



Prepared Remarks

LOUIS STOUT

President, Amateur Athletic Union

News Conference

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Lake Buena Vista, FL

Good afternoon – and thank you all for being here today.

I am Louis Stout – and I am the President of the Amateur Athletic Union. On my left are most of our officers: Henry Forrest, First Vice President; Ron Crawford, Treasurer; and Dr. Roger Goudy, our Secretary, who could not be here today. For more than 100 years, the AAU has provided millions of young people with the exciting opportunity to compete in diverse sports activities -- and to develop strong and positive character traits that serve them throughout their lives. We're proud of that history – and we're dedicated to continuing that important work.

But more than any game, contest, competition, or sporting experience, our job always has been to help nurture the best qualities of humanity in our young people. That's more important than anyone winning a medal, trophy or ribbon. It's the special reward for those who know the AAU – as young athletes or as adult coaches and volunteers.

It's all about trust.

So, we're not here today to reflect on our proud history. We're not here to announce a new tournament, or exciting plans for upcoming competitions that will engage thousands of young Americans in healthy activities. We're here to redefine trust.

We are here for the principle and priority above all others: the safety and well-being of every young person who takes part in any of our programs and activities – anywhere in the country. That responsibility is more important and more fundamental to the AAU than anything else we do.

Frankly, the recent allegations of sexual abuse of children dating back nearly 30 years ago -- leveled against our former longtime president and executive, Bobby Dodd -- are shocking and the cause of deep concern.

While we don't know if these allegations are true, we have acted decisively and correctly to be responsible to our ability to safeguard children -- because that imperative is far more important than protecting our AAU brand.

Many of us have worked with Bobby Dodd for many years – and many of us have called him 'friend.'

But that friendship had to be put aside in order to respect a deeper loyalty than the loyalty of friendship. And that's about the AAU's deeper loyalty to do the right thing.

I'd like to briefly recap what we found out, when we found it out, what we did – and what we still are doing. And while some folks may choose to find fault from the comfortable perch of self-appointed critics, we are confident in our actions.

Early last month, around November 9th, the AAU offices here began to receive some anonymous emails that were brief, accusatory, non-specific in detail – but very general -- alleging terrible acts of child sexual abuse by Bobby Dodd, many years ago.

One referenced 1984. Memphis was mentioned. They were all brief. But they all got our attention.

And, two brief anonymous voice mail messages also were left on our headquarters phones – again, without any contact information, with similar accusations.

I'm proud that the AAU did the right thing with that information – general as it was....negative as it was....dated as the alleged acts were that were reported to have happened.

And to the alleged victims, let me direct this: We took these allegations very seriously, as soon as they were received.

Every member of this AAU staff – and all of its officers -- extend our genuine concern to you. But we want you to know that we acted upon these allegations – immediately.

We did not ignore these issues. We did not delay taking action. We did not 'delete' the problem. We did our job. And we're going to continue to do our job.

We may not have handled all of this perfectly – and I have not handled all of this perfectly. But we have acted decisively and with the best motivations.

This is not Penn State. This is not Syracuse. This is not The Citadel. This is the AAU.

In stark contrast to those great, established institutions, for which I have much respect, in the face of serious allegations of wrongdoing, we took action.

We didn't have any evidence -- except very brief anonymous email and phone messages. But we took direct action -- Immediately. Decisively. Pro-actively. Even against our own friend, colleague and longtime president.

Our Compliance Office and our General Counsel were immediately involved in reviewing these messages. Our officers were notified on November 11 -- and we made plans to travel here to meet with and confront Bobby Dodd on Monday, November 14.

Bobby Dodd acknowledged that there were serious allegations -- and he told us that he had received some similar messages or calls directly, too.

And, Bobby Dodd emphatically denied any wrongdoing. He denied the allegations -- even after being repeatedly pressed by the officers.

Despite those consistent denials, we did the right thing. We acted to ensure trust in the AAU. We directed Bobby Dodd to take indefinite leave from the AAU -- that very day, November 14th.

We took control of his AAU email account and his work computer. We are prepared to provide those secured entities to law enforcement.

We also boxed up Bobby Dodd's personal effects in his office.

We also undertook what we believe was responsible due diligence -- by hiring a professional private investigator to directly check out these allegations -- to

establish or generate more detailed information to be shared with law enforcement

We did not hit a 'reply' button to the anonymous, brief and general allegations dating back many years, sent in the emails. But perhaps we should have. Instead, we hired a professional private investigator to get the facts. I believe that was the right thing to do.

After Bobby Dodd was placed on indefinite leave, he notified us that he learned from doctors that he was suffering from colon cancer – and that he had to undergo surgery. He asked to be allowed to retire for medical reasons. But I told him we would resolve that issue after his surgery – because that seemed to me like the right thing to do.

After Bobby Dodd's surgery, and after his recovery from it, we made a decision late last week that we would not honor Bobby Dodd's departure from AAU as a medical condition retirement, though we initially gave that 'medical retirement' explanation, when asked. We should have announced that earlier last week.

But here's the fact: Bobby Dodd is severed from the organization – and he won't be coming back.

I don't know if Bobby Dodd is guilty of these allegations. But we acted to ensure there is no cloud over our ability to make the protection of young people a continued top priority. We intend to do a lot more toward that goal – to make it a more definite reality. And for the AAU to be known for setting the highest standard of safety and trust for the children who participate in our programs.

Bobby Dodd is no longer president and executive director of AAU. The organization has no continuing contact with him – and he has no continuing association with the organization and its programs.

We are urging anyone in the AAU community who has information about any instances of inappropriate behavior or abuse anywhere – including our programs -- to contact law enforcement and the AAU.

Bobby Dodd is owed some salary – and some accrued vacation and sick leave. We are completing those calculations – but expect we will be paying him a final check of about \$15,000 dollars.

Our private investigation established the identity – not just of two complaining alleged victims of abuse.... But of 3 possible alleged victims.

That's the information we have shared with the Memphis Police Department in a phone call we placed to them on Friday, December 9th. That's when we had enough information to make that contact – based on a professional investigator's opinion. We also offered to share any other information, open up every process of ours to them -- and to cooperate in any way possible with any investigation by law enforcement.

But let's be clear about this: until AAU contacted the Memphis Police – no one had contacted them about this issue. Not any of the alleged victims. No one -- except the AAU. We believe we have acted properly – and immediately. And as President, I take responsibility for what we've done and how we've done it.

I don't know where the Memphis Police investigation will lead – but we are committed to cooperating.

And now, it's time to move onward. So, we have some good news to report today. I want all of the parents of children who participate in our programs to know that we are dedicated to taking every active step to continue to provide great events – but to set a best and highest new standard of trust and safety for any organization that works with children.

We have begun an independent internal review of our protocols, procedures and policies.

While we believe our network of programs has safeguards in place, we will never be complacent about doing all we can to protect the young people in our activities and events. This independent review will include outside expert assessments about the safeguards we have in place, and the screening and training we provide to staff and volunteers.

We are going to enhance any of our policies, procedures and practices – as recommended by this expert review – to ensure the safety of all of the young people in our programs.

The two task forces that we establish today are authorized to ask for any information from AAU – and to receive it.

Staff is directed to fully cooperate. And our officers will ensure that these experts get any and all support that they need.

The first of these task forces is the Adult/Volunteer Screening Task Force. From the outset, we already know that a pro-active screening process is a critical issue for us to address. The hundreds of thousands of young athletes who participate in our events often come to our programs through local Boys and Girls Clubs,

YMCAs, local parks and recreation or school programs. We have limited authority to compel adults in THOSE programs to submit to background checks.

But going forward, let me make this clear: adults who want to bring their teams and athletes to AAU events in the future are surely going to be expected to undergo rigorous screening, that likely will include background checks.

It's not because we *suspect anyone*.....it is because we *expect everyone* to be willing to help us build the trust.

So, heading up the Adult/Volunteer Screening Task Force are two men with long, distinguished careers in law enforcement – with special achievements in protection of children.

Tim Moore and Dr. Jim Sewell will focus on guiding the AAU toward the use of the most effective and efficient ways to ascertain that all coaches, volunteers, and other adults are properly vetted to safely work with children. We know that we can do better than the system we have now – and we have to do better.

Mr. Moore previously served as the longest-tenured commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, an agency in which he worked for more than thirty years, with a stellar track record of protecting child safety. Under his leadership, FDLE is credited with enhancing the Missing Children Information Clearinghouse (MCIC) -- the first of its kind in the nation – to be a model for other states to adopt. He was also instrumental in helping Florida to become only the second state in the nation to create a statewide AMBER Plan.

Dr. Sewell, who also retired from FDLE, brings more than 30 years of law enforcement experience. While at FDLE he served as Assistant Commissioner; Deputy Commissioner; Regional Director of FDLE's Tampa Bay Regional

Operations Center; Director of the Division of Criminal Justice Information Systems; and Director of the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute. He has also served as special advisor to Florida's Department of Children and Families. He has authored two important books that are highly regarded by law enforcement professionals and scholars.

Dr. Sewell and Mr. Moore could not be here today – but they're already beginning their work, which we look forward to embracing to build even stronger trust in the AAU. I'm pleased that our AAU First Vice President, Henry Forrest, will coordinate this Task Force with our outside experts.

The second task force is the Youth Protection Task Force. And, you're going to hear now from a very courageous young woman who is one of my heroes. Her name is Lauren Book. And she is a survivor of sexual abuse by a trusted adult when Lauren was just a young girl – and it lasted for many years.

To her credit – and with the guidance of her dad, renowned attorney Ron Book – Lauren has become more than a survivor. She has become a champion for the victims – and a tireless advocate of policies to better prevent and respond to sexual abuse of children. We're very proud that Lauren Book and her "Lauren's Kids Foundation" are going to provide wise counsel to the AAU....Lauren...

Remarks of LAUREN BOOK,
Lauren's Kids Foundations
AAU News Conference/Orlando, Florida
December 14, 2001

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to be here today – because I have a great respect for the AAU and its long history of such wonderful work with American youth. Plus – my dad, Ron Book, who is sitting right there, still beams today about the track events in which he starred as a young athlete – not sooooo many years ago in Miami. He has always told me about how AAU has been an important part of his life when it really counted.

So, I was proud when the AAU contacted me and asked my foundation, Lauren's Kids, for help in reviewing their protocols and procedures and recommending any improvements that could make the organization better and stronger in its mission. In contrast to Penn State, Syracuse and the Citadel, the AAU acted decisively when they learned of these horrible allegations.

For the work ahead for our Task Force, President Stout and the AAU's officers have said they will answer any question, allow us to see any document, interview any staff member or volunteer, analyze any program or practice – so that we can get the job done. It is how we can report back with an honest, independent assessment of what's being done right and what could be done even better.

They've even told us that for any significant changes we strongly commend, they will find a way to implement – even if it means changing long-standing ways of doing things.

As these recent, high-profile cases of alleged sexual abuse against children illustrate, this is a tragic and rampant problem in our society. We have to find ways to keep children safe, while preserving important programs like those sponsored by AAU,

that create wonderful opportunities for hundreds of thousands of young people to engage in amateur sports.

Yesterday, I was in Washington DC to attend a Senate subcommittee hearing about this critical topic and share recommendations for steps Congress can take to better protect children under federal law.

As someone who was sexually abused myself from age 11 to 17, I can tell you from firsthand experience that sexual abuse robs children of their childhood, creating scars that remain with them for the rest of their lives. Sexual abuse is an epidemic that we all have a role and a stake in preventing, responding to – with a goal of eliminating.

I feel privileged to have this opportunity to consult with the AAU and recommend protocols to better protect the children who participate in and benefit from their many wonderful athletic programs.

Whether it's screening processes, volunteer training programs, policies for overnight travel, protocols such as making sure no adult is alone with a child, we will seek to identify protocols that protect children from abuse, while also protecting the 80,000 adult volunteers who make the AAU programs possible.

I recognize that most adults who work with children, including the vast majority to volunteer with AAU, do so because they are genuinely motivated to help children.

As I said, my own father was an AAU athlete and coach for many years. But we must put safeguards in place to protect children from the few dangerous adults who would seek out opportunities to be around children just to exploit them.

The reality of today with this problem is that the many must submit to safeguards and practices aimed at stopping the dangerous few.

We have a lot of work to do, and we are motivated to do a lot in a short time to enhance the excellent programs that have been giving young athletes important opportunities to compete and to develop great character, for more than 100 years.

I'm excited about working on this Task Force with a nationally recognized organization and its leader, Chris Newlin. Chris is Executive Director of the National Children's Advocacy Center – based in Alabama. His leadership and organization have provided 'best practices' training on these issues to many organizations and thousands of adult volunteers. Chris?

Thank you.

CHRIS NEWLIN
Remarks as prepared
National Children's Advocacy Center
Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2011

Thank you,

I'm Chris Newlin -- and I'm here today representing the National Children's Advocacy Center.

We salute the long history of wonderful work the AAU has become renowned for during its proud 113-year history. Generations of America's young athletes have enjoyed healthy sports competitions and developed great character traits that serve them throughout their lives -- thanks to the AAU.

Very clearly, this is a very difficult time for the AAU because of the recent child sexual abuse allegations made against its former president that go back nearly 30 years.

But the steps that AAU has taken thus far demonstrate that the organization is dedicated to doing the right thing -- and that's why we're involved.

To President Stout's credit -- and to the credit of the AAU -- we've been asked to work with Lauren's Kids Foundation in thoroughly reviewing AAU's current policies and practices with one fundamental goal: to make smart and practical recommendations that will enhance AAU's commitment and ability to protect children who participate in their many events.

As a youth sports organization with a significant national footprint, AAU is poised to create an even higher level of diligence in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and youth who participate in programs with coaches and/or volunteer adults.

We embrace this challenge – because it is completely within the fundamental mission of the National Children’s Advocacy Center. And we look forward to partnering with AAU and providing our best counsel for this important purpose.

The NCAC has revolutionized the nation’s response to child sexual abuse – with prevention, intervention, and education strategies. Our work serves as a beacon of hope for more than 250,000 child abuse victims every year. Annually, the NCAC trains thousands of people from the United States and around the world to recognize and support endangered children. More than 70,000 child abuse professionals from all 50 states and 20 countries have been trained by the NCAC.

The NCAC was founded in response to the need for a better, and more child-friendly way to help young victims of sexual abuse.

In the early 1980’s, the social service and the criminal justice systems were not working together in an effective manner that the children could trust. This common problem added to the children's emotional distress, and created a segmented, duplicative, and often frightening experience for the child victims.

The child advocacy center model pulls together law enforcement, criminal justice, child protective service, medical and mental health workers onto one coordinated approach to these difficult situations. After we developed this innovative team approach on the local level, communities across the country, and throughout the world have emulated this innovative model to ensure the full protection of children at risk for harm.

In addition to training programs throughout the year, the NCAC hosts the annual National Symposium on Child Abuse and National Conference on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention, and also helps lead the National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.

We hope to share this expertise and experience with the AAU as this great organization moves forward to ensure that its programming utilizes cutting edge protocols and practices to protect kids.

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