

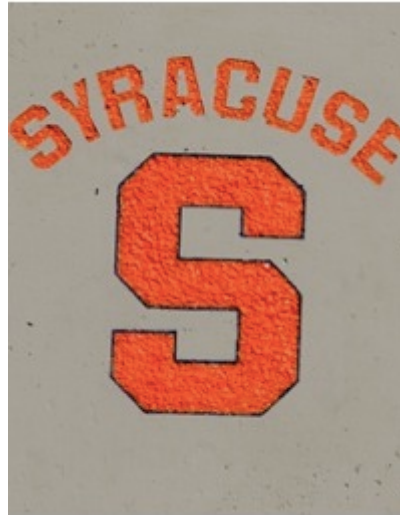


Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 29, 2011

Sex Abuse Charges at Syracuse Univ. Follow Penn State Scandal

Syracuse recently fired its assistant basketball coach, Bernie Fine, after allegations surfaced that he had for years sexually molested young ball-boys for the basketball team, dating back to 1984. The university was reportedly “shaken” by the allegations.

According to WSYR Channel 9, “Fine has been the subject of a sexual molestation investigation involving several law enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Attorney’s office, Onondaga County District Attorney’s office, Syracuse Police, and New York State Police.”



One of Fine’s alleged victims, Bobby Davis, now 39, told “Outside the Lines” that he was sexually abused by Fine for six years, starting in 1984, while serving as the basketball team’s ball-boy, at both Fine’s home and the university’s basketball facilities. He claims that the abuse continued until he was 27 years old.

Following the revelation of Davis, another alleged victim came forward — Mike Lang, 45, stepbrother of Bobby Davis who also served as a ball-boy for the basketball team. Lang asserts that Fine molested him while he was in the fifth or sixth grade.

Zach Tomaselli was the third victim to come forward. Now 23, he says he was molested by Fine in 2002. Pittsburgh police have announced they will be launching an investigation into Tomaselli’s accusations.

Fine has adamantly denied the charges, declaring, “Simply put, these allegations are patently false in every aspect.... I am confident that, as in the past, a review of these allegations will be discredited and restore my reputation.”

According to CNN, however, there may be indications that Fine’s wife, Laurie, was aware of her husband’s actions. CNN reports:

A tape, made public by the Syracuse-based *Post-Standard* newspaper and ESPN, appears to show Laurie Fine knew about her husband’s alleged sexual abuse. In the tape, the woman that ESPN, citing experts, identified as Laurie Fine tells Davis she knew “everything that went on” with her husband, adding that “It’s just wrong and you were a kid.”

In response to the scandal, Syracuse’s head basketball coach Jim Boeheim issued a formal statement:

The allegations that have come forth today are disturbing and deeply troubling. I am personally very shocked because I have never witnessed any of the activities that have been alleged. I believe the university took the appropriate step tonight. What is most important is that this matter be fully investigated and that anyone with information be supported to come forward so that the truth can be found. I deeply regret any statements I made that might have inhibited that from



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occurring or been insensitive to victims of abuse.

The timing of the scandal at Syracuse University is ironic, as it follows a similar, rather larger scandal at Penn State, where retired assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was charged with 40 counts of sexual abuse of children. Sandusky allegedly pursued his victims through a charity called The Second Mile that was created to protect children who were at risk.

The incident prompted the university to take a look at those surrounding Sandusky to determine who if any may have known about the molestations and failed to report them to authorities or covered them up. Penn State fired its legendary head football coach, Joe Paterno and its president, Graham Spanier. Additionally, athletic director Tim Curley and vice president Gary Schultz were accused of perjury and failing to report those suspected of child abuse, prompting them to step down from their posts.

The 67-year-old Sandusky denied the allegations, during a phone interview with NBC News' "Rock Center" with Bob Costas:

I am innocent of those charges.... I could say that I have done some of those things. I have horsed around with kids. I have showered after workouts. I have hugged them, and I have touched their legs without intent of sexual contact.

When asked whether he was sexually attracted to underaged boys, he answered, "Sexually attracted, no. I enjoy young people, I love to be around them, but, no, I'm not sexually attracted to young boys." Asked if there was anything he had done wrong, Sandusky replied, "I shouldn't have showered with those kids."

Naturally, the alleged abuse at both Penn State and Syracuse have attracted major media attention and have left many Americans in shock, but as [noted](#) by journalist Patrick Henningsen,

Scandals and corruption are nothing new to college sports in America — cash for recruits, academic eligibility fraud, laundering money through booster programs, sports agent pay-offs, steroid abuse, drug abuse, drunk driving, university cover-ups [of] violent assaults by coaches and athletes, athletes accused of rape perpetrated against female students, and the list goes on.

Anyone who has attended university with a successful college sports program will have heard of at least one of these incidents happening at some point during their four-year degree. Considering the hundreds of millions of dollar that are on offer to NCAA Division One sports programs across the country, it's not surprising if high-ranking institutional officials would opt to "look the other way" or even engage in a cover-up, rather than tackle abuses which were occurring right within their midst.

However, as [observed](#) by Lauren Book, author of *It's Ok to Tell* and founder of Lauren's Kids, a foundation that fights sexual abuse through education, one good thing comes out of the revelations at Penn State and Syracuse University:

The Penn State case has taken the national epidemic of sexual abuse against children and made it a mainstream topic — finally — for debate and dialogue throughout our country.

This case triggers a level of outrage that should lead to overdue changes in our society's indifference toward and tolerance of sexual abuse of children.

Photo of Syracuse logo: AP Images



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