

Twins Dismiss GM Smith, Return Ryan As Interim

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — When Jim Pohlad came to what he called “a stomach-churning” conclusion that general manager Bill Smith needed to be fired, the Minnesota Twins owner was making the kind of decision rarely seen in one of the most loyal and patient organizations in baseball.

A 99-loss season is equally unique in these parts, so Pohlad swallowed hard, made the move and turned to one of the most trusted and revered figures in the organization to pick up the pieces.

Terry Ryan reclaimed the job he had for 13 years on Monday, taking over for the man he recommended to take his place when Ryan stepped down four years ago.

“In the past week, it was clear to all of us that a change in leadership was in the best interest of our organization,” Twins President Dave St. Peter said. “We proceed with that change with a high level of re-

spect and sensitivity to Bill Smith and his family.”

Widely recognized for their stability, class and ability to make the most out of a medium-range payroll, this was a startling move for the Twins despite the embarrassment and deep disappointment of the 2011 season following two straight AL Central titles.

This is the first time since the franchise moved from Washington to Minnesota in 1961 that the Twins have fired a general manager. Calvin Griffith was the owner and general manager until selling the team in 1984. Andy MacPhail became the full-time successor, leaving for a prime job with the Chicago Cubs, and Ryan followed him. They’ve also had two managers — Tom Kelly and Ron Gardenhire — since 1984.

“We do this with a heavy heart,” Pohlad said. “But we also do this knowing that it is what’s best for the organization.”

Pohlad and St. Peter both side-stepped numerous questions about the specific reasons for the decision, saying it came down to “philosophical differences” in the direction of the baseball operations.

Ryan stepped down from the position in 2007, citing burnout and growing increasingly impatient with some aspects of the job, including working with some agents and, occasionally, dealing with the media.

Ryan remained in the organization on the scouting level and said he turned down several inquiries from other teams about taking over a front office again. On Monday, he said his “batteries are recharged” and he’s ready to get back to work.

“I’m going to take this job head-on,” Ryan said.

It appears to be an interim job in name only. Ryan said he would have a role in

grooming and choosing his eventual successor, but both he and Pohlad said they hoped things went well enough where Ryan would want to keep the job for a while.

“I don’t know if it will be for one year or 10 years,” Ryan said. “(I’m) going to see how it goes and see exactly the direction and success and workload and all the things that about 4 1/2 years ago we talked about over at the Dome.”

Ryan’s moves helped turn the Twins from one of the worst teams in baseball in the mid-90s to one of the best the next decade. They won four division titles over Ryan’s last five full seasons, without spending much money in free agency and instead drafting and developing their core players.

Shrewd trades were part of his success, too, fetching Cristian Guzman and Eric Milton for Chuck Knoblauch; getting Nick

Punto and Carlos Silva for Milton; and landing Francisco Liriano and Joe Nathan for A.J. Pierzynski.

Smith’s decisions haven’t turned out as well, dealing Johan Santana, Matt Garza, J.J. Hardy and Delmon Young for little production in return. Japanese shortstop Tsuyoshi Nishioka, the headliner acquisition last winter, was hurt for much of the season and a bust at the plate and in the field.

Pohlad added that the Twins will speak with Smith about “an ongoing role within the organization.” Smith has been with the club since 1986.

“This is going to be good for the Minnesota Twins organization,” Smith said in a phone interview. “It’s always tough when it involves you, but at the same time I respect the decision that the Pohlads had to make. We have to do it with players all the time, and it’s no fun.”

Revamped MMC Set For Season

Lancers Optimist As They Prep For Friday’s Season Opener

BY JEREMY HOECK

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Though he tries to remain cautiously optimistic, Jim Thorson’s enthusiasm is evident.

With his program coming off its first Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) post-season win, the Mount Marty College men’s basketball coach was asked if the Lancers are ready to take the next step in their progression.

“At this point, I would say yes,” he said Monday. “I think we’re capable of doing that.”

Doing so will be a relatively new-look Lancers squad, which opens its season Friday night at home against Ashford (Iowa). Mount Marty returns just one starter, but brings back a key player who was limited by injuries and two other senior transfers.

Another significant change for the 2011-12 squad, Thorson said, is attitude.

“Our attitude’s been really good and the guys have worked hard so far,” said the 17th-year coach, who guided the Lancers to a 10-20 overall record last season.

“We’ve got people who can score and defend the ball, and we’re just a little tougher all around,” he added. “I’m encouraged by what I’ve seen so far.”

Forward Spencer Yackley (Sr., 9.5 ppg) is the only starter back for Mount Marty, which graduated two, lost one to transfer and had another move back to a reserve role for this season.

Yackley will be joined in the frontcourt by sophomore forward Jeff Viereck, who averaged 8.9 points and 6.6 rebounds in 13 games a year ago after getting injured. Junior guard Joe Hieb (6.2 ppg) moves into a starting role this season after what Thorson called a “very strong finish” to last season.

“We felt like those guys back from last year should know the system and should give us some nice leadership,” Thorson said. “That was a pretty good nucleus to build around. Then we set out, recruiting wise, to fill in the gaps.”

Enter Will Eddie and Mitch Ackelson.

Though not a transfer this year, Eddie — a 6-foot-2 senior guard — played in only 11 games for the Lancers last season after venturing to Yankton from the

junior college ranks. He averaged 5.9 points and 1.64 assists in his limited duty last season.

Eddie will start this season as an off-guard in the backcourt with senior transfer Mitch Ackelson, who comes to MMC from NCAA Division II Missouri-St. Louis — where he played in 26 games a year ago.

Referencing Eddie and Ackelson, Thorson joked, “We needed guard help and we definitely got it.”

Another transfer, junior forward Scott Odekirk, also comes to Mount Marty from the junior college level — Southwestern Oregon Community College. He will be joined in the front court by fellow reserves Austin Harms, a junior who averaged 7.5 points in just 15 games, junior Jeff Larsen (who saw time in just 13 games) and senior Tom Kahler (2.9 ppg, 2 rpg).

“We needed some depth in those spots, and even though we didn’t really bring in a lot of guys, we’ve got some strength there,” Thorson said.

Other varsity reserves include Chevy Fischer (So.), Zach Wevik (So.), Jordan Knippling (So.), along with freshmen Tyler Payer (Tripp-Delmont-Armour), Hayden Barker and Matt Hilgers.

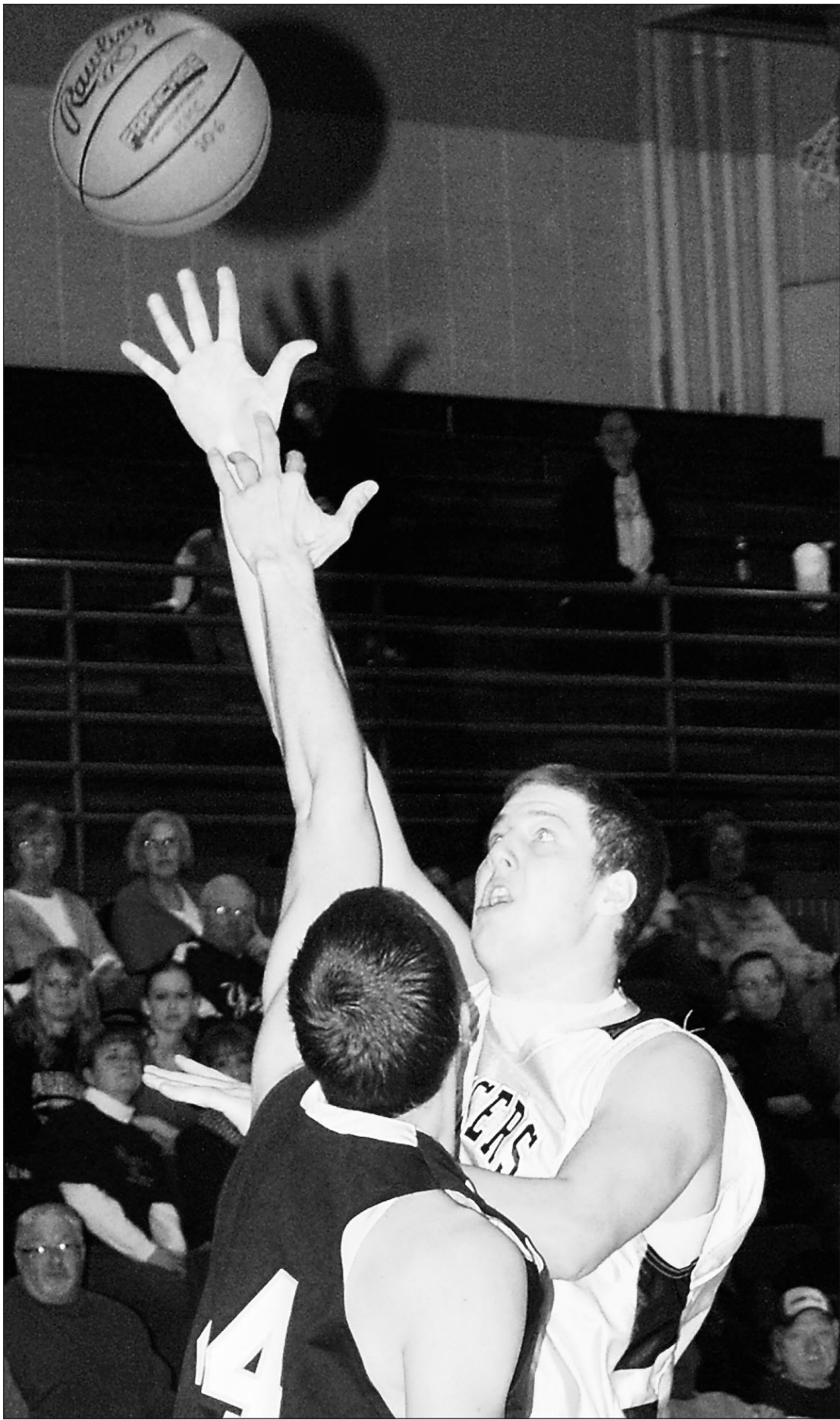
In all, the Lancers return 69 percent of its scoring from a team that averaged 67.6 points per game. A pre-season exhibition with S.D. Tech, in which four MMC players scored in double figures, should be a good indication of the offense for the season, Thorson said.

“We’ll have pretty balanced scoring again,” he said. “I don’t see any 20 or 30 point a game type of players. I feel if we’re going to be good, that’s how it’s going to be.”

Though they were picked the finish 11th — last — in the GPAC, the Lancers could have the pieces in place to make another run at a post-season victory, Thorson said.

“With all the new people, we have hopes that they’ll fill in the spots with the returners and we can make something out of it,” he said. “Things have been going pretty good with that so far, so we’ll see how it plays out.”

Following Friday night’s home game with Ashford, an NAIA National Tournament team a year ago, Mount Marty will host Clarke (Iowa) at 4 p.m. Saturday.



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Mount Marty’s Spencer Yackley shoots over the top of a Concordia defender during their Great Plains Athletic Conference men’s basketball game last season. MMC, which added several players to a squad that got its first home playoff game and first conference tournament win since joining the GPAC, begins its 2011-12 campaign Friday against Ashford.

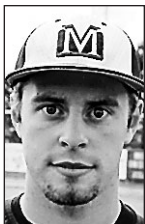
Lancers’ Schmidt Named Preseason NAIA All-American

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Mount Marty College senior shortstop Jason Schmidt has been named a preseason All-American by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. Schmidt and Doane pitcher Chance Brull were the only Great Plains Athletic Conference players selected.

Schmidt earned honorable mention All-American honors in 2011 after being named the GPAC’s Player of the Year. He batted .364 with team-highs of 13 home runs and 53 RBI. He also went 2-0 with three saves and a 2.76 ERA as the Lancers’ closer.

For his career, Schmidt is batting .396 with 23 home runs and 122 RBI. As a pitcher, he is 8-0 with 17 saves and a 2.62 ERA, a Mount Marty record for saves.

MMC, 19-27 a year ago, opens the 2012 season on Feb. 18, facing Dallas Christian and Park University in games to be played in Dallas, Texas.



Schmidt

Jund Named Region Coach Of The Year

WATERTOWN — Dakota Valley’s Jason Jund has been named the Region 6 Coach of the Year by the South Dakota Football Coaches Association.

This award is chose by fellow coaches in their region for their outstanding contributions and efforts in the area of football. The presentation will be made during the Class 11B championship game on Thursday in the DakotaDome.

Jund, the current president of the South Dakota Football Coaches Association, has coached for 16 years, including the last seven at Dakota Valley. He has also coached at Aberdeen Central, and at two Minnesota schools: Sleepy Eye St. Mary and Canby. This season his Panthers squad went 6-4, eliminated by state finalist West Central in the quarterfinals of the Class 11A playoffs.

Kim Nelson, who coached Sioux Falls Roosevelt to the Class 11AA final, will also be honored. Other region coaches of the year include Shaun Wanner of Groton Area, Chad Stadem of Flandreau, Michael Postma of Huron, Bruce Bressee of Spearfish, Kent VanOverschelde of Mitchell and Russ Bailey of Custer.

Penn State Sex Scandal Engulfing Revered Paterno

BY MARK SCOLFORO AND MARC LEVY

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Time and again, questions about an alleged cover-up of a sex abuse scandal at Penn State, circled back to one name: Joe Paterno.

Major college football’s oldest, winningest and perhaps most revered coach, was engulfed Monday in a growing furor involving former defensive coordinator and one-time heir apparent Jerry Sandusky, who was indicted on charges of sexually abusing eight boys over 15 years.

The Pennsylvania state police commissioner said Paterno fulfilled his legal requirement when he relayed to university administrators that a graduate assistant had seen Sandusky attacking a young boy in the team’s locker room shower in 2002. But the commissioner also questioned whether Paterno had a moral responsibility to do more.

On the Happy Valley campus and in

the surrounding town of State College, some were even asking whether the 84-year-old coach should step down after 46 seasons on the sidelines.

Two Penn State officials, Senior Vice President Gary Schultz and Athletic Director Tim Curley, surrendered on charges that they failed to alert police to the complaint about Sandusky.

Schultz and Curley are also charged with lying to the state grand jury that indicted Sandusky. Both stepped down from their posts Sunday, Curley taking a temporary leave and Schultz retiring. They appeared Monday in a Harrisburg courtroom, where a judge set bail at \$75,000. They weren’t required to enter pleas.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Linda Kelly said Paterno is not a target of the investigation into how the school handled the accusations. But she refused to say the same for the university president, Graham Spanier.

“All I can say is again, I’m limited to

what’s contained in the presentment, and that this is an ongoing investigation,” Kelly said.

State police Commissioner Frank Noonan said that although Paterno may have met his legal requirement to report suspected abuse by Sandusky, “somebody has to question about what I would consider the moral requirements for a human being that knows of sexual things that are taking place with a child.”

He added: “I think you have the moral responsibility, anyone. Not whether you’re a football coach or a university president or the guy sweeping the building. I think you have a moral responsibility to call us.”

At a news conference, Noonan and Kelly were peppered with questions about whether Paterno was given details about what graduate assistant Mike McQueary — now the team’s wide receivers coach — saw on the night of March 1, 2002.

The grand jury report said McQueary was in the locker room that night to put away some new sneakers when he heard “rhythmic, slapping sounds” and looked into the showers.

He reportedly saw a naked boy, about 10 years old, with his hands against the wall as Sandusky subjected him to anal sex. McQueary left immediately and first contacted his father before calling Paterno the next morning and then meeting at Paterno’s home.

Exactly what was said during that meeting is unclear from the grand jury record, which states that Paterno called Curley the next day to tell him McQueary had seen Sandusky “in the Lasch Building showers fondling or doing something of a sexual nature to a young boy.”

Paterno released a statement Sunday in which he said he was not told “the very specific actions” contained in the grand jury report, but that McQueary had seen “something inappropriate in-

volving Mr. Sandusky.”

“If this is true we were all fooled, along with scores of professionals trained in such things, and we grieve for the victims and their families,” said Paterno, who has not spoken publicly about the matter. His weekly news conference is Tuesday.

The indictment also cited a 1998 incident in which an 11-year-old boy’s mother called university police to complain after learning that her son had showered with Sandusky. A state Department of Public Welfare investigator told the grand jury that Sandusky said he showered naked with the youth and hugged him, “admitted that it was wrong,” and promised not to shower with any child again.

Kelly would not say whether Paterno or the university president knew of that investigation.

“All I can say is that investigation was

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