

Baylor launches inquiry into student athlete's sexual assault

August 22, 2015

WACO—[Baylor University](#) President Ken Starr called for a “comprehensive internal inquiry” into circumstances surrounding former football player Sam Ukwuachu’s sexual assault of an 18-year-old female student-athlete, including the conduct of the various campus offices involved.

Ukwuachu, a 22-year-old former defensive end on the Baylor Bears, was convicted Aug. 20 of sexually assaulting a then-18-year-old soccer player in October 2013, about five months after Ukwuachu transferred from Boise State to Baylor. He will serve 180 days in jail and 10 years probation for the second-degree sexual assault.

Sam Ukwuachu makes a tackle while playing football for Boise State. Soon after Ukwuachu’s conviction was announced Aug. 20, Baylor issued [a public statement](#): “Acts of sexual violence contradict every value Baylor University upholds as a caring Christian community. In recent years, we have joined university efforts nationally to prevent campus violence against women and sexual assault, to actively support survivors of sexual assault with compassion and care, and to take action against perpetrators. We have established and fully staffed a Title IX office that employs a Title IX coordinator and two full-time investigators. Maintaining a safe and caring community is central to Baylor’s mission and at the heart of our commitment to our students, faculty and staff.”

The next day, in an email to Baylor alumni and supporters and [a statement](#) on the Baylor website, Starr announced he ordered an internal inquiry after consulting the university’s board of regents, the school’s executive council and academic leadership.

Jeremy Counseller, professor at Baylor Law School, will lead the inquiry. Counseller is Baylor’s faculty athletics representative to the Big 12 Conference and NCAA and a former assistant district attorney.

“Mr. Counseller will engage others in his review as he deems appropriate and will submit his report directly to me at the conclusion of his inquiry,” Starr wrote. “After an analysis of his report, I will determine what additional action to take.”



Baylor Head Football

Coach Art Briles
In the email, Starr noted expressions of “disappointment and anger” by Baylor supporters regarding the incident.

“My colleagues and I fully share your outrage,” Starr wrote. “We work tirelessly to provide a distinctly Christian and safe educational experience for our students and to continually advance the good name and high calling of Baylor University. That a student would be grievously harmed and our university’s good name besmirched deeply saddens all who love Baylor and have a care for her, including those of us who are blessed to serve on this campus.

“In addition to the work already being undertaken by our Title IX Office, we are doing everything in our power to ensure that acts of sexual violence are

not committed and that those who perpetrate them will find no shelter on our campus.”

Ukwuachu did not play for Baylor during the 2013 season due to transfer rules and rehabilitation from pectoral surgery. He did not play in 2014 due to violation of unspecified rules.

But *Texas Monthly* reported Baylor Defensive Coordinator Phil Bennett told a Baylor Sports Network luncheon in Fort Worth two months ago he expected Ukwuachu to play this season—even though Ukwuachu had been indicted June 25, 2014 on two counts of sexual assault.

Furthermore, the magazine reported Ukwuachu had been dismissed from the Boise State team after an earlier act of violence involving a female student—and questions surrounded how much Baylor Head Coach Art Briles knew and when he knew it.



Former Boise State Coach Chris Petersen On Friday morning, Aug. 21, [Briles insisted](#) he knew “zero” about Ukwuachu’s history of violence against women when he allowed him to transfer from Boise State to his program. He insisted Chris Petersen, coach at Boise State in 2013, only mentioned Ukwuachu was “depressed” and the Pearland native wanted to “come home” to Texas.

Petersen responded later in the day in [a statement to ESPN](#): “After Sam Ukwuachu was dismissed from the Boise State football program and expressed an interest in transferring to Baylor, I initiated a call with Coach Art Briles. In that conversation, I thoroughly apprised Coach Briles of the circumstances surrounding Sam’s disciplinary record and dismissal.”

Briles, in turn, issued [a statement](#) saying: “In our discussion, he (Petersen) did not disclose that there had been violence toward women, but he did tell me of a rocky relationship with his (Ukwuachu’s) girlfriend which contributed to his depression. The only disciplinary action I was aware of were team-related issues, insubordination of coaches and missing practices. ... As required with any transfer to Baylor, Boise State acknowledged that he was not suspended due to any institutional disciplinary reasons and further that he was eligible for completion if he chose to return to Boise State.”

The [compliance form](#) released to media confirmed Ukwuachu was not “suspended or disqualified from (the) institution for disciplinary reasons.”