

Miami tries to move forward amid scandal

Written by Administrator
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CORAL GABLES, Fla. (AP) — For the first time, some Miami players are speaking out about the scandal that has rocked the Hurricanes' football program and sparked an NCAA investigation.

"Know this for sure everyone hurts! We all feel pain!" defensive back Brandon McGee posted on his Twitter page at 6:29 a.m. Thursday, about 90 minutes before the Hurricanes took the field for the first of two scheduled practices.

Also ending his silence: Miami athletic director Shawn Eichorst, who promised fans "there will be a better day." Miami returned to the practice field Thursday with coach Al Golden saying his team is recovering from the "shock" of the claims former booster Nevin Shapiro made in a Yahoo Sports article this week.

Shapiro, now serving 20 years in federal prison for his role in a \$930 million Ponzi scheme, said he provided Miami players with cash, prostitutes, cars and other gifts over the past decade.

"These are not times for pity and reflection," Eichorst said in a statement. "All of my efforts and energy are committed to ensuring the integrity of the NCAA investigation, demanding the full cooperation of our employees and student-athletes and providing unwavering support to our more than 400 plus student-athletes and more than 150 coaches and staff.

"There are tough times ahead, challenges to overcome and serious decisions to be made, but we will be left standing and we will be stronger as a result," Eichorst added.

Two of the current players implicated in the Shapiro scandal — quarterback Jacory Harris and defensive back JoJo Nicholas — were not in uniform Thursday morning, for reasons that school officials said didn't involve the investigation. Harris was on the field in shorts and a T-shirt, whistle dangling from his neck, serving as a player coach for the morning. Nicholas was tending to a family matter and was excused.

Golden said players decided among themselves to limit usage of social media like Facebook and Twitter during camp, but McGee and running back Mike James were among the few who picked Thursday to update their followers.

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"You have to appreciate the process and accept the struggle. This is how you win in everything you do!" James tweeted after the morning practice.

Harris will be in full pads for Thursday afternoon's practice, which is closed. Players and assistant coaches still aren't permitted to speak with reporters.

"If anything, it's going to bring us closer together," Golden said when asked how his team is dealing with the distraction of the scandal and allegations. "Again, 90 percent of the guys have nothing to do with this as it happened in the past. For the most part, inside here, we're moving forward."

Eichorst stressed the same in his four-paragraph statement.

"I know our family is hurting right now and that is what has made the past few days so difficult, upsetting and disappointing for me, as I am sure it has been for many proud Canes," Eichorst wrote.

On Wednesday, NCAA president Mark Emmert released a statement saying if the allegations against Miami prove true, "fundamental change" in athletics nationwide may be necessary.

The Miami scandal is one of many to hit college football in the last 18 months, joining messes at Southern California, Ohio State, Auburn, Oregon, Michigan, North Carolina, Georgia Tech and LSU — schools all either investigated or sanctioned by the NCAA.

"If the assertions are true, the alleged conduct at the University of Miami is an illustration of the need for serious and fundamental change in many critical aspects of college sports," Emmert said.

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Last week, Emmert led a group of university presidents — including Miami's Donna Shalala — in drafting an outline for change in college sports.

Shalala said she was upset, disheartened and saddened by Shapiro's allegations.