here who is our liaison for law enforcement. And he says, Coach, there's no arrest. We can't even find a police report from 2015. The only thing that we see on his record is a divorce and his recent trespass situation that he had in July.

And there's nothing to that story. There's nothing to it. I hang up the phone. I go to sleep. I wake up in the morning, and I go to media day.

The focus of my — as I was asked questions, was on that felony arrest that never took place. And so once again, for those of you — I see some of you here that asked those questions — I apologize.

I gotta do a better job of listening. It was very uncomfortable — obviously there to talk about football, players and teams.

But that situation, when I got started getting peppered about questions about what I perceive to be a felony assault arrest, that's the reason I answered the way I did.

I've always had a somewhat a good relationship with the media. I've always been forthright with you the best I can. If I have not been, I apologize, but there's no intent. There's no intent — for those of you that know me well, some of you don't know me at all — there's never been an intent to mislead.

I would also like to give you a little bit of a timeline of what's happened in the last several years here. In 2012 I was hired at Ohio State and I was putting together a staff and the staff was going fast. A lot of activity going on. A lot of recruiting going on.

And I looked into Zach Smith. He's worked at two other previous universities. I was getting very, very high recommendations about his performance as a recruiter and his knowledge of our offense.

I made a decision to hire him. In 2012, '13 and '14, he did a very good job. One of the best recruiters on our staff, developed an excellent group of receivers. Some would say the 2014 group of receivers was as good as ever played here at Ohio State.

In 2015, I received — Gene Smith came up to me on the practice field and told me there was a domestic issue between Zach and Courtney. We were both furious.

I remember getting a hold of Zach and telling him if it was a domestic violence, you're fired immediately. Gene Smith reiterated that issue to him, that this would be instant termination if this was domestic violence.

He told us it was not. He would never hurt — hit Courtney. He would never — he had never done it, would never do it. And once again, I and Gene made perfectly clear, if this domestic violence you're

terminated within minutes.

And so — I then asked Gene, I said what do I need to do? Gene said allow the investigation to take place, do not get involved in the investigation; we'll update you along the journey. And that was right in the middle of the season. '15, as you recall, was a very up and down season, very intense season.

And I was updated throughout that time. As I was receiving updates as it became clear (indiscernible) the conclusion, what I was hearing back from law enforcement is that this was not domestic violence, that this was a very nasty divorce, child custody issues involved, but it was not domestic violence.

And finally, in conclusion, that's what we received back, that there was no arrest, no charges, not domestic violence, just a very messy divorce with child custody issues.

I then had to make a decision. And that decision was — I've seen Courtney Smith for many years around here with her beautiful children — I made a decision like I have in the past, once I knew domestic violence was not part of the situation — once again, if it was, it was perfectly clear — the report shows that; (indiscernible) report came out with that saying that she was impressed with our core values of treating with respect, which we work so hard on around here. And also I would fire any staff member immediately if I believed or I was told that this was in fact domestic violence.

So I made a decision, how do I best help stabilize. I've seen these kids many, many times. Like I said, I've seen Courtney many, many times. I was dealing with a coach who was dealing with work-related issues. All during this time was this separation and divorce.

I made a decision, I talked to Gene about it, let's get him very intense counseling, let's monitor it closely and try to stabilize this guy so he can be a good father and support the family the way he should.

And that's what we did. So we put him in counseling. We watched it very closely throughout the counseling. I was made aware of a couple of scenarios, situations that took place.

One was a credit card situation where he was supporting two homes, I was told, and he had maximized his credit cards. Gene and I both sat with him to try to advise him through that.

I was also made aware that through the counseling, university counseling that he has a prescription drug that he was using more than he should. I again asked what needed to be done. They assured me he was doing much better. He was getting everything in order. And I actually thought he made it through it.

He came out the other end of this very difficult time. His production increased. He looked much better. I saw his children constantly, which I encourage; we have family nights every week. So I see his children all the time.

He became once again one of our better recruiters. Had a good year. Had a great year in '17, and actually had some job offers this year to move on. He made the decision to stay here because he didn't want to leave his children.

I thought we made — periodically when asked about the relationship with him and Courtney, I was told by him that it was very good, it was very good. So that was in '16, '17. And really the first six months of '18 I heard nothing other than things were going fairly well, very well.

And then summer of 2018, we were on vacation. I was back here getting ready for training camp, I was made aware of a trespassing citation. I called him immediately on the vacation. I asked what's this all about. And I find out it's actually two months prior to when I find out. I was very upset with him, very angry about not being forthright.

And I alerted Gene immediately about the trespassing. He made it sound as if he just dropped his kids off at the wrong place. He was supposed drop them off here, instead he dropped them off here. He had said like a \$25 fine or something like that.

I was so angry that I had to hear about it from somewhere else. I made it clear: You keep me posted on everything. I made it clear to all our coaches; I need to know before I'm told from you.

And I go to Chicago. Bring my family to Chicago on Monday. I'm made aware of a protective order against Zach. Once again he does not tell me. A protective order is very serious. And I begin to go into termination mentality. And I alert Gene Smith a few hours later and I fire Zach Smith.

One other thing that I was asked several times throughout the investigation and recently I've been asked is about the deleted text messages or changing settings on my phone. And I've never deleted a text message. I've never changed a setting on my phone.

And I was asked that. I made that clear to the investigators. I've made it clear also — many, many people have access to my phone, including IT people, including some people that help me recruit. It's not uncommon for me to recruit over a hundred players a day and receiving videos.

I have hundreds of videos of my grandson and other family videos. And what happens is my phone started locking up throughout the spring and — throughout the spring.

And an IT person would take my phone and whatever he did he did to increase the storage capacity. And I found out several months ago, I think late spring is what I was told, is that he'd changed my setting to one year. Once again, I never changed the setting on my phone. I never changed the text message on my phone. And when I heard that — I highly respect the report. I would never do that, and I did not do that.

With that said, I'll any questions for you.

Q. Could you describe what it was like for you sitting and watching the first three games, where you were and what you were doing and how that was for you?

COACH MEYER: I was just devastated. I love these players. I have such great respect for these players. And that's why I've tried to share throughout my career is how hard these guys worked. I think a lot of times people see No. 68, No. 5, No. 7. And the time and effort that goes into that, that's their payday, that's the time to showcase. I'm not a part of it.

I think even as hard as that is not being able to be there at training camp. That's when you build your team and that's why I stay in a hotel with them. It's very difficult.

I watched it at home. Some support would come over to my house, friends, very close friends. And this one in particular, I only watched the good plays. I couldn't take it. I only watched the good ones. My daughter kept me updated and I would seriously — sounds silly but I would leave the room. The way that game started, it looked like — that team is very good. I only watched the good plays. And there

were some really good plays.

Q. Did you yell at the TV?

COACH MEYER: I don't yell — I just squeeze my arms. You see it on the sideline, wake up with bruised arms all that.

Q. You've mentioned many times how much you love this university. Has this situation affected your relationship with the university perhaps your longevity here?

COACH MEYER: I have a great relationship with our president, Gene Smith, I'm as close to Gene Smith as anybody. And this to me has never been a job. You know, when I took a year off, I wasn't planning on coming back coaching football. I was asked by Gene and the president at the time, Ohio State was going through a hard time.

And part of my family didn't want me to coach again. And I came back because of my sincere love for the state. I grew up here. I played high school football here. Played college football here. I love this school. I have a master's degree from Ohio State. My love is unwavering for Ohio State. Even more so now.

My apology is to Ohio State. My apology, I made a mistake, and you're going to hear this throughout this several times, but my apology is not for turning my back to domestic violence. I want to be so clear about that. The report clearly states that. And it was a very thorough investigation.

If I paraphrase the findings is that they respect our sincere commitment to respecting women. And if I was ever aware or made aware or told that there was domestic violence taking place I would have fired him immediately.

My error — and I've been accused of this before by giving people chances, and I saw a guy with work-related issues that have two children and an ex-wife, and he needed to support the way a man is supposed to support them. And I went — and I was suspended for the fact that I went too far to try to help a guy with work-related issues. To answer your question, my love is stronger than ever for this university.

Q. With regard to the Zach and Courtney situation, are there things you wish you could say about that you feel like you can't say?

COACH MEYER: This has been occupying my life for whatever weeks now. So I think I've said everything I possibly can. I'm not sure.

Q. I didn't know if there was something you wish you could say that you can't say publicly about — it's a very delicate situation obviously.

COACH MEYER: Very delicate.

Q. Things you wish you could say about it?

COACH MEYER: (No response.)

Q. Couple Fridays ago, I think it was before the first game, you put out a statement on Twitter reiterating, like you have here, of why you were suspended. I'm wondering what were you seeing, what were you hearing, what prompted you that I need to clear this up? Was there a tipping point for you that I gotta do something now?

COACH MEYER: Obviously came from my family. I'm not a social media guy. I don't, especially in

difficult times when I understand there's some pretty hard criticism out there, I just, I do what I try to do. What was brought back to me was that there was a perception out there that I was suspended because of domestic violence.

And my entire life, I think I've put out there, that this is something that when I was a child it was made very clear to me, it's about core values and you can fix a mistake. There's no fixing domestic violence. When that takes place it's dismissal, immediate removal of the person from the program. And I was not suspended for that. It was very clear in the report.

That was really, I think, the original part of the report is if we turn our back on domestic violence — that was the number reason. And my daughter actually — I don't know how to tweet out — she actually — I wasn't allowed to — usually the university does it for me. And that was — we all felt it was very necessary to be very clear what was taking place.

And I'm going to stay at other times — I apologize for being repetitive — that I was suspended — I want to say this, too, that Dr. Drake, who I have incredible respect, I apologize for putting him in this situation.

But the mistake was once again, and we've shared this conversation many, many times, the mistake was going — especially when some of these things started being reported in the media that I had no idea about.

This is an extremely strong and proud university with an incredible president, great athletic director. I've tried for the majority — for my career — to do the right thing. And I went too far trying to help a troubled employee with work-related issues, like I've done before. I've helped other staff members who have, obviously.

Q. Just quickly, your relationship with this current staff that you've had to stay away from and they've gone through pregames, has it changed — are you closer — I'm just wondering how you feel about that?

COACH MEYER: Very unique situation. And I'm just — I can't be more impressed. You guys saw it. And that's not by accident. I mean people say you go win a game. You just look across every week how hard it is to win a college football game. You take nothing for granted.

You know how involved I am in the kicking game just to see the punts getting off and the guys covering and the guys — I mean ball security. I don't have the stats right here. But that part of that game was won because we had created three turnovers, two for scores and a blocked punt. We had zero. Our punting was outstanding. Just things like that, that's how we measure an excellent coaching staff. And Ryan Day is elite. As well as other coaches on our staff. I'm very thankful for.

Q. The report found that you have suffered memory issues or from memory loss, used that as an explanation for some of your decision-making. What influence did that have on your ability to coach this football team?

COACH MEYER: I'm very healthy. I've had cyst issues in my head over the years. And I've had a couple of procedures and actually one surgery, also very intense medicine — I'm telling you, this report was so thorough and so transparent.

And so when questions came up about some of the conversations, for example, exact conversations back in 2015 or back before that and I didn't have great recollection of it, to they would ask: Have you had

any of this? Have you had this? What about this? It was very transparent and very personalized. But I'm very healthy.

Q. Do the memory issues that you had impact some of the decision making you made, or was that just —

COACH MEYER: I think it was just so transparent. There's things in that report that are very transparent and very thorough, the relativeness to the investigation. But I can just be truthful and tell you I've had heavy some pretty meds at times but it certainly — doesn't impact the way I coach.

Q. How damaging has this been to your credibility? Paul Finebaum last night said your credibility has been shattered. How do you feel about that?

COACH MEYER: It's tough to take. I've spent 30-plus years in coaching. Never been perfect. Tried extremely hard. My love of players, my love of development of players, my love of team, my love of the university has never been challenged.

When I start to hear that — that's why I'm hoping that something like this, for clarity, I wanted to go through everything.

If — I did not lie to you — if they talk about lying to the media, I did not lie to the media. I did not do a very good job. Now everybody has a decision to make and a choice to make. I was very clear about why I was doing, why I said what I said. And I apologize for that. If that destroys a guy's credibility, then I apologize for that.

Also, did I turn my back to domestic violence? Not one bit. I never would do that. That's been made perfectly clear after that very thorough investigation.

And for people who know me, know that's absolutely intolerable. I've always been a very strong advocate of anti-domestic violence.

I've been accused of giving student-athletes more than one chance, sometimes more than two chances, especially people from very tough situations. Not core value situations, but mistakes. And with great success we've had over the years, not perfect, but great success over the years.

I've helped staff members who have had issues over the years. Not exactly like this, but a couple that had marital issues. Great success.

I erred in going too far to try to help a guy with work-related issues. And as the investigation took place, these behaviors were showing up that I had no awareness of. So once again, I can only do what I do. I apologize. But there's no intent to mislead and no intent to not be truthful with everybody, including this university, including you guys. I went too far. That's what the president — that's why I was suspended.

Q. How do you explain the discussions regarding the text messages and the potential of deleting text messages?

COACH MEYER: With all due respect to that report, once again, a very transparent, very open report, I don't recall exactly any conversations about that. The article came out. And I once again, during the investigation, they asked me about that.

They found my settings to be on one year, which I wasn't quite sure what that meant. And I found out

later, after I went back to work, that the IT people changed my phone to one year months earlier than that.

There was never a deleted message. And I think the report even said that. I can't recall exactly what it said. But I did not delete text messages, never changed a setting in my phone.

Q. How do you balance your desire to help coaches through issues and your desire to give your players the best coaching and modeling as possible?

COACH MEYER: That's a great question and one that I've been replaying in my head over and over again. When I hired Zach, glowing reviews from the previous two coaching staffs he worked on, about his family, about his recruiting, about his first few years here, fantastic. 2012, he took — I think our leading receiver had ten catches the year before we got here. He developed Philly Brown, Devin Smith and all those guys, second year.

Third year, we won a national title of receivers, elite. 2015, you had an eight-month window of separation, a divorce, work-related issues that we were dealing with.

And I had two choices: Eliminate him right there. But I just — I saw Courtney around here so many times throughout recruiting. And we had family dinners every week.

I saw these children, which I encourage all the time, I saw them all the time, around here. And just the way my head works is how do I help this situation. Firing, would that help him? In hindsight, if I knew some of the things I knew after this investigation about his personal behavior that I was unaware of, that's an obvious. But at the time, that's not what I was made aware.

That's a fine line. I try to have pretty good success rate of hiring elite coaches around here. And really my entire career, with all the head coaches. And character is very important.

When I was hiring him, I believed I hired the right guy. In hindsight, now I look back with all these other issues that took place during that time period, I did not hire the right guy.

Q. Have you found throughout this whole process that you learned some valuable lessons about domestic violence, Coach? I know you made (indiscernible) and things like that before, but have you found this an educational process for yourself (indiscernible)?

COACH MEYER: I found this whole thing to be an educational process. And since my first day at Bowling Green, when I was putting together our coaches' manual, thinking — because I was raised that way.

When I was a young man, my dad taught us our core values: Honesty, treat women with respect, no drugs (indiscernible), no stealing.

That's always been that way. I can't say that all of a sudden now this is on the forefront; it always has been. But to say I haven't learned, I learned a great deal.

I learned — we brought in Ray Wright [phonetic], spoke to our team about that. We always have.

Shelley Meyer and Sheila Smith put on a workshop last year called Healthy Relationships. And it's just always on the forefront.

Throughout the facility, we have examples of mistakes made by people that just destroy lives. So it's

always been on the forefront. But to say have I learned, I learned a great deal.

Q. I wanted to clarify your conversation with (inaudible). You didn't talk about text messages at all that day, obviously?

COACH MEYER: My recollection of that is that there's an article out, something about the press gaining access to your phone. And I said, "I don't worry about my phone. There's nothing to hide on my phone." And that was it.

Q. And then you said at that time you didn't believe it was a domestic violence issue.

COACH MEYER: I'm sorry?

Q. You said in 2015 you were told there was no domestic violence issue. What do you believe about Courtney Smith's allegations?

COACH MEYER: Back in 2015 — the report said that both Gene and I were too reliant on law enforcement. And my entire career, we've been taught, if there's any type of investigation with a student-athlete, with a staff member, any law investigation, stay out of it and get updates along the way.

All I can go by is what I was told by law enforcement. And that was that there's no domestic violence and this was a messy divorce with child custody involved. That's what we were told.

Q. Is that still what you believe?

COACH MEYER: I can only go by what was told to me by law enforcement. What I have learned is that, especially a situation as serious with law enforcement, you need to ask more questions.

And I've always been kind of told not to. And I just think that after going through this that I need to ask more questions.

Q. I think you've addressed it, but I recall when you were hired, OSU was going through a tough time. And I asked something about: When you encounter a situation. And you said you have to go in there and blow it up. I mean, you cited chapter and verse here. Your statement seems to reflect — with regard, in general, to Zach, was there a time when you should have blown it up, I guess is the question?

COACH MEYER: I look back now, there was. At the time that it was time to make a decision was — like I said, '12, '13 and '14 were very productive years. '15, that's when work-related issues started to surface, too.

He was late for summer meetings, a handful of meetings. And also this domestic situation that law enforcement was involved.

I had to make a decision. When it came back to me that there was no charges and no arrests, and it was actually told to us that this was not domestic violence — I look back now, I'm not sure I'd do the same thing; I might say that's enough, to get to that point, especially how serious that is.

But that's a hard situation. I've had conversations with some colleagues about that, what do you do? Do you question the police? I'm not allowed to question the police.

Are you allowed to go beyond and start contacting victims and investigating yourself? That's — you're done. You can't do that; that's called tampering.

Those are the fine lines that other people have dealt with, I've dealt with over the years. Many leaders, I've talked to a couple friends of mine in corporate America, and they deal with HR and you let the professionals do their work. And that's what I did.

Q. Did Earle's influence always weigh on your mind?

COACH MEYER: Not about domestic violence, no. No. I think the fact that Earle was such a close mentor of mine, that the work-related issues — I once again go back to seeing Courtney and seeing these children many, many times throughout the several years here. I mean, many times, because we encourage that.

I wanted to try — once I knew domestic violence was not part of the equation — how best to help these two young kids.

Fire Zach Smith? Can he support that family? And what happens next? And I knew they were work-related. I thought all the work-related stuff was about this tumultuous time in his life. I wanted to help Courtney. I wanted to help the children. How do I do that?

And I talked to several people: How do I do this? And we had very good success, like I said, over the years. Tried to put him in intense counseling so he could stabilize that family and be a good father, support the family the way he should.

Q. Ryan Day said that while you were gone he didn't want to disrupt anything; he wanted to have everything ready for you and he just didn't want to rock the boat. When you returned, do you sort of do the same thing, even though it's your program, do you actually (inaudible), you don't want to just come in be like a bull in a china shop?

COACH MEYER: That's a good way of putting it, bull in a china shop. He's done and this coaching staff has done phenomenal. You guys are witness to it.

I was back two weeks ago, and I even asked today how do I assist? I'm a fundamental person, a ball security guy. I watch things very closely. I'm very involved in the kicking game. I have not been that involved in the offense. I give my ideas. And I think they're doing exceptional. So I'm trying to just help, do the best I can.

Q. Do you have an update on Nick Bosa?

COACH MEYER: Yes, he's getting further tests this week. He went on to play this week. Further tests on an abdominal and groin issue (indiscernible).

Q. When Gene Smith came to you in 2016 to talk about Zach Smith's allegations of domestic violence, why didn't you inform him about the 2009 incident involving Zach Smith at Lawrence [phonetic]?

COACH MEYER: That was actually in 2015 he came to me.

Q. Right.

COACH MEYER: In 2009, I was led to believe this was not domestic violence. There were no charges filed. I look back now, that when I — he worked at two other universities. And then he came, and that's when I hired him at Ohio State, that's when I should have made him aware of this situation.

In 2015, I can't recall if I did or not. That's the 2009 situation.

Q. If my recollection is right, Gene Smith said that he was not aware of the 2009 incident. If you didn't inform him, did you feel like that was in any way covering up a problematic situation?

COACH MEYER: Not covering up. But in hindsight, I should have. I thought I did. But —

Q. Lastly, do you believe that Courtney Smith was ever a victim of domestic violence?

COACH MEYER: I can only rely on what information I received from the experts.

Q. Do you anticipate an administrative staff shake-up with your staff based on the way things have been brought to you in the past concerning the other things that obviously went on with Zach Smith, from sex in the office kind of situation and all these other things that kind of comes in that went on without you knowing about it, do you anticipate making any changes in that regard?

COACH MEYER: Two things there: Number one, I need to do a better job creating an atmosphere — football, especially during the season — is so intense. Obviously a very intense focussed guy. And people need to feel comfortable coming to me if there's any scenarios or situations like this.

I've started that process. The majority — I've not talked to one person who was aware of that stuff that was going on. So I'm not sure — I know the report, I think, said something like that.

But when you start talking about some of these behaviors that I'm asked and they're not aware of is behaviors that surfaced during the last two months [phonetic].

Q. Follow up. You've even said this in a press conference, you like to have positive news come across your desk, that's where kind of you like to operate. Do you think it's intimidated some folks into not bringing you negative news, so to speak?

COACH MEYER: I hope not. That's something that Gene and I have talked about that I need to do — I always thought I had that atmosphere. If someone was aware of somebody's behaviors and did not bring it to my attention, I obviously have to work on that, and I have.

Q. Obviously that report about the strip club stuff including another coach, Tom Herman. Do you remember having a conversation at all with Tom Herman during this time here about some things getting out of hand, et cetera? What do you recall? Because obviously he was there with Zach in this one instance, at least. What do you recall of any of that?

COACH MEYER: With all respect, there were two coaches involved. And when it was made clear, when I was told what had happened, I was extremely upset.

I called them into my office immediately. I told them they would be fired if it ever happened again. That day, I instituted a morality clause in the program.

I've been told that it takes place in other places. And I don't care. It's Ohio State, we don't do that. So I was just very clear that we don't do that.

Q. We've all seen the text messages that Shelley had with Courtney Smith. And I think you've been pretty — you've been clear from your recollection you recall nothing of Shelley bringing that to you in any form or fashion, that kind of news. I mean, do you stick by that story, so to speak; she did not bring this up to you in 2015 or '16?

COACH MEYER: She never shared the text messages with me.

Q. What damage do you believe has been done to the Ohio State football program as a result of this and the investigation?

COACH MEYER: I think there was. I think this is — hopefully this — I've already had conversations with recruits and families of our players. We sent out several letters to the families. But to say there's not damage, there was.

I'm hoping that the clarity of the damage is that why I was suspended and what the report came back, and that I was not lying to the media. I was not lying to people, or that I turned — I or we turned our back to domestic violence.

And I'm going to do the best I can. If we can remove those two, which is the truth, the damage, I believe, is that we just went through a really hard time and I made a mistake in helping a troubled employee, went too far trying to help someone that had some work-related issues.

Q. So you've mentioned domestic violence (indiscernible) several times. And obviously I think special (inaudible) does vary. You understand that; it's a very important part of this —

COACH MEYER: Sure.

Q. — that it is a very serious situation handled properly by people who are in power. And everyone's made a lot of having the words on the wall, that type of thing. In terms of actions to show how seriously you say you take domestic violence, what are the concrete examples you point to in your past that show this is how to take domestic violence seriously and what will you do, what can Ohio State do in the future to show that, Ohio State, the football program, you take this very seriously?

COACH MEYER: Ever since I began as a head coach, and even in more recent years, I would say every other day is a very strong — last night I talked to our team about it.

We have power unit messages to our players every Thursday, and I talk about domestic violence, Title IX respect. When I say the word "Title IX," our players respond back to me: "Respect."

That's how serious we take this. This is something that is constantly — we have conversation. It's not uncommon for me to send a group text out on a Friday or Saturday night: Remember Title IX equals respect.

This is something that I put the number one — I think there's an article this summer, number one is domestic violence - sexual assault. Number two is this opioid issue that we're all dealing with.

Number three is the mental health of a student-athlete. This is something that 10 years ago — now we have a full-time sports psychologist because that's how serious we take that. And then concussions.

Those are the four pillars that I've told our staff, constant, constant awareness. We try to go outside — we have a very good relationship with our Title IX office here on campus.

I'm constantly — I would say two months ago Ryan Stanford [phonetic] and I went over and met with Dr. J, Vice President of Student Affairs, and for no other reason, just: How are we doing? What can we do better? What's out there? We can keep educating our players about the respect for women; that's such a serious issue right now.

And so it's endless as far as working on. I made a mistake — not in domestic violence. Where I made my

mistake is not asking enough questions, I believe, and complete reliance on law enforcement.

When you hear “no charge,” “no arrest,” how far can you go? And Gene and I talked about that. Many colleagues and I have talked about that. What’s the next step when you say there’s no arrest or no charge? What do you do next?

And one thing that’s been made clear all along the journey is you can’t go out and investigate; you’re not allowed to. That’s not something that’s part of — but you can ask questions. And I think the other thing is red flags. Those are the things.

Q. And you addressed all these matters (indiscernible): The text messages, not informing Ohio State about it, what happens after 2009. However you want to characterize what was said in Chicago. It’s the collection of those things together, right, that adds up sometimes, even when you have (indiscernible) — that add up. For Ohio State administrators, for fans of Ohio State, why should they believe you’re a trustworthy person?

COACH MEYER: That’s also a very difficult — for six and a half years here, until July of 2018, since we came back to Ohio State, we’ve taken — the academic performance, it’s been elite. Football performance has been very good.

Life after football — Real Life Wednesdays we started has taken on a world of its own — about development of players, getting them ready for life after football.

The honesty and integrity of our program has been very good. Evaluations every year with the president, with Gene Smith, have been very, very positive.

This is a window of time that I made an error. But once again that’s what I’m hoping — and I’ll keep saying it, really, for the rest of my life — this was about trying to help a troubled employee with work-related issues. It was not about lying to the media.

And once again, if someone in this room says you lied to you, I’m telling you I did not lie. I misspoke. And I hope you can understand why, where my focus was on that day. And if someone tells me that it’s a felony arrest, that’s my focus. But there’s not one. I don’t know why this came up, there was no felony arrest. But what about this? What about this? And I didn’t listen closely.

So that part I’m hoping people will understand about. The understanding about — that I deleted messages. I didn’t do it. In fact, the university found I didn’t do it. The university is even aware that the IT guy changed my phone months before, just because my volume was filled.

So I’m hoping that people listen. And I can only say the truth. I can only let you know. I’d like to say over 30 years that I — I have been accused of helping players too much, giving them too many opportunities. That’s an accusation I accept. And I’m very careful about that.

But I also — I’ve been that way my entire life, even outside of football. When I see someone in need, you help the person in need. How far do you go? That’s that fine line.

I had — I counted at least three staff members over the 17 years that have been in difficult situations that I’ve tried to help and never fired anybody. I always take the approach of trying to help them. I’m hoping that comes out.

I understand that this will take time. Maybe never. But that's my job in a press conference like this, and really in relationships with you and recruits and administrators. I know our president now is very comfortable with the situation. We've had many, many conversations, and I know our athletic director is.

Q. Just in general, you made it clear that you went too far to help Zach with these issues. It does seem like you're in control of this football program, this football building. That's how it works; you're the football coach, you're in charge of everything. Should there be more oversight in the athletic department to make sure that you're not doing too much with a certain issue, to make sure that they're informed all along the way? I know you have a personal relationship with Gene. But is it possible that a football coach can have too much power in a building to make unilateral decisions?

COACH MEYER: Absolutely.

Q. And what can Ohio State do better going forward to make sure something like this doesn't happen again with a staff member?

COACH MEYER: Absolutely. That's always been a concern of mine. That's why, when I was hired at Ohio State I asked to have a full-time compliance officer in this building. There never was one. I wanted a guy here so they could — you know, for me to be in charge of the progress was very serious.

I wanted to make sure doors were open, and I don't ever want have someone coming to me saying, Coach, you're violating rules. And that was my request. Whenever within minutes I hear of a situation, I contact Gene Smith and make sure because I'm not qualified sometimes to handle these situations. I need help with this. I'm a football coach. I'm not an investigator. I need help with this.

On campus, I've asked for much help. I mentioned Dr. J, who is a very good friend, and she's very good at her job. I asked for help. I asked for help for a Title IX liaison, Title IX coordinator. We're not Title IX people. Help us with this situation. What can we do better?

And that's what I was hoping was going to either come out or be involved in this investigation, is that other than this window of time, which was very serious, the marks are all over the top. And I was hoping more would come out. I haven't heard much. I invite you to go ask is how does the Ohio State coaching staff respond to any type of Title IX issues, any respect for women issues, any legal issues. I would be surprised to say as good as any school in the country.

And that's the response back I get from my superiors. Because I don't handle things. What I do is I seek advice on this. Because I've been asked many, many times how would you handle the situation differently.

I'm here to tell you, three years later, six weeks after going through this, I need help. You know, a football coach, I've talked to many coaches about this, you know, you need to go investigate this yourself, bring everybody in and talk to everybody involved? No, absolutely not. I'm not going to do that.

There needs to be a channel. Does Ohio State — yeah, we're looking at everything. I think it's a topic that every school in the country is going through.

There's well-documented issues that have gone on in the last five, six years. 20 years ago, you never heard much about them. It's a completely different animal.

And I agree with it. It's such a fine line. But I do seek advice. That's how it is — those who probably know me a little bit, but those who know me, and my superiors, instantaneous, elevate it, instantaneous, need help; help me out and handle this situation. Not football-related. Any off-the-field things.

Q. Along those lines, there's been made discussion about how much a head coach should have to know, delving into personal issues. Where do you stand on that? You've said everything is under your purview, you see that as fair and is that just the way it is?

COACH MEYER: I think that at high-profile football programs that's the way it is. Do I think it's fair? No one forced me to be a head coach. I think what goes on in people's homes is very difficult. There's some things brought up throughout this facility that Zach did that I'm completely unaware of.

What's your responsibility to know that? That's why I want to create — if someone knows something, I need them to come back. And I'm asked a lot, and the people I've talked to in this facility, they were not aware of some of these salacious accusations that were taking place, they were not aware.

And so that's — I actually spoke to a friend of mine in corporate America, that's everyone's nightmare is that you're representing a very proud company, institution, you're responsible for hundreds of people, how much can you really know? The answer is you have to know.

Q. I know that domestic violence, obviously, is a very sensitive issue. And part of the sensitivity is you get into a he said/she said situation. Through this time, the last 10 years or whatever, have you found yourself wondering about the credibility of Courtney and Zach, is that part of the challenge?

COACH MEYER: I tried to stay away from that because I know — I did ask Zach — or no, I stressed it, I said, "You're fired, like within seconds, if I find out it's domestic violence."

People have asked me why didn't I reach out to Courtney and ask her. I'm not allowed. I'm not allowed; there's an investigation going on.

We are still in conversation, Gene and I, and other people, like I said, when that comes across the table, there's experts, there's professionals, there's law enforcement: Please help us with this; you have the right to go investigate the situation, report back to us, and we respond, and there's never a charge, never an arrest, how do I respond? And I want to once again say that what I have learned is ask more questions.

Q. How much better can this offense get?

COACH MEYER: A lot better. Two very good running backs. We can get a lot better.

Q. You mentioned stuff you learned about Zach. (Inaudible) and visibility, can you explain why that was?

COACH MEYER: In 2001 was personal work-related issues. He did [phonetic] get a raise one year, I believe that was the year. But I did discuss it with him. And once again, it was related to being late to a handful of meetings and other personal issues. It was about an eight-month window. That was on there.

Q. You did say (inaudible) you hadn't talked to Courtney. What would you say to her?

COACH MEYER: I've said it several times. And I do want to say this that there was a press conference the day that I found out I was suspended. And I was in a room for about 12 hours straight.

The investigation as I recall was just concluded. I sat in my house, I stared at walls for two weeks. And

it was awful. And I was exhausted and obviously very emotional, because I was just suspended or being suspended. And I walk into a press conference and the cameras are going, and I start getting rapid-fire questions at me. And I did not do well, again, at that scenario.

I came out there a couple days later and said I'm very sorry. And I'm saying this again right now, I'm very sorry.

No two children and a wife, family, should go through this, especially when this started becoming a media storm about these just these activities that were going on and families chiming in and accusing families of things against each other. And no family should ever have to go through that.

Q. When you talked about that period of reflection that you had and the chance to maybe learn some lessons, now that you are at this point, what is it that you think you learned? What will change? What did you get out of it on your side?

COACH MEYER: I think, once again, and I've had this question to me about a student-athlete, and when I try to help a guy, try to help a guy — and what doesn't get reported are the great stories, the positive results, guys' lives change and they get these opportunities that playing college football and an education will give you.

Same thing about helping a staff member through a very terrible divorce or when there's young children involved. This was a scenario that there were so many other outside forces coming in on both sides and families on both sides and this behavior that was going on that we were unaware of.

I learned a lesson, and that's how far do you go to try to help someone out. To be honest, to this day, right now, I struggle with that. Because I've always gone on trying to go help someone who, especially the people in difficult situations — we have these family nights. I see children, beautiful kids. I see them around the office, I would say, once a week. And that's throughout the whole year. I encourage our families to be around here. I've seen Courtney many, many times over the years.

And I start to see these families, and part of the obligation of a leader, especially the way we do it here, is you're obligated to that: Do the right things, to follow the rules, to perform on the field so people don't lose jobs and families get uprooted.

And that's the way my mind works. When I saw this situation, and once domestic violence was taken out of the equation, my mindset was how do you help stabilize this situation.

That man has an obligation to raise those kids. He has an obligation to support that family: How can I help? How can Gene help do that?

We made a decision, and for many people out there that think that was a very wrong decision — I look back now with all the other decisions together, it was the wrong decision. But what I knew at the time, I can tell you I thought we were doing the right thing at the time.

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