

## Wulff, Eagles land in hot water

While former team gets hit with NCAA sanctions, WSU coach receives three-day practice ban

By Dale Grummert Of The Tribune

Thursday, February 12, 2009



### Associated Press

Before taking over at WSU last season, Paul Wulff spent eight years as head coach at Eastern Washington. He went 53-40 with the Eagles.

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Since hiring Paul Wulff as football coach more than a year ago, Washington State has been expecting some type of fallout from NCAA violations under Wulff's watch at Eastern Washington.

But WSU athletic director Jim Sterk said he was surprised by the severity of sanctions against EWU announced Wednesday by the governing body.

Citing a lengthy list of secondary violations involving use of players and coaches, the NCAA placed the Cheney school on probation for three years and banned the Eagles from postseason play in 2009, among other penalties.

The actions affect Washington State directly in only one way: Wulff will be banned from the first three days of WSU preseason camp in August. But he now has an NCAA black mark on his record, a rarity in Cougar football aside from Academic Progress Rate sanctions incurred by predecessor Bill Doba.

Wulff said the infractions were inadvertent, and both he and Sterk emphasized that EWU at the time lacked an NCAA compliance director who might have prevented them.

The violations, occurring between 2003 and 2007, included use of ineligible players in practice-related situations, the use of too many "countable" coaches, failure to "monitor the head coach" and "a lack of institutional control."

Some of the violations had been public knowledge months before WSU hired Wulff in December 2007, and Sterk said he consulted officials at EWU and the NCAA before making the hire. Meanwhile, he waited for the governing body to complete its research and deliver a verdict.

"We knew this was coming at some point in time," the AD said. "... As far as Eastern is concerned and the lack of institutional control - that kind of surprised me, as far as (it) rising to that level."

Wulff said the NCAA was initially informed of some of the violations by an EWU athletic director who had been recently fired, and that he, Wulff, reported other violations during the NCAA investigation in 2006.

"I have regretted that things did slip through the cracks under my watch," Wulff said Wednesday night by phone from an airport, where he had arrived from Hawaii after watching the Pro Bowl. "But that's just the reality. I admitted it; I addressed it over two years ago. Unfortunately, there are so many rules that things slip through the cracks."

Asked how Washington State can be assured similar mistakes won't be made there, Wulff pointed out that WSU, like many top-tier NCAA schools, has three compliance officers and other staff members who help educate coaches and players in the minutia of the rulebook - something EWU lacked as a member of what was formerly known as NCAA Division I-AA.

"I just kind of followed what Mike Kramer had done and what Dick Zornes had done," he said, mentioning two of his predecessors at EWU, "and kind of the culture of Eastern Washington. We just made do. We tried to do everything we could, do all the right things."

Wulff disputed an NCAA charge that he failed to report violations, but admitted he didn't do so "in a timely manner."

Some of the violations involved how "nonqualifiers" - academically ineligible players - were used in practice-related activities. Wulff said these resulted from a misunderstanding of the rules.

Others infractions involved the number of countable coaches, as opposed to student assistants, that were on staff. Wulff said those were the result of student assistants who, unbeknownst to Wulff, had fallen below the 12-credit minimum.

Asked his opinion of the sanctions against EWU, the coach said they seemed reasonable aside from the ban on postseason games this year.

"I think that was probably too much," he said. "... Eastern Washington is a little easier to kick around, I guess."

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## **NCAA lowers boom on Eagles**

*From the NCAA report on violations in the Eastern Washington football program under Paul Wulff:*

## **VIOLATIONS**

- Between fall 2003 and spring 2007, 13 players were allowed to practice despite being nonqualifiers. They also did not have their eligibility certified by the university of the NCAA.
- Two of the players were provided housing and meals during preseason practice before the first day of classes despite not being eligible to receive such benefits. Furthermore, the university failed to withhold one of them from competition after discovering his involvement in the NCAA violations.
- The football program exceeded the maximum of 11 countable coaches. Anywhere from 13 to 15 individuals per year were allowed to perform coaching duties.
- The NCAA committee found that the violations were the result of the former head coach's inattention to certain aspects of the program. The committee said it was most concerned that the former head coach did not report violations to the compliance officer once he learned of them.
- The committee also noted the violations were a result of the university's failure to implement an effective system of athletics compliance.

## **SANCTIONS**

- Public reprimand and censure.
- Three years of probation, beginning Feb. 11, 2009.
- Reduction of two scholarships for the 2008-09 through 2010-11 years (self-imposed by the university).
- Reduction of the number of fulltime coaches from 11 to 10 for the same years (self-imposed).
- Limitation of the number of incoming freshmen who are nonqualifiers to no more than three per year for three years.
- Prohibition of the recruitment of nonqualifiers from two-year institutions for three years (self-imposed).
- Prohibition of incoming athletes who have not been certified by the NCAA from attending preseason camp for two years (self-imposed).
- No postseason games in 2009.

- The former head coach shall attend, at his own cost, an NCAA Regional Rules Seminar during each of three years.

- The former head coach will not be allowed to have any contact with his present institution's football squad during the first three days of 2009 practice.

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