

Elon football player's father reacts to Penn State scandal

Adam Lawson
Reporter

When the Villanova University football program shut down in 1981, Al Harris trusted the Penn State University coaching staff with his last two years of eligibility.

That meant for two years, Harris, father of Elon senior running back A.J. Harris and junior wide receiver Chris Harris, got to experience the life of being a linebacker at "Linebacker U" under much-heralded defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Jerry Sandusky.

"I learned more in playing linebacker in two weeks at Penn State than I did in two years at Villanova," Harris said. "He just had it all figured out."

On Jan. 1, 1983, Harris became a national champion. In his last game as a college athlete, Harris' Nittany Lions beat the University of Georgia 27-23 in the Sugar Bowl. For a moment in history, Penn State was on top of the world.

In the grand scheme of things, none of that matters now. Not in State College. Not after a 23-page grand jury report released Nov. 5 charged Sandusky with sexually violating at least eight young boys.

"My heart just sank," Harris said of the November Saturday when things at Penn State changed for the worse.

Harris, now a dentist in Ocean City, N.J., read every word of the grand jury's indictment, completely unaware of how a man he had long considered a mentor

could allegedly commit acts so heinous.

"I never had any inkling of any of this," Harris said. "I thought he was one of the smartest guys I knew."

But after reading the charges, Harris' opinion of the man he once looked up to took a 180-degree turn in the opposite direction.

"I don't even want to see him," Harris said. "I'm just really upset and distraught that this is happening."

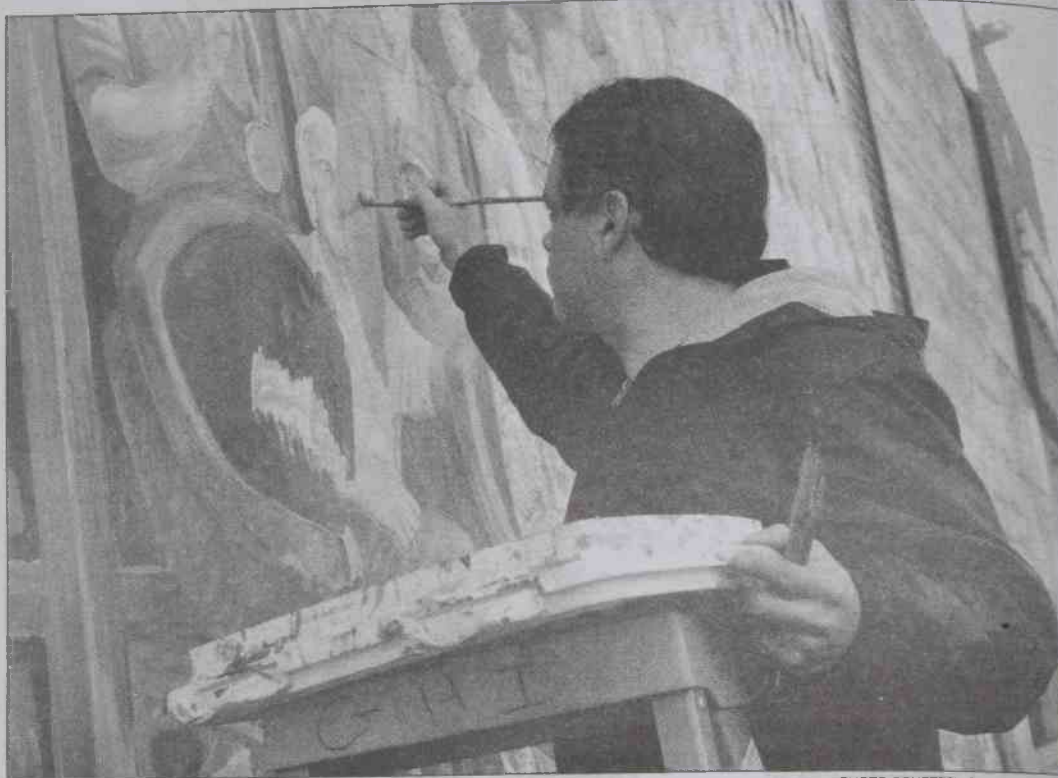
While thinking about the current scandal, Harris can't help but reflect on his time as a college athlete. He said while you may think you know the people coaching you on a daily basis, things like this happen and show you can't know everything.

"I think these guys are great coaches," Harris said. "But for something like this to happen and knowing now that (Sandusky) probably had some skeletons in his closet, some hidden demons. It kinda makes you upset that he's not the person you thought he was."

One of the chilling details that came out of the grand jury's indictment was the revelation that Sandusky used his own charity to find his victims.

Sandusky founded The Second Mile in 1977 to provide assistance for at-risk children. As it turns out, Sandusky's charity did more harm than good. Six of the eight victims mentioned in the grand jury presentment were participants in The Second Mile.

"I would think if you have an organization like



Artist Michael Pilato paints the first brush strokes over Jerry Sandusky's face as he covers up Sandusky's image on his mural, Wednesday, November 9, 2011, in State College, Pennsylvania. Sandusky, former Penn State defensive coordinator, has been charged with molesting eight boys in 15 years, including at the Penn State football complex.

The Second Mile, which specifically deals with underprivileged kids, that he would take extra measures to take care of these kids if they're in your care," Harris said.

Joe Paterno, Harris' head coach at Penn State, was fired Nov. 10. After 46 years as the man in charge of the football program and two days before the Nittany Lions were to play their Senior Day game against the University of Nebraska, Paterno was let go after not doing more to end Sandusky's

abusive actions.

"At this point, to offer any kind of condolence or anything like that? No. I don't have any intention of calling him," Harris said.

The real victims, Harris said, are the kids whose life Sandusky so negatively affected. While the public saw the students rioting over the firing of their football coach, Harris said that on game day the community paid their respects to those who deserved it.

"My father was at the

(Nebraska) game," Harris said. "He said you could have heard a pin drop. One hundred and eleven people, perfectly silent. Praying for these victims."

Eighteen years after graduating from State College, Harris said he's still proud to be a Nittany Lion and have a degree from Penn State, even if the football program will never be looked at the same way again.

"I'm not mad at the university," Harris said. "I'm just mad that this happened."

Women's basketball hunts for rebound in home game

Sam Calvert
Online Managing Editor

The Elon University women's basketball team will head into Southern Conference play on a streak the team didn't see coming: three losses in a row.

"I don't think anyone anticipated that we were going to go 0-2 this week," junior guard Ali Ford. "We found a lot of things we need to work on before Saturday."

The team played in the East Carolina Thanksgiving tournament Nov. 26 and 27, where it lost 69-65 to Robert Morris University and 60-46 to East Carolina University.

Ford led the team for the weekend with 29 points, playing 59 minutes. But she said the team had a lot to improve on.

The Phoenix made an average of 35.1 percent of its shots during the two games, while its opponents saw an average of 40.2 percent of their shots go through the basket.

"We know that other teams don't really have a control over us in the game," Ford said. "We control what we do. We need to take some extra time and focus on doing things that win ball games."

One of the factors she said wins games is rebounding, a battle that corresponds with Elon's outcome in games.

In the first two games of the regular season, Elon's two wins, the Phoenix outrebounded its opponents 109-66. But in its last three games, the team's adversaries have grabbed 146 rebounds, as opposed to Elon's 104.

In the East Carolina game, the Phoenix were outrebounded by 20, and in the UNC Charlotte loss Nov. 19, the team was outrebounded by 22 and lost by 31.

"We're missing a lot of firepower right now, but that's no excuse, and we need to get better," head coach Charlotte Smith said in a press release. "Going forward into SoCon play next weekend, we need to remain positive and focus on the details this upcoming week in practice."

The Phoenix will take on its first two

SoCon foes Friday and Saturday at home: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Samford University, respectively.

The Mocs are first up on the slate at 7 p.m. in Alumni Gym — a team that Elon split games with last season.

"We know Chattanooga is a good team, and we have to play one of our best games to upset them," Ford said.

UT Chattanooga is 2-3 so far this season, with wins against University of Alabama at Birmingham and Indiana State University.

The offense has averaged 54.8 points a game, making on 38 percent of its shots.

"Our defense is going to be key this weekend, being able to fine tune our defense," Ford said. "We have to do what we know how to do and do it better than we have been doing."

But the team is playing at home, and the Phoenix is undefeated in Alumni Gym. And last year, Elon went 11-6 on its own court.

"We're excited to have home court," Ford said. "Hopefully there will be a good turn out, and we'll use that to our full advantage."

SPORTS BRIEFS

Former quarterback Riddle arrested, according to reports

According to The Times-News sports reporter Adam Smith, former Elon University quarterback Scott Riddle was arrested Monday.

Smith tweeted that Riddle was arrested on charges for "assault on a government official and resisting a public officer," citing the Asheville (N.C.) Courier-Tribune.

Riddle, who played from 2007-2010, holds several Elon and Southern Conference records. He was a finalist for the Walter Payton Award, given to the best player in the FCS, three of his four years at Elon and threw for 105 touchdowns in his career.

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