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Sex Abuse Case Shakes Penn State Football; 72-Game NBA Season?



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Former Penn State head football coach Joe Paterno at a game on October 15

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This is IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English.

This week, the coach with the most wins ever in major college football in the United States lost his job. The governing board of Penn State University in State College, Pennsylvania, dismissed eighty-four-year-old Joe Paterno. The Board of Trustees fired him after police arrested one of his former assistants last week. Jerry Sandusky is accused of sexually abusing at least eight young boys over a period of more than ten years.

One of those incidents reportedly happened at Penn State in two thousand two. A graduate student assistant said he witnessed Mr. Sandusky assaulting a ten-year-old boy.

He informed Mr. Paterno, who told informed school officials. But Mr. Paterno has been criticized for not informing others when no action was taken against Mr.

Sandusky. He retired from Penn State in nineteen ninety-nine, and has denied the charges.

Mr. Paterno is not a target of the criminal investigation. But the two Penn State officials he informed have been charged with failing to report the incident to law enforcement officials.

On Wednesday Mr. Paterno released a statement saying he wished he had done more. He said he would retire at the end of this season after forty-six years as head coach. But later in the day the trustees voted to fire him. Vice chairman John Surma announced the decision.

JOHN SURMA: "Joe Paterno is no longer the head football coach, effective immediately."

Mr. Surma also announced the dismissal of Penn State's president. Graham Spanier led Penn State, a public research university, for sixteen years.

There was violence Wednesday night as some students went into the streets near campus to show their support for Mr. Paterno.

Mr. Paterno spoke to students who gathered in front of his house after his firing.

JOE PATERNO: "One thing, thanks and pray a little bit for those victims."

The Education Department says it is investigating whether Penn State failed to report incidents of sexual abuse on campus, as required by federal law.

Mr. Paterno, known as "Joe Pa," turned a rural college into a national sports leader. His so-called Grand Experiment aimed to show that college players could be both good athletes and good students. He had four hundred nine victories. He guided Penn State to five undefeated seasons and two national championships.

The team is ranked twelfth in the nation. They play their last home game of the season on Saturday against nineteenth-ranked Nebraska.

In other sports news, team owners and the players union in the National Basketball Association completed their latest negotiations on Thursday. Those efforts ended with a proposal for the players to vote on. It would allow for a seventy-two game season beginning December fifteenth.

Derek Fisher is the union president.

DEREK FISHER: "On the main six or seven issues, I'm not sure that we can say on any one of them, the NBA came all the way to what we like them to come to. All I can say is that on a couple of the issues, there was some revision, there was some change in their position from the last proposal that we saw."

NBA Commissioner David Stern said the owners would await the decision from the players union next week.

DAVID STERN: "There comes a time when you have to be through negotiating and we are."

The season was supposed to have started November first. The dispute centers on basketball-related income. Owners want fifty percent of the revenue while players want 52.5 percent.

Owners say the NBA lost three hundred million dollars last year. They say just eight of the thirty teams earned a profit.

And that's IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English. I'm Christopher Cruise.

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