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'It's just sick,' says Sandusky victim's foster mom on report

From the foster mother of one of Jerry Sandusky's sex abuse victims to Nike's World Headquarters, the Freeh report on how Penn State Officials handled the allegations generated shock and new outrage.

"It's just sick," said the foster mother of the boy known as Victim 10. "This all could have been avoided."

She said she was really surprised to learn late football coach Joe Paterno didn't do more.

"I thought he would be more like the honest Joe, the good guy," she said. The report implicated Paterno, former university president Graham B. Spanier, former athletic director Tim Curley and former vice president Gary Schultz in a 14-year effort to prevent the child sexual abuse allegations against Sandusky from coming to light.

"I just didn't think they would do that, cover up like that," the foster mother said.

Mark Parker, Nike's CEO, announced Joe Paterno's name would be removed from the child care center at the sporting goods giant's world headquarters in Beaverton, Ore.

"I have been deeply saddened by the news coming out of this investigation at Penn State," said Parker in a statement. "It is a terrible tragedy that children were unprotected from such abhorrent crimes . . . My thoughts are with the victims and the Penn State community."

Nike co-founder Phil Knight, while expressing love for Paterno and his family, said he was "extremely saddened on this day."

"According to the investigation, it appears Joe made missteps that led to heartbreaking consequences," he said.

The report by former FBI Director Louis Freeh was seven months in the making and much anticipated not only by victims and their families, but by Penn State alum, and university officials elsewhere.

Attorneys Justine Andronici and Andrew Shubin, who represent Victim 10, as well as Victims 3 and 7, issued a statement that called the report, "absolutely devastating to Penn State."

"It confirms that at the highest level, Penn State officials, including the University President and head football coach, knew that Sandusky was a child predator, but made the deliberate and reprehensible decision to conceal his abuse."

They statement continued: "They chose to protect themselves, Penn State's brand and image, and their football program instead of children."

Tom Kline, an attorney who represents 'Victim 5,' spoke after the news conference announcing the report's findings.

Penn State tragically, sadly, unbelievably is the enabler - that's the headline," he said. "The conduct by Mr. Spanier is unthinkable."

Also attending the news conference was Brian Masella, a Penn State alum from Columbus, N.J. He played for the football team as a punter and tight end from 71-75.

Masella said Paterno was being unfairly smeared in a rush to judgment. He said there's more information that needs to come out - and maybe more trials.

"It's still early in the game as far as I'm concerned," Masella said.

On the Penn State campus, reaction - at least at first - was muted as students and alumni tried to either call up the report on computers or watch coverage on television.

Maddy Pryor, a 21-year-old senior at Penn State University was hoping to find something in the report that would exonerate Paterno. But the public relations major from Neptune, N.J. sighed as she grazed the pages. She kept sighing. "Most people are going to do a knee-jerk reaction, but it takes time to read (the full report)," Pryor said. And recently elected Penn State trustee Anthony Lubrano asked: "How important is this? We all understand our conduct going forward is extremely important to the university." Lubrano stopped to talk with reporters as he walked into the Hilton Hotel in Scranton in preparation for the board of trustees 3:30 p.m. news conference. He would not comment on calls for the entire board to resign, saying that would be up to individual members, according to their own conscience. He was asked if the board, so severely criticized for lax oversight in the Freeh report, could exert strong oversight now. "I'm a glass half-full kind of guy," he said.

"This Penn State community is very vibrant. We have it within ourselves to do what coach (Paterno) demanded of all of us, which is to make Penn State better than we found it." Lubrano promised that the board review of the report's findings would be thorough. He said he himself had read about 80 pages so far, and would be reading and rereading the full document. Elsewhere, reaction was strong.

Dan Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities believed the report had bigger implications.

"This report is yet another affirmation that this case at Penn State will have a profound, reverberating effect throughout American higher education," Hurley said. "It provides a strong call for greater accountability on the part of university officials."

Ronald G. Ehrenberg, director of the Higher Education Research Institute at Cornell University, said the report's findings suggest, "a failure of governance more generally," and not just on part of former President Graham B. Spanier.

"You had this really successful president and because of that, the trustees became comfortable with his leadership," Ehrenberg explained. As a result, he said, the board didn't possess the oversight it needed.

Ehrenberg believes Spanier erred by not informing the board in both 1998 and 2001 of allegations of sex abuse that had come to light against Sandusky.

"The fundamental rule of leadership is that the board will never be surprised," Ehrenberg said.

Barbara Micucci of Plymouth Meeting, who is an elementary school counselor in Upper Merion School District and a Penn State graduate, decried the lack of action by university leadership.

"When I hear that people in authority were told about a situation and nobody followed up and investigated, that's a child we're talking about," Micucci said. "That's the most unfortunate part, the thing that makes this just a horrible situation. It was very public figures that turned their eye (away from) this."

Micucci noted the report's finding that the school's most powerful leaders repeatedly concealed critical facts relating to Sandusky's sex abuse of children "to avoid the consequences of bad publicity."

Despite the report's assertion that Paterno was among the school leaders who failed children, Micucci remains "torn" over him.

She called him "a man who did a lot of good things and he made a bad decision. I think he's human. Maybe that's the difference - people put him up as a god. Now we're seeing he was really a man."

Micucci plans to join alum this weekend at the annual arts festival in State College, where she's not sure what the "vibe" will be.

"I'm still a Penn Stater," she noted.

Staff Writers John Martin and Jeff Gammage also contributed to this article