

Is There Any Big Ten Program That Doesn't Have a Hideous Sex Abuse Scandal Lurking In Its Past?

 deadspin.com/is-there-any-big-ten-program-that-doesnt-have-a-hideous-1842303580

Once is a mistake, twice is a coincidence, three times is a pattern.

But four?

That's a contagious culture.

The University of Michigan is now the fourth school in the Big Ten in the last few years that's in the news because of past sexual abuse scandals that were either covered up or ignored for years inside athletic departments.

Back in 2018, a police investigation took place based on accusations against former University of Michigan doctor Robert Anderson, who worked at the school from 1968 to 2003 and died in 2008. Besides a slew of accusations against Anderson, it appears his actions were an open secret amongst student-athletes over the years, as Anderson was an important figure in the athletic department who helped administration cut costs, while also being the brains behind [Bo Schembechler's drug-testing program](#). A former Michigan wrestler from the 1980s sued the school earlier this month, claiming that the university was well aware of what was going on. Days later, a former Michigan football player from the same era filed a similar lawsuit. To date, Michigan has received more than 100 complaints about Anderson from his tenure at the university.

It's pretty hard to ignore the fact that the conference's biggest names and moneymakers have all had scandals that could have been exposed decades ago were it not due for the enormous revenue athletics brings in at those institutions.

According to recent data from the NCAA, almost \$18.1 billion was spent on athletics between all three of its divisions in 2018, generating \$10.3 billion. Last year Penn State's football team generated \$100.5 million compared to the \$205 million that Ohio State athletics made. Michigan State's athletic program brought in over \$145 million between 2017-2018, while Michigan's projected revenue for the 2020 fiscal year is expected to be more than \$196 million.

When it comes to big-time collegiate athletics, the adults in the room have proven to us time and time again that they will swallow their whistles when it comes to the safety of a child/teenager or reporting a crime that could affect the money train.

2011 gave us Jerry Sandusky and Penn State. Last November, Sandusky was re-sentenced to 30 to 60 years in prison, the sentence that had been overturned, as he still maintains his innocence. Former FBI director Louis Freeh's 2012 report said that it was "reasonable" that things were covered up due to "a culture of reverence for the football program."

2016 was the year Michigan State's Larry Nassar saga began. When The Indianapolis Star broke the Nassar story, we quickly became aware of how USA Gymnastics and MSU allowed him to sexually assault young women and men for decades.

It's pretty hard to ignore the fact that the conference's biggest names and moneymakers have all had scandals that could have been exposed decades ago but were not due to how much revenue athletics brings in at those institutions.

"I can't even guess how many vulnerable children and families you actually assaulted," said Judge Rosemarie Aquilina during the closing remarks of Nassar's trial.

In 2019, it was Ohio State's turn. Dr. Richard Strauss was the Buckeye's version of Nassar. He was an employee of the university from 1979-1997 that is believed to have sexually abused at least 177 male students. Like Anderson, Strauss is dead. He committed suicide in 2005.

"It was known he was seeing these athletes and there were issues," attorney Michael Wright previously told the Associated Press, as he was preparing to drop a lawsuit on Ohio State as counsel for over 50 former athletes that claimed they were sexually abused by Strauss. "Clearly they had good relationships with the university, and they believe the university will either retaliate or significantly distance themselves from these athletes," Wright explained.

And now, we have Anderson at Michigan, one of the most notable universities in the world, which claims to have almost a half-million living alums.

Countless victims + four universities = one conference. At some point, the Big Ten has to realize they're the common denominator. And while these incidents may have been the ones that have garnered the most attention over the years, there are still some messes that the conference needs to address.

For instance, in February there was a report alleging that a hockey coach at the University of Minnesota had different jobs at the school despite multiple sexual assault allegations. In January, the Big Ten got new leadership when Kevin Warren made history becoming the first Black Commissioner of the conference. Warren also spent time in the NFL working with the St. Louis Rams, Detroit Lions and the Minnesota Vikings. In 2005, Warren began working in Minnesota. That's also the same year the Vikings had their infamous "Love Boat" sex scandal.

I guess if you're going to be the conference that's repeatedly dealing with these kinds of issues, it's smart to hire a commissioner that has some type of experience with the subject matter.

If you read most of the headlines Sunday evening surrounding the NFL players' vote to approve the controversial collective bargaining agreement, you'd think all was blissful on the league's labor front.

"NFL players voted to approve a new collective bargaining agreement with the league's owners, ensuring NFL labor peace through at least 2030." That was the common message from the headlines: "Labor peace".

The NFL Players Association, led by Executive Director DeMaurice Smith, announced the approval gleefully, saying: "The result comes after a long and democratic process in accordance with our constitution."

Opponents of the resolution, however, claim this is false, that the process was neither democratic nor constitutional, but illegally pushed through against the NFLPA's executive committee's 7-4 vote against the proposal in the middle of an ever-increasing pandemic, to boot.

So if you read past the headlines and press releases, and listen to those who were behind the scenes as this vote went down, you'll realize not all is as enchanted as it seems.

"The fact that the NFLPA Executive Committee voted against the proposal, 7-4, but it was still rushed for a full vote during a pandemic without providing players full and accurate information, and instead giving NFL talking points wrecks of bad faith," said Ben Meisalas, one of Eric Reid's lawyers, who along with fellow Reid attorney Mark Geragos, reviewed the proposed CBA, and published a four-page fact sheet last week claiming the proposal "disproportionately enriches ownership," "reduces players safety" and "guts disability benefits."

Meisalas also noted Executive Committee member Russell Okung issuing a legal claim against the NFLPA on Sunday "with the intention of bringing the truth to light." Okung retained Peter Ginsberg and his firm Sullivan & Worcester to pursue a National Labor Relations Board Complaint charging the NFLPA had "substantive" procedural violations; asked many players to vote on the CBA "without receiving full or accurate information", and failed "to disclose health-risk information in the possession of NFLPA staff leadership."

In an interview with Deadspin on Friday, Reid shared in great detail why he felt the CBA was "a disaster" for players, especially for health and safety concerns that would reduce disability benefits to "historic lows", while diverting new gambling revenue away from shared revenue.

"This is obviously problematic," Reid told Deadspin on Sunday in response to news of the Executive Committee's vote being bypassed.

The vote to approve was 1019-959, a majority by only 60 votes in an election where nearly 500 players didn't vote, and many players were denied a chance to change their vote after receiving accurate information. All this happened amid a global pandemic that was significant enough for the NFLPA to close its Washington, D.C. offices, but not delay its 10-day voting period, which ended at 11:59 p.m. ET on Saturday.

As expected, Commissioner Roger Goodell painted an even rosier picture, despite concerns raised by Reid, Okung and several other high-profile players.

"We are pleased that the players have voted to ratify the proposed new CBA, which will provide substantial benefits to all current and retired players, increase jobs, ensure continued progress on player safety, and give our fans more and better football."

Putting the NFL public relations machinery aside, there are so many questions that need to be answered by NFLPA leadership:

- What is the point of having an NFL Player Executive Committee, if the wishes of that committee are ignored? Information matters, and it seems the NFLPA failed to take steps to honestly disseminate it.
- And, if reports are true, why wouldn't the NFLPA honor players' requests to change their CBA vote before Saturday's deadline?
- If the amount of players asking to change their vote was significant enough to propose a resolution, was it also significant enough to flip the vote?
- After the request to change votes was denied last Monday, how many more requests by players went unheard?

"The law provides remedies to penalize Unions and potentially overturn their decisions that involve misconduct, bad faith, voting irregularities, and procedural infirmities," says Meiselas. "All of which appear to have occurred here. This is probably the most absurd and offensive negotiation I have ever seen."

Want Deadspin's email newsletter?

DEADSPIN

By subscribing you agree to our [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).