

Rob Spear, Paul Petrino dispute column

But say football coach was counseled on dealing with media

Shanon Quinn, Moscow-Pullman Daily News

University of Idaho Athletic Director Rob Spear and head football coach Paul Petrino spoke to the media in response to a Daily News column critical of Petrino that sparked an outburst of national media interest Thursday.

They took no questions.

Petrino described himself as a passionate person in addressing a Wednesday confrontation with Daily News sports editor Michael-Shawn Dugar and a Lewiston Tribune reporter.

It was this passionate nature that caused him to, as he put it, "react poorly" to what he perceived to be undue criticism of his players and program.

"I will not apologize for that," he said.

Dugar detailed his experience with Petrino in Thursday's Daily News Sports section.

According to Dugar's column, "Here's a shout out to UI coach Paul Petrino," Petrino confronted the reporters on the field toward the end of Wednesday's football practice about what they had been writing about the Vandal passing game.

He went on to immediately ban the media from Thursday's practice, Dugar wrote, with the coach yelling, "If all you're going to write is negative (expletive) then none of you need to be here.' "

Moments later, off the field, the coach again approached the two reporters, yelling and cursing at them, Dugar wrote. When the situation escalated to the point that a second athletic program employee approached and restrained Petrino, Dugar wrote he was concerned about what might have happened had no one intervened.

According to Spear's prepared press conference statement, Petrino was not restrained.

"Following Wednesday's football practice, I witnessed Coach Petrino's verbal exchange with several reporters from a distance," Spear said. "I spoke with two UI athletic department officials who were in the immediate vicinity of the exchange between Coach and the Moscow-Pullman Daily News reporter. I want to make it very clear that at no point was Coach Petrino restrained. We're taking this opportunity to set the record straight."

"I will say this about those statements today: I stand by every word of my column," Dugar said late Thursday.

"I have complete confidence in Michael-Shawn's report, and multiple indications it is the more accurate account," Lee Rozen, Daily News managing editor, said Thursday evening.

At the conference, Spear said he and Petrino followed the incident with a discussion about how Petrino would constructively interact with the media in the future.

"I am confident he will do so," Spear said.

Petrino also denied approaching Dugar angrily, insisting he was never closer than seven yards from Dugar, but took responsibility for using inappropriate language and lack of professionalism.

"I allowed my passion for the program and our players to spill over into a conversation with Mr. Dugar in which I used an unprofessional tone. I apologize for my language and looking back, I wish that I had handled it differently," Petrino said.

Dugar said Thursday that Petrino apologized to him and the Tribune reporter privately after the conference.

The UI's Administrative Procedures Manual defines violent or threatening behavior as "behavior that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others," and in the case of university employees, is subject to disciplinary action including administrative leave, dismissal, departmental, division and college action.

According to Becky Paull, assistant athletic director of media relations, no action will be taken by the university against Petrino.

"If the university receives a formal report of violent or threatening behavior as defined in the policy, we will investigate and take appropriate action based on the results of the investigation," Paull said. "Needless to say, a newspaper story does not constitute such a report."

The Daily News requested a comment from university President Chuck Staben.

"The president is not going to make a comment on this," Stefany Bales, executive director of university communications and marketing, said.

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