

President of Youth Football Team Served With Attempted Sex Offense Conviction

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Harold Irving Berg, Jr., who until recently served as the president of the Pax River Raiders youth football team, lead the football club even though he had been convicted more than a decade ago of attempted third-degree sex offense, The County Times has learned.

Several sources confirmed that Berg had served up until recently, stepping down from the presidency of the team and handing it over to the interim president Dave Burris.

County officials have said that such youth sports leagues are required to provide a list of those who are coaches for background checks but those members of the league who are not coaches do not need to be on that list.

"I'm satisfied that the county performed all of its obligations," said County Attorney George Sparling.

County Commissioner Dan Morris said elected leaders should consider expanding the requirement for background checks from just coaches in youth sports leagues to all volunteers and officers associated with it.

"It would be a wise thing to do," Morris (R-Mechanicsville) said. "I think we need to cover all the bases involving our children."

"I'm for every blanket of protection for our children," he said.

Berg said he never hid his record and did not get a background check because it was not required of him because he was not a coach.

He said he is no longer serving in any official capacity with the Raiders and sacrificed his own time and money to make the program better.

He said he stepped up to the presidency of the club because it was in danger of disbanding at the time.

He said he has not been charged criminally since 2000 and is the target of a deliberate smear campaign by other competing youth football officials.

"I feel like I'm a scapegoat here," Berg said. "If I had known it would have been this much of an issue I never would have ... taken over the president's position. 'I've never coached, I've never been interested in coaching. I'm not on the field with any kids.'"

Burris said that Berg stepped down from the presidency before Burris learned that he had a criminal record.

He said he learned of Berg's record when an official from another local team brought it up in a meeting.

The way in which that official brought it up in the meeting, in which Berg was not in attendance, resulted in that person being removed from their position on that team, Burris said.

Burris called it a "slander campaign."

Burris said that all members who are involved in coaching or assisting coaches in football or cheerleading

"I'm not the person I was back in 1999."

- Harold Irving Berg, Jr.

must go through background checks.

"He [Berg] was never a coach," Burris said.

A former official with the Pax River Raiders who wished to remain anonymous said they were shocked to learn that Berg had a criminal record.

They said that information was not widely known but had been rumored around the organization.

"Nobody knew," the source said. "That's not good."

Court records from Charles County, where Berg got his 2000 conviction, show that his original charge was a third-degree sex offense but was amended to attempted third-degree sex offense on his indictment. Upon conviction he was sentenced to two years in prison but that sentence was suspended and Berg was put on three years of unsupervised probation.

Berg is not on the state's sex offender registry.

"I'm not the person I was back in 1999," Berg said.

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