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*Mike
Watson*

From:

Saginaw Valley State Baseball Team

To:

Mr. Mike Watson

And

Saginaw Valley State Athletic Department

With the upmost respect for the University, the Athletic Department, and the baseball coaching staff, we the Saginaw Valley State baseball team would like to bring to your attention the situation that has been forced upon us. There are many issues that lead us to the conclusion that the best move for the organization and the health of the players is to have a change in the head coach. The three main issues that we must deal with on a daily basis are negativity, lack of coaching, and the lack of concern for the health of the players.

Negativity is one of the main reasons that the team struggles. The issue it causes on the field is nothing compared to the mental issues it creates for the team. Dark sarcasm is commonly used to degrade players that may be struggling on any given day. Backup players are put in at the end of close games after sitting on the bench for weeks and are expected to perform at a high level. They are being put in a position to fail, and then ridiculed when they do so. The negative comments towards and about players can be bad enough to be considered verbal abuse. In the locker room, Coach told one of the starting pitchers on the team that he is having a terrible season and asked him, "What the fuck happened to you." Keep in mind that the kid this was said to is a captain and one of the best pitchers on the team who is having a very good season.

A positive comment by Coach Head is one of the rarest things in the organization. After losing two games to Findlay, the team turned it around and played a fundamentally sound game to win six to three. In the postgame huddle, not a positive word was spoken about the game. The focus of the post-game speech was how we had lost two games the day before. Coach Head couldn't be positive enough to even say good game or you guys played well. The only positive comment he made was when he walked past the starting pitcher at the end of the game and quietly said "Good game." This is not the only time he has ignored any positive notion so that he could belittle the team in less than a week.

Two days before the double header against Grand Valley two players, including a captain, went up to Coach Head's office to talk to him. When they got there, he talked for no less than five minutes about how bad our team is and how we are going to get blown out. The day before the game, he told the team that Grand Valley is better than us because they have more money, so they can afford to buy better players. Not only does he tell the team that we are bad, but on numerous occasion has implied that he has given up on this season. He has also hinted at the fact that he doesn't expect the team to win in the article that was written about the baseball team in the beginning of the year. He told one of the local papers that this year is just for experience and next year is when the team will be good.

This is absolutely demoralizing to the team and the confidence of the players. This type of attitude and negativity carries over into the everyday life of the players. When baseball demands so much of your body, mind, and time it is hard to prevent the influence of this mental abuse to not leak over. Negativity is not the only reason we are pushing for a new leadership, but the lack of actual coaching.

Coach Head's decisions and actions as a coach are severe enough to get him fired from any level of collegiate baseball. The first thing that one will notice is Coach Head habitually falls asleep at practice. Coach Head then proceeds to make the lineup for the games completely

by himself, even though he misses parts of practice due to his unconsciousness. Not only does he sleep in practice, but he also takes naps during games. In Florida last year, the starting shortstop got thrown out of a game. Coach Head woke up two batters later and started questioning why the backup was in. The pitching coach had to explain to him that the kid had gotten thrown out of the game five minutes beforehand.

Coach Head has claimed to be the hitting coach, but he almost never helps the hitters. In fact he spends very little time actually paying attention to the hitters. He is much more inclined to sit in a chair and watch the pitchers and fielders. He complains all the time and yells at the team that they cannot hit, but does very little to help them get better. One of the starting infielders asked coach if he could borrow his keys so that he could go hit. Coach replied by telling him that, "You going to hit isn't going to make us hit any better."

This is one of the few times that we have been able to go up to coach's office and actually talk to him. Coach is seldom in his office. Most players have been up to his office multiple times during normal working hours and he is nowhere to be found. When asking the assistant coach where he is, or when he will be in, the reply is always either, "I don't know, I haven't heard from him" or "I don't know, he didn't tell me anything." This is supposed to be his job and he just picks and chooses when he want to show up. There have been situations where this has drastically impacted many individuals on the team.

For the Findlay trip, Coach Head told us that he wasn't coming in until 6pm, and that is when the travel list would be posted. Remember, this was on a Tuesday. When he was informed that we were scheduled to leave at 6:30pm, he replied, "Well I guess everyone will have to be ready and whoever goes, goes and whoever doesn't, doesn't." Many of the players have classes ranging from 4pm-10pm. Not only is this poor coaching, but it is a complete disrespect shown towards the entire team.

The complete disregard for player health is the strongest argument for an immediate need in change of coaching leadership. Coach Head has a complete lack of knowledge of the nutrition that an athlete needs to compete. Every chance he gets, he tries to cut out food. Coach had told the man working the concession stand at our first home game that he didn't want us eating in between games because "We play like shit after we eat." He wants us to not eat and perform on a high level. For a game at Adrian this year, the bus was scheduled to leave at 9am. Coach was informed before we left that the school rules require him to feed us breakfast since we were leaving so early. His response was, "What the fuck? Why the hell do I have to feed them?"

Having to go long periods of time on minimum food is only a small part in how Coach Head puts the players in danger. Last year, three of the original starting pitchers tore their UCL. One of them required Tommy John surgery, and all three kids had to get hardship waivers. These kids got hurt because of neglect and lack of common sense. The physical abuse that Coach Head put on the players is inexcusable. The first kid that got injured last year threw close to 140 pitches his first time pitching for the year. Most professional are limited to no more than 100 pitches in their first few starts. He actually got hurt in the last inning and Jeremy had to

attend to him on the field. Coach Head didn't take him out. He left an injured player on the field to keep playing. In the next start that the kid got, he tore his UCL.

This is a common occurrence. Our number one starter last year had a very similar thing happen to him. His first two starts were less than a week apart. He was expected and allowed to go deep into both games. He threw upwards of 260 pitches in those games combined. After that, the player constantly had arm problems. Coach Head knowing this, and knowing that the kid went to rehab every day, still expected him to pitch. Less than half way through the season, he also tore his UCL.

This trend has carried over from year to year. This year against Findlay, Coach Head started a reliever who had not thrown in two weeks. The kid was allowed to throw 135 pitches in the game. The trainer and pitching coach for the last three and a half innings of the game told Coach Head to put in someone else so that he would not get hurt. Coach Head completely ignored their warnings. The kid has not torn anything yet, but he is in rehab multiple times a day now.

We apologize for using profanities, but we felt in some places they were necessary to emphasize how serious the situation is. We hope that you understand and see why we strongly urge the need for a new head coach. We feel the sooner that this is made possible, the better it will be for the University, the team, and the individuals on the team. To say that every player's mind and body is in harm until a change is made is an understatement. Again, with the greatest of respect, we ask for this change.

Attached to this letter are the names and the signatures of players on the team who have read and fully support this letter. Ten players didn't sign the letter. Five of the ten kids that didn't sign are ineligible to play, and do not travel. This made them feel like that had not seen enough to sign the letter. The other five players read and said they agree with the letter and want change, but are afraid of what the repercussions will be if Coach Head finds out they signed their name.