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'Take care of Bo's team': Former Michigan players wrestle with a legacy of abuse

By Austin Meek (</author/austin-meek/>)

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In his career as an artist, Chuck Christian specialized in murals painted in the French style *trompe l'oeil*, literally translated as “deceive the eye.” A shelf of books, a child’s teddy bear, a window looking out at the ocean. They look real at first glance, until a closer inspection reveals Christian’s delicate brushstrokes.

Christian’s artistic streak earned him some locker-room teasing from his teammates at Michigan, where he played tight end for Bo Schembechler’s Wolverines from 1977 to 1981. If Christian missed a block in practice, he could expect to hear Schembechler’s bark: “Someone find Christian a brush and let him paint!” The teasing was worth it, though. Christian’s family was so poor that, when he needed groceries in college, his mother would shop with food stamps and deliver the bags to his door so his friends wouldn’t find out. Without a football scholarship, there’s no way he could have paid his way through art school.

After college, Christian started his own business, Chuck Christian Designs, and did custom artwork for clients near his home in the Boston area. Along with his murals, Christian has a selection of portraits, including one of Schembechler in mid-rant, headset yanked away from his mouth as he shouts into the facemask of quarterback Jim Harbaugh. He'd like to do more, but lately he's found he doesn't have the stamina.

Christian suffers from advanced prostate cancer and can't tolerate the pain of sitting for long periods. On a good day, he can move around the house on his own. On a bad day, his wife lifts him from his bed, places him on the toilet and carries his 6-foot-4 frame back again. So for now, the paintings will have to wait.

"I've got all these wonderful ideas in my head," Christian said. "I can't put them on canvas or on paper yet."

When Christian was diagnosed three years ago, the cancer had already spread. It's possible his cancer could have been detected sooner, but Christian had an aversion to prostate exams that he traces to his experiences with Robert Anderson, the team doctor accused of abusing scores of Michigan athletes over more than four decades before his death in 2008.

Christian braced for an onslaught of anger when he decided to come forward with his experiences nearly six months ago. His son volunteered to scrub him from the internet if the vitriol became too intense, but the response was just the opposite. Christian received overwhelming support, along with many messages from ex-players sharing their own stories of abuse.

As allegations against Anderson grew into the hundreds, players expressed a range of emotions: disbelief, confusion, anger, a loss of faith in the institution that molded them into Michigan Men. Now, as the university enters mediation with Anderson's survivors and braces for the findings of an investigation conducted by the law firm WilmerHale, players are left with gnawing questions.

Why was Anderson allowed to prey on athletes for so long, even after credible allegations were raised on more than one occasion? What did he do to earn the protection of so many powerful figures at the university — including, apparently, the football coach idolized by so many of Anderson's victims? Players have their theories, some of which may be unprovable. But at least among some, there is a common suspicion that the full story has yet to be revealed.

“Even when Bo had the power to get rid of him, he still didn’t do it,” Christian said. “That brings up other questions. Why didn’t he do it? What’s going on? Is there another layer to this whole thing that we don’t even know about?”

Jon Vaughn is asking the same questions.

Vaughn arrived at Michigan in 1988 as an undersized running back from Florissant, Mo., and led the Wolverines in rushing two years later. Schembechler called him “Pissant” because of his diminutive frame, but Vaughn soon proved his worth. As a redshirt sophomore, he ran for 288 yards against UCLA and became the first Michigan player to top 200 rushing yards in consecutive games before declaring for the NFL Draft and leaving Ann Arbor behind.

In three years at Michigan, Vaughn says he was abused by Anderson on 12 occasions, beginning with his initial physical. During that physical and in subsequent visits, Vaughn says Anderson fondled his genitals and inserted fingers in his rectum. Though he found Anderson’s behavior unsettling, Vaughn said he didn’t realize he’d been raped until reports surfaced earlier this year outlining a pattern of abuse that spanned decades.

Vaughn, 50, now wants answers about why Anderson’s abuse was allowed to continue for years after the first complaints were made. He said he’s spoken to many ex-players who were abused by Anderson, a large number of whom have not identified themselves publicly. In their accounts, certain patterns appear over and over again, offering clues as to how Anderson gained access to his victims and insulated himself from serious scrutiny.

Vaughn exemplifies that pattern. Growing up near St. Louis, he was exposed to violence at an early age. His mother was a steadying influence, but Vaughn had a difficult relationship with his father, a volatile man who worked for a time as a collector for the Detroit Black Mafia.

When Vaughn was young, he and his brother would spend their Saturdays hanging out at a bodega owned by their father’s friend. Vaughn remembers playing checkers in the back one day when a car pulled up across the street. As the driver walked toward the bodega, Vaughn

watched his father give a signal. Someone called the man's name, causing him to stop in the middle of the street. A car roared into view, flicking on its lights at the last moment as it sent the man sprawling over the hood.

Though he was only in kindergarten, Vaughn watched the man dying in the street and realized he'd witnessed a murder.

"I remember my father's friend said, 'Go ahead and get the boys home and I'll handle this,'" Vaughn said. "It was never something we mentioned or talked about."

Vaughn never saw his father hit his mother, but he recalls hearing the sounds of struggle from their bedroom. Once his mother came home with a gash on her head after jumping out of a moving car to escape Vaughn's father. So when the great Bo Schembechler promised him a scholarship, an education and a ticket out of a volatile home, Vaughn eagerly accepted.

"A father figure was something I was very much looking forward to, very interested in," Vaughn said. "My dad never taught me how to catch a ball. Everything I learned sports-wise was self-taught. Excelling in sports in high school, it was all just natural talent. You didn't have that figure to drive you in a direction or a path or get the most out of you. That's what I saw in the opportunity to be coached by Bo and his coaching staff."

Vaughn didn't know it then, but his decision to attend Michigan also brought him into contact with a serial sexual predator. Like many of Anderson's victims, Vaughn assumed the invasive examinations were the price of playing for such a storied program. Even if he'd wanted to complain, who was going to listen to a 5-foot-9 freshman — a pissant in his coach's lexicon?

"Bo was a legend," Vaughn said. "Everyone that you came in contact with associated with the football program, Bo picked. You had this trust/respect thing, because Bo wouldn't have had them around if he didn't trust and respect them."



Jon Vaughn speaks about being sexually abused by Robert Anderson during a news conference at the Michigan State Capitol in September. (Anna Nichols / Associated Press)

Schembechler trusted Anderson enough to retain him as the team physician despite rumors and at least one alleged conversation about the doctor's behavior. A former student broadcaster, identified in court filings as John Doe EB-17, says he approached Schembechler in 1982 to report being digitally penetrated by Anderson. Schembechler directed the student broadcaster to report the incident to athletic director Don Canham, who by that time had received a complaint from a former Michigan wrestler making similar allegations.

There's no evidence that Canham acted on the student broadcaster's complaint or that Schembechler took further action, either at the time or after he succeeded Canham as athletic director in 1988.

If either man had acted then, Vaughn and other ex-players could have been spared the painful experiences that led them to realize, 30 years later, that they were survivors of sexual abuse. So why didn't it happen?

That question has been bothering Vaughn from the time these allegations surfaced. The full answer has yet to emerge, but a deeper look at Anderson's 35-year career reveals a few clues.

The year 1968 marked the beginning of a new era at Michigan. That's the year Canham, Michigan's longtime track coach, replaced Fritz Crisler as athletic director and hired Schembechler, a 39-year-old protégé of Woody Hayes, to reinvigorate the football program.

The same year, Anderson took over as director of Michigan's University Health Service. After completing medical school at Michigan in 1953, he joined a private practice in Flint and developed a sports medicine program that provided free physicals to high school athletes, according to his 2008 obituary.

A story in the Detroit Free Press recounted a conversation between Anderson and Canham that occurred Nov. 2, 1968 — nearly two months before Schembechler was hired — on the flight home from a 35-0 victory against Northwestern. Anderson proposed requiring annual physicals for all Michigan athletes, an idea Canham enthusiastically embraced.

Over the next two decades, "Doc A" would become a fixture around Schembechler's program. He earned a reputation as a friendly family doctor who would treat any ailment, no matter how minor. At the time of his death, he was lauded for his contributions by former coach Lloyd Carr and others close to the football program.

"Bo valued him greatly and had great trust and confidence in him," Bob Thornbladh, a former Michigan player and assistant coach, told MLive.com at the time of Anderson's death. (https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2008/11/beloved_university_of_michigan.html) "We used to tell people when we recruited them, 'You will get no finer medical care.'"

One mystery is how Anderson managed to engender such trust, even as rumors circulated about his habit of conducting unnecessary genital and anal examinations during routine appointments. Given Anderson's expertise in urology and andrology — male reproductive health — it appears he was rarely if ever questioned about the purpose of his invasive prostate exams. Many times in his career, Anderson used that expertise to present himself as an authority on matters of reproductive health, creating an image of himself as a trusted expert.

A review of the Michigan Daily archives shows Anderson was quoted numerous times discussing venereal disease, circumcision and other matters of reproductive health. In 1971, he led a discussion on sex and marriage at Michigan's Campus Chapel. A story from 1975 describes an artificial insemination program sponsored by the University Health Service that offered "\$15 to any male who is willing to participate and can pass a battery of tests." According to the story, participants underwent testing to determine their sperm count and, if accepted, were instructed to return three months later to provide a donation.

"We, quite simply, are looking for good quality sperm," Anderson told the student newspaper.

That language mirrors what athletes said they were told when Anderson approached them about an unusual project: his purported sperm-count studies. Neither Vaughn nor Christian were recruited to participate in these studies, but both said they've spoken to former players who said they were asked to provide semen samples for Anderson's research. When one player asked about the purpose of these studies, Christian said, Anderson said he was studying the traits of "elite Black athletes."

"My friend said it sounded too much like the Tuskegee project," Christian said. "He said, 'Nope, not interested.'"



Chuck Christian is the first former Michigan football player to publicly say Anderson assaulted him. (Steven Senne / Associated Press)

In one case, Christian said, an athlete asked to meet with Anderson for more information about the study. The athlete became suspicious and backed out when Anderson proposed meeting in a room at the hotel formerly known as the Campus Inn. The athlete's understanding was that Anderson and Anderson alone could collect the semen sample, Christian said.

Michael Wright, Christian's attorney, said he hasn't uncovered evidence that anyone at Michigan knew about or sanctioned Anderson's purported research, or that any research even occurred. He has, however, spoken to athletes who corroborate what Christian was told about players being recruited to participate in studies related to athletic performance.

"I think these were lies that Anderson was telling these athletes so that he could sexually assault them," Wright said. "That was told to many of the players I represent, that he was doing this type of study. I believe that was just made up by him as a scheme."

Another way Anderson leveraged his expertise was in the area of drug testing. Anabolic steroid use was rampant in college football in the 1980s, with athletes such as Oklahoma's Brian Bosworth and Michigan State's Tony Mandarich signifying the excesses of the era. Schembechler and Canham were among the influential voices pushing to clean up the game and advocating for mandatory drug testing, which the NCAA adopted in 1986.

"Every college will now test for drugs itself because it won't want to send a team to a championship and be embarrassed by having one of its stars kicked off of the team because of drugs," Canham told the New York Times in 1986.

A line in Anderson's obituary (<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/detroitnews/obituary.aspx?n=robert-e-anderson&pid=182440234&fhid=5988>) notes that he was "instrumental in developing the first drug testing program for the NCAA." His role in developing and administering drug testing at Michigan is something attorneys are trying to establish as they seek documentation from the university.

"I believe through the rest of the discovery, we will try to determine if that was in fact a reason he was being sheltered by the university," Wright said. "At this point we don't have any specific knowledge or information or evidence that would corroborate that's why the university was protecting him."

What's alleged is this: In 1979, a Michigan student identified in court filings as John Doe MC-73 went to Thomas Easthope, the school's associate vice president for student life, with specific allegations concerning Anderson. The student had been examined by Anderson through an afterhours program that provided confidential counseling and medical treatment to the gay community.

During the examination, Anderson allegedly made lewd comments about the student's genitalia while touching himself and breathing heavily. The student reported Anderson's behavior to the director of Michigan's human sexuality office and was encouraged to make a formal complaint.

Speaking to detectives in 2018, Easthope said that after learning Anderson had been "fooling around in the exam room" with male patients, he walked to Anderson's office with the intention of firing him on the spot. But John Doe MC-73's lawsuit describes a follow-up

meeting in which Easthope expressed pity for Anderson, describing the doctor as “troubled, sick and needing help.” Instead of firing him, the plaintiff recalls, Easthope proposed reassigning Anderson to an administrative role that didn’t involve contact with patients.

As it turned out, neither of those things happened. On Jan. 14, 1980, Michigan announced Anderson was stepping down from his role as director of UHS to “return to the staff as a senior physician.” The news release noted Anderson would continue as director of athletic medicine at the Health Service while serving as a physician to Michigan athletes.

“We are extremely grateful for the high quality administrative and medical leadership Dr. Anderson has provided during his years at the Health Service,” vice president Henry Johnson said in the 40-year-old news release. “We are pleased that he plans to remain on the staff as a senior physician.”

In a deposition conducted in late July and early August, Easthope testified that he intended to fire Anderson but believed he was overruled by two men: Henry Johnson and Don Canham. According to court filings, Easthope testified that Canham was “a bigger man than Henry Johnson and probably 90 percent of the people on the hill” and “a voice to be reckoned with at the University of Michigan.”

Instead of firing Anderson, the university cut off his access to the general student population while allowing him to continue treating athletes. He would remain at the university until his retirement in 2003, a period of 24 years in which many additional athletes — including Vaughn and Christian — were abused.

“All to protect one man,” Vaughn said. “The perpetrator.”

The events of 1968 marked the beginning of a renaissance at Michigan. Canham built the athletic department into a marketing powerhouse that regularly drew crowds of 100,000 or more at Michigan Stadium. Schembechler took over a program with one Rose Bowl appearance in 18 years and made it a perennial contender. Along the way, they built Michigan’s image as a school that does things the right way, honors the rules and wins with integrity.

Years later, former players are left to wonder about the cost of maintaining that image.

“We were supposed to be protected,” Christian said. “That’s what (Schembechler) told us when he came in to recruit us. But we weren’t protected. Anderson was the one that was protected.”

One night in July, Amos Guiora was at his home in Israel, just back from dinner with his wife, when an email arrived from across the world.

“Mr. Guiora,” it began, “my name is Jon Vaughn.”

Guiora didn’t need any further introductions. Before he moved to Israel in 1985, Guiora spent 20 years in Ann Arbor, where his father was on the faculty of the Michigan medical school. As a kid, he hung out with Schembechler’s sons and watched football practice with the coach’s permission. Everywhere he went after that — from the front lines of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations to the halls of Congress, where he testified as an expert in counterterrorism law — Guiora wore his passion for Michigan football on his sleeve.

“I really am a huge sports fan,” said Guiora, a law professor at the University of Utah who splits time between Israel and the United States. “I used to have a radio show here in Israel. I can play Michigan football trivia with you, and I’ll kick your ass.”

Vaughn didn’t know any of that when he wrote to Guiora. The son of two Holocaust survivors, Guiora wrote a book called “The Crime of Complicity” that explored the role of bystanders in Nazi atrocities. That led him to his most recent project, a book about bystander complicity in high-profile sexual abuse scandals involving Ohio State, Michigan State, Penn State and the Catholic church.

In each of those cases, Guiora found a common theme: authority figures who were not only passive bystanders, but enablers of sexual abuse. The title of his latest book, “Armies of Enablers,” refers to the way institutions often close ranks to protect a sexual predator rather than taking action to protect survivors.

Vaughn wrote to Guiora seeking answers about why authority figures at Michigan, including Schembechler and Canham, allowed Anderson to continue treating athletes despite allegations about the doctor’s misconduct. In studying the details of the case, Guiora

recognized the familiar pattern: a powerful doctor celebrated as an expert, victims whose complaints were dismissed or ignored, administrators who chose to protect the institution rather than exposing the crime.

Guiora can't speak definitively to the motives of Schembechler, Canham and other powerful figures at Michigan. But in studying their actions, he sees a dynamic common to sexual assault cover-ups at Ohio State, Michigan State and within the Catholic church.

"They chose to do what institutions do, and that's to protect the institutions," Guiora said. "The brand. The 'M' brand. That's enabling."

No former players have come forward to say they discussed Anderson's abuse with Schembechler. The only such assertion comes from the former student broadcaster who says he approached Schembechler in 1982 after being digitally penetrated by Anderson on two occasions while seeking treatment for migraines.

During a news conference in July, the former student broadcaster recalled Schembechler ordering him (<https://theathletic.com/1963496/2020/07/30/university-michigan-lawsuit-bo-schembechler-was-told-about-robert-andersons-sexual-abuse/>) to report the matter to Canham immediately. The broadcaster said Schembechler's reaction indicated he was hearing the allegations for the first time, a belief supported by subsequent conversations with players.

"I felt from the look on his face and from his actions that this was the first time anybody had ever reported it to him," the student broadcaster said. "Further investigation by myself down the line later, talking to several of the football players who also had been assaulted by Dr. Anderson, none of them ever went to Coach Schembechler. None of them went to the assistant coaches.

"There was a pride factor there. There was just a relationship that they had with Schembechler that never allowed them to bring anything forward to him."

Those close to Schembechler have tried to put themselves in the coach's shoes. Schembechler had watched legendary Michigan broadcaster Bob Ufer battle prostate cancer before his death in 1981, an event that would have been fresh in Schembechler's mind. Perhaps, like many of his players, he assumed Anderson's invasive exams were an unpleasant medical necessity. Perhaps the idea of strong, healthy men being victims of sexual abuse simply did not compute.

One person familiar with Schembechler's thinking said that, in 1982, the coach's relationship with Canham had grown strained. Following the 1981 season, Texas A&M made a public bid to lure Schembechler away from Michigan with a massive contract offer that Schembechler didn't immediately reject. Though Schembechler ultimately stayed at Michigan, the fallout from that situation might have influenced his decision to refer the student broadcaster to Canham rather than approaching Canham directly.

The student broadcaster said he believes the responsibility for dealing with the allegations rested with one person: Don Canham. He described Canham as an all-powerful figure at the university who sparked fear in his subordinates — including broadcasters, who could be pulled from the booth at halftime if they said something Canham didn't like. As powerful as Schembechler was, Canham and Canham alone had the authority to deal with such a sensitive issue, the broadcaster said.

"Bo was powerless," the student broadcaster said. "I'll say that until my dying day, and I hope that every other football player who was there, who participated, would say the same thing.

"He was a completely powerful man, yes, because he was the disciple of Woody Hayes. But when it came to these kind of issues, there was absolutely nothing he could do except to direct the students and the student-athletes over to the boss, who was Don Canham, and let Don run with it from there."

That account stirs complicated feelings among Schembechler's former players. They, too, want to believe Schembechler took appropriate action given his understanding of the allegations. They also wonder why he didn't do more — if not in 1982, then in 1988, when he replaced Canham as athletic director.

"The one young man that went to Bo and told him what Anderson had done, Bo tells him to go to Canham," Christian said. "That wasn't the right thing to do. You take the young man to Canham yourself and say, 'Tell Canham what you just told me.' You are standing there behind him, having his back, saying, 'You tell Canham what you just told me.'"

Guiora never played for Schembechler, but as a die-hard Michigan fan, he understands the players' mixed emotions. Even after writing about similar scandals at Ohio State and Michigan State, he struggled to believe it could happen at his school. But in studying the details of Anderson's abuse, Guiora saw the unmistakable pattern playing out once again.

The Michigan brand, constructed in large part by Canham and Schembechler, held powerful sway over the people who represented it. As often happens, Guiora said, an abuser was enabled by authority figures who chose to protect the brand rather than standing up for the victims.

“Those of us who grew up in Ann Arbor, those of us whose parents were at Michigan, we really believed in the Michigan difference,” Guiora said. “We always said this could never happen at Michigan. That, I think, has been a very, very sobering realization.

“If it can happen at Michigan, it can happen anywhere.”

On a bright morning in September, John Lott stood on the steps of the Michigan State Capitol in a crisp blue suit and a mask. Lott, a cornerback and 1983 team captain at Michigan, was there to support legislation introduced by two state lawmakers that would make it easier for Anderson’s survivors to sue the university.

After his football career ended, Lott became a licensed clinical social worker and a certified treatment specialist for sex offenders. Speaking that day on the Capitol steps, Lott revealed that he, too, had been a victim of sexual abuse, first as a child and later as a member of the Michigan football team.

Lott’s parents divorced when he was 6, leaving his single mother to support the family. When he was 7, he was molested by a neighborhood friend over the period of a year. His experiences with Anderson years later left Lott questioning his sexuality, seeking promiscuous relationships as a coping mechanism.

Even after 20 years advocating for survivors of sexual assault, Lott still struggles to make peace with his own story.

“Professionally I thought I was doing the right thing, and I still think I’m doing the right thing, but still I’m unsettled in my spirit,” he said.

Like Vaughn and Christian, Lott has complicated feelings about Schembechler, whose values he credits for shaping his moral foundation. Character, honesty, integrity — those were traits he learned playing for Bo. He still wants to see the best in the man he admired, but revelations of Anderson's long-running abuse have prompted, in Lott's words, "a great shaking."

"Bo was a father figure to me," Lott said. "I can't say that he did anything directly, to my knowledge, that I know. It's hard to fathom that. I went to Michigan. I believed in him. It's hard to think he would do anything to hurt (us)."



John Lott (in mask) at the Michigan State Capitol in September. (Austin Meek / The Athletic)

Anderson's abuse wasn't limited to a particular demographic. Football players, wrestlers, medical students, gay men, ROTC cadets, high school athletes, pilots renewing their licenses — all were vulnerable in some way. But it's notable that some athletes — including Jim Harbaugh, whose father was an assistant coach on Schembechler's staff in the 1970s — have said they never saw or heard about any inappropriate behavior on Anderson's part.

In the stories of Vaughn, Christian and Lott, a through line exists to connect the pattern of abuse within the football program. All came from difficult circumstances or experienced some form of childhood trauma. All were young Black athletes on a mostly White campus. They were, in a sense, fortunate to be there, fortunate to be playing for such a respected coach, fortunate to be studying at such a prestigious school. To complain — or worse yet, to quit — would have been viewed as failure.

“Some of my White friends, their dads were pilots and doctors and different things,” Christian said. “For the Black athletes, a lot of us came from single-parent households. It was usually the mom.

“That was my situation. I grew up without my dad. Once I got to Michigan, the last thing I wanted to do was lose my scholarship. I was the hero for the whole neighborhood. Everybody was counting on me to succeed because it was going to give them courage to do better as well. It was a lot of pressure.”

As men in their 50s and 60s, these former players are left to reconcile with ghosts. Anderson died in 2008, Schembechler in 2006, Canham in 2005. The people who could answer their questions are, in many cases, long departed. All they have is each other: their own doubts, their own theories, their own pain.

In their own ways, they're all trying to make something good of a horrible situation. New safeguards. More accountability. Support systems that didn't exist when they were young athletes caught in a web of abuse. Those steps can make things better for the future, but they can't change what happened in the past.

On Michigan's campus, the reckoning has already begun. The WilmerHale report commissioned by the university is likely to bring renewed scrutiny to the legacies of some of Michigan's most revered figures — including Schembechler, whose statue stands outside the building that bears his name.

For Vaughn, the fate of such monuments is inconsequential.

“I got asked the question once about ‘Should they take the statue down?’” he said. “I don’t care about statues. It’s not about the statues. It’s about teenagers being molested and raped, and eradicating that from the system.”

Sometimes Christian will go to YouTube and watch the clip of Schembechler’s famous pregame speech, delivered before the 1983 game against Ohio State. It’s the quintessential image of Michigan football: Schembechler’s iron jaw, his flinty stare, players listening with rapt attention.

The team. The team. The team.

When Christian watches now, he thinks about the parts that no one can see. The players in the room who were, that very season, being abused by a team doctor. Those who went on to struggle with drug addiction, who lost marriages or relationships. The shame they carried for decades. After staring at it long enough, he starts to see what isn’t there. The optical illusion. The trick to fool the eye.

Schembechler isn’t here to answer his players’ questions, but in that speech, Christian hears a set of parting instructions. Schembechler preached team above all. No player, no coach, was greater than the whole. If those words were true, then it’s clear to Christian what must happen now.

“The most important thing in this whole process is not how much money you can make off it or how much time you can string this along,” he said. “The most important thing is the team, and us who are that team. We’re still hurting. We just need for them to do what’s right by us.

“Bo said no man is more important than the team. So take care of Bo’s team.”

(Illustration: Wes McCabe / The Athletic)

Austin Meek ([/author/austin-meek/](https://twitter.com/byaustinmeek)) covers Michigan football for The Athletic. He previously covered college sports for The Topeka Capital-Journal and served as sports columnist at The Register-Guard in Eugene, Oregon. Follow Austin on Twitter [@byaustinmeek](https://twitter.com/byaustinmeek) (<https://twitter.com/byaustinmeek>).



16 COMMENTS

Add a comment...

Jeff M. 4h ago

That's tremendous reporting Austin. It's going to be very difficult for us fans to accept the imperfections of the brand of Michigan football, especially off the field, and especially with such a revered figure like Bo. Nothing ever gets better without bringing these stories to light.

10



You STAFF 3h ago

@Jeff M. Thank you, Jeff.

1

Steven D. 3h ago

I got a few paragraphs in and when I read that his wife who is probably between 50 and 60 years old picks up a 6'4" man and carries him to the toilet and back I just shut it down. Not plausible so why keep reading.

Patrick T. 3h ago



@Steven D. Your takeaway from this was the validity of how a wife takes care of her cancer stricken husband? Not the systemic sexual abuse against teenagers by authority figures? Please recalibrate your moral compass.

24

Dan K. 3h ago

@Steven D. I don't supposed that you ever considered that she grabs him by the arm and walks him

@Steven B. I don't supposed that you ever considered that she grabs him by the arm, and walks him over. At least it was plausible that you had time to write a dumb comment.

 13 

Steven B. 1h ago

There also was a place in the story where the author used a comma instead of a semi-colon. Story must be fabricated.

 3 

David V. 3h ago

Great work and lots for all Michigan fans and alumni to grapple with. In my years living in AA (both as a student and after), it was well known Don Canham was not a good man, and no one I ever met who knew him remembered him fondly. Now we can fully appreciate why.


 3 

Craig M. 3h ago

In a very strange way, I place some amount of blame on us fans. The blame is small, because it's not like we made the likes of Dr. Anderson or Dr. Nassar perform the disgusting acts that they did, but we're the ones who enable the "brand" to be what it is. We pay such reverence to the players, coaches, and organizations who mostly just provide us with entertainment, but in return we invest much time and money into supporting them that it's no surprise that universities and sports organizations act in the ways that Mr. Guiora has written in his books.

What's worse is that when stories like arise, battlelines are instantly drawn. It happened in the Penn State, Michigan State, and Ohio State horrors. Fans from opposing universities jumped at the chance to lay it on. It was pathetic and really distracted from the tragedies that occurred, but thus is fandom.

Here's hoping there won't be a next time, but if the next time does occur all of us should strive to take the high road and hope and pray that the victims of all this abuse find peace, and that the criminals are brought to justice. Let's not be so immature that we pile on by getting into ridiculous back and forths with fans from that team insinuating that they are in some way to blame.

 5 

Spencer D. 3h ago

Thanks, Austin. Well written. You've done a great job on the UofM beat

**You**

STAFF

3h ago

@Spencer D. Thank you, Spencer ... much appreciated.

**Dan K.** 3h ago

Awesome reporting, such a tragedy.

**Andy S.** 2h ago

I haven't really kept up on the news because the world is a pretty depressing place right now but has anyone talked to Carr or Moeller about this?

**Tom M.** 1h ago

monsters are everywhere these days, and in our pasts. let's try to do the right thing.
what is accomplished when grotesque evil behavior becomes the norm? we are
traumatized by events of the day.

**Alan W.** 1h ago

Terrific and sensitive writing, Mr. Meek.

When the whole abuse scandal erupted from PSU, I thought to myself that 'not for a second do i believe that couldn't happen at UM'

Any institution (sports or otherwise) with a powerful leader, a compliant board of directors or fans, and universal love....those are places ripe for such acts, where protecting the brand so to speak trumps over rights of individuals. I am sickened and saddened to know that MY university and trusted Bo were

involved in a cover up, but there is no question, and no excuse.

I hope the one "good thing" about this is that UM and every other institution and board room looks at these repeated examples of cover up and builds in a process to protect the athletes, students, workers, etc from such crimes in the future. This is a story that is not going away. (And re: OSU, I am surprised Rep Jordan, one of the loudest Republicans in the HR and tagged with covering up abuse on OSU wrestlers has not become more embroiled in that cover up. I do think his day will come)



Lee B. 43m ago

Helliuva piece, Austin. Greetings from Omaha.



Mark T. 7m ago

Interesting how in this piece it seems we are struggling to figure out why Schembechler allowed this to happen to his players. Was it because he had a friend with prostate cancer and he thought inappropriately invasive procedures were necessary to combating this disease? Was it because he was offered a job at Texas A&M?

But when it happened elsewhere? THEY ARE MONSTERS!

I suppose Michigan failed to learn the lesson taught by PSU, MSU and OSU, which is that predators are out there and your beloved institution may be enabling them regardless of how high of an opinion you have of yourself.

I found it notable that Guoira, the so-called expert in this matter who has written books on this very topic, said, "If it can happen at Michigan, it can happen anywhere." This shows that even he hadn't learned the lesson.



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