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Subject: Ed Ray ESPN Interview

ESPN Q&A with Ed Ray

INDIANAPOLIS -- NCAA president Mark Emmert received most of the attention Monday in announcing the unprecedented penalties for Penn State's football program, but Oregon State president Ed Ray also played a significant role. Ray chairs the NCAA's executive committee and represented the presidents and chancellors Monday. He helped give Emmert the green light to punish Penn State outside of the normal infractions process. He also didn't mince words about what he called "a conspiracy of silence at the highest levels" of Penn State regarding the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal.

I caught up with Ray on Monday afternoon following his return to Oregon. He explained several elements of Monday's decision and also disagreed with the claim made by Penn State president Rodney Erickson that Penn State had to accept the NCAA's penalties or face the so-called "death penalty," a suspension of its football program.

Here's my conversation with Ray:

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AP Photo/Michael Conroy Oregon State University president Ed Ray (at podium) and NCAA president Mark Emmert made history Monday.

Earlier today, you mentioned a retreat several presidents and chancellors took last year where they decided they had had enough with corruption. How did that play into Monday's decision and the need to reclaim control?

Ed Ray: The retreat last year was a pretty amazing experience. There was a recognition that we needed to change the risk-reward calculation that people are doing. We talked about a lot of things. The whole reform effort is touching on many categories. Some of them are enforcement, policies, procedures, penalties, guidelines for penalties. I chair the work on that. We'll get a penultimate draft of that document out at the meetings on Aug. 2. So I think there has been a lot of attention focused on the need to make certain that the actions that are taken, whether they're through the enforcement process or outside by the executive committee, that the messages sent need to be very clear.

Having said that, it would be unfair to say people didn't have what we understood was unfolding at Penn State in front of mind. But when all is said and done, this is about this case. This isn't about people being mad or happy or wanting to



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send broad messages to the world. This is about the Penn State case, period. And given the circumstances of the Penn State case, given the agreement of the basic facts as we know them from the Freeh report, both the university and the NCAA executive committee, we found a basis for asserting what we would want Penn State to agree to in a consent decree, which was presented to them and they accepted it.

Was there any apprehension among you or your fellow presidents in going this route as opposed to the NCAA's normal enforcement and infractions process?

Ray: Everybody felt these are truly extraordinary circumstances in the sense that this isn't about team violations or a coach doing something with respect to competition on the field or recruiting. This was an institution-wide lack of institutional control, a loss of integrity in the way the university was operating. It really called for consideration of extraordinary measures. The heinous nature of it, if anything, simply added to the sense that there is a common understanding of what needs to be done in a punitive way and in a corrective way, and that it needs to be pursued. It really was the nature of what went on there. It reflected a complete lack of institutional integrity and institutional commitment to the core values of the NCAA. It led us to conclude it was within the authority of the executive committee to take and exercise its authority. And that's what we did. There have been other cases where we did not go through the normal enforcement process, given the nature of the case at hand.

What were the discussions like regarding penalties for Penn State?

Ray: It was pretty straightforward. Once we had the Freeh report, the university commissioned it and released it without comment, so we had a pretty clear sense that the university itself accepted the findings. Then the question was: Are there appropriate punitive actions and corrective actions that could be taken? So the executive committee and the Division I board charged President Emmert to discuss possibilities with his staff, with others, whoever he felt would be appropriate. He called some of us individually to talk about what set actions would be most appropriate, given the facts as we understand them, that we could present to the university for a consent decree -- for them to either accept or determine they wanted to go in a different direction.

The only potential penalty that we had some extended discussion around was suspension of play, whether that ought to be part of a basket of punitive and corrective measures. There were people who felt that was appropriate, but the overwhelming position of members of both the executive committee and the Division I board was to not include suspension of play. And therefore we moved quickly to a consideration of the actions you heard about today. And that had unanimous support from both groups.

President Erickson was quoted today as saying that Penn State accepted that deal because if not, you would have decided to suspend play. Can you confirm that?

Ray: I've known Rod for a long time. I didn't hear what he said. I was on a plane flying back to Oregon. But I can tell you categorically, there was never a threat made to anyone about suspension of play if the consent decree was not agreed to.

So it wasn't as though you said, "Take this deal or we're shutting you down"?

Ray: That was never even a point of discussion within either the executive committee or the Division I board.

I'm sure you also had familiarity with Graham Spanier. What are your thoughts about his involvement in this,

somebody who had such a big role on NCAA committees and had a lot of respect in both Big Ten and NCAA circles?

Ray: I think [Emmert] said it right in that we don't have all the facts about individual culpability. The Freeh report talked about the participants and the cover-up and the conspiracy. But as Mark said, we're going to take a wait-and-see attitude with respect to taking further actions with respect to individuals, as the legal and other processes play their way out, and we get hopefully a clearer sense of what, if any, culpability individuals have. So we did not take action with respect to individuals. We took action with respect to a university that lacked institutional commitment to integrity and the other values of the NCAA.

You've said this is all about Penn State's case, but how do you think other schools will receive the action you took today against Penn State?

Ray: Let me tell you what I would hope that they take away. What I would hope is this is a cautionary tale. For one thing, we certainly acted expeditiously and have dealt with very heinous offenses against human decency, much less [NCAA] values. This was so egregious, and it's hard to fathom anything like it. So what I wouldn't want somebody to do is decide, "This is so unique. It doesn't apply to me." Every major college and university in Division I certainly, if not elsewhere, ought to do a gut check and ask: Do we have the balance right between the culture of athletics and the broader culture and values of our institution? How do we know that? And if we don't, what do we need to do to make sure we get that balance right?

Was there any discussion for a television ban or a reduction in home games for Penn State?

Ray: What we talked about were two sets of options. One is the set of actions that you learned about today. That got unanimous consent. We also talked about suspension of play plus some or all of the other actions, but maybe to a lesser degree to get the balance right. In the end, there was overwhelming support for the actions reported today.

Where does Penn State go from here?

Ray: Well, hopefully they go in the right direction and work very hard at creating a culture of commitment to the values of the association, from top to bottom. I hope they work with the integrity officer and they meet the requirements of their probationary period. It is a wonderful, wonderful university, and I expect it will move to a better place. That was really the point of the corrective measures that were taken, to help a very fine university get its bearings straight again.

Many feel SMU's program has never really recovered from what happened. With these types of penalties, do you think Penn State is in a similar situation?

Ray: We tried to find a balance so that taking these actions would not preclude Penn State from being in the future among the leaders in intercollegiate athletics. But let's be clear: These actions were taken because of a conspiracy of silence that went on for years, with total disregard for the well-being of young children. That is what we were trying to send a message about, both in terms of the punitive elements and also with the corrective elements. Those are intended to give people a path to move forward productively.

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Sent from my iPad