

MEMO

To: Elson S. Floyd
President, University of Missouri
From: Dalton Wright
Jean Paul Bradshaw II
Date: March 15, 2006
Subject: Report Regarding Resignation of Quin Snyder

Introduction

On February 20, you asked us to investigate the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Quin Snyder as Head Men's Basketball Coach and specifically to determine what various persons involved in that process had said. We appreciate the trust that you have placed in us to perform this inquiry.

We have interviewed 19 persons, including Mike Alden, Gary Link, Dr. Brady Deaton, and yourself. Through his legal counsel, we asked permission to interview Quin Snyder. His attorney told us, and confirmed by letter, that Snyder does not wish to make further statement regarding this matter. We did have access to a video record of his news conference. In addition to interviews, we have examined Snyder's Restated Contract for Employment and Settlement Agreement and Release dated February 14, 2006, a large number of e-mails, monthly reports from Alden to Deaton, Snyder's last performance report, and other memoranda. We have reviewed news articles from the Columbia Missourian, Columbia Daily Tribune, Kansas City Star, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and the Associated Press, from the relevant time period. Finally, we have reviewed recordings of television news broadcasts and the Mike Alden Show.

At the outset, we want to commend all of the persons we interviewed for their candor and their commitment to the University. We were truly impressed with everyone we interviewed. Even those who disagreed with a particular action seemed to try to view that action from different perspectives, acknowledging that all sides had some claim to their own view. Also, all expressed concern over the effect that this lingering controversy has had on the reputation of a school that they all love, regardless of whether they graduated from it.

Our task was to develop facts, not to make recommendations, and we have largely been faithful to that mission. Through the interviews, however, we have become very concerned about the coordination of media responses to events such as the one that we have been investigating. We both believe strongly that there should be one person who has both the expertise and power to coordinate the school's response to "crisis" situations. The layers of responsibility for handling these issues at the department, campus, and university levels have resulted in responses that are not in the best interests of the school.

The results of our investigation follow below. Unless there was not agreement between witnesses regarding the event described, or unless the information came from one particular person, we have not identified all of the persons that gave us the information. Because we have concluded that to understand the statements that motivated this inquiry requires significant understanding of historical context, we have included a rather detailed history of events over the past year. We have not attempted to reconcile the statements we were given with statements in news stories. We were not present when quotes were given to the media. Others may draw their own conclusions by comparing those statements with those that we have reported. We have done our best to set forth the information we were given by witnesses and to reconcile those statements with each other, noting differences where significant.

Factual Investigation

On February 4, 2005, Athletic Director Mike Alden and Chancellor Brady Deaton met with Head Men's Basketball Coach Quin Snyder at Alden's house. The basketball team was struggling and there were some people – donors and others - calling for Snyder to be replaced at the end of the season, causing a great deal of media interest in Snyder's future. In addition, it was causing problems as current student-athletes and potential recruits heard the speculation. Snyder wanted Deaton and Alden to make a public statement of support for his future as the Tigers coach. In order to show support for him, Deaton and Alden told Snyder at this meeting that he would be retained as head coach through the 2005-06 basketball season and made a public statement to that effect.

On February 8, Alden met with Snyder and informed him that the team's performance in 2005-06 season was going to be critical. In addition to existing expectations (academic performance, budget discipline, etc.), the team would need to finish in the top one-half of the Big 12 and be invited to participate in the NCAA Championships in 2006. If the team did not meet these goals, Snyder would be terminated. Snyder was also told that if it appeared that it was going to be impossible to meet these goals, he should consider stepping down early and that the University would make sure that he was not penalized financially. Alden informed Deaton that he had placed these expectations on Snyder.

Also on February 8, Deaton and Alden met with University President Elson Floyd and University General Counsel Bunky Wright to advise them of their meeting with Snyder and the conditions placed on his employment past the end of the 2005-06 season. Although doubt was expressed as to whether Snyder and the team could meet those expectations, there was neither objection nor specific approval given to the conditions. We note that supervision of the Athletic Department is considered a campus matter.

The conditions placed on Snyder's continued employment also are referenced in regular reports ("Current Issues reports") that Alden prepares for Deaton. They appeared in both the March and April Current Issues reports. Specifically, the April report states,

“[T]here is no doubt that Quin Snyder . . . must have greater competitive success next year. If not (and that would mean finishing in the top 1/2 of the Big 12 and playing in the NCAA Championships (not NIT), then we need to be prepared to make a change.”

In April, Alden had a meeting with Snyder in Alden’s office in which Alden gave Snyder his annual performance appraisal both verbally and in writing for the period July 1, 2004-April 22, 2005. Contained in the written evaluation is the following language: “There is no question that 2005-06 is an important year for Quin. Since his hiring, I have attempted to provide every possible form of assistance that is appropriate to allow Quin to succeed. On February 8, 2005, I was very specific with Quin telling him that if we didn’t finish in the top 1/2 of the Big 12 Conference and make the NCAA Tournament, 2005-06 would be his last year as Head Men’s Basketball Coach. Further, I also suggested my hope that if he saw the program not heading in that direction, he would resign from his position.” Snyder signed the evaluation on June 30, 2005, indicating that he had read it, and delivered a memo to Alden in response. While his memo takes issue with a number of matters raised in his evaluation, Snyder does not take issue with the expectations for the 2005-06 season.

In June, 2005, and again in August or September, Alden met with Snyder and reviewed both the expectations for the upcoming season, as well as the possibility that Snyder resign if those expectations became impossible during the season. In addition, senior Athletic Department staff, including Special Assistant to Alden, Gary Link, were aware of these expectations.

Alden’s June Current Issues report contains another reference to the need for the team to finish in the top half of the conference. The September Current Issues report also confirms the season expectations and also contains the following: “[I]f we did not perform in all these areas, then we would make a change following the season. I know that you have been supportive of this and agree. Further, it is my understanding that you have discussed this with President Floyd and he is also supportive. I do believe it to be critically important that this is all “crystal clear” with Dr. Floyd. I would certainly hate to see him not be “on board” as we get down to decision making time. Hopefully, we’ll have a great season and won’t have to worry about this issue, but if we do, I have to make sure that we are all on the same page.” Deaton said that Alden asked a number of times if Floyd was on board with the conditions placed on Snyder. Deaton said he told Alden that he thought Floyd would go with the decision they would make. He told Alden not to worry about it, that they would get to the end of the season and make their decision. Although Floyd was aware of the conditions, it was clear to Deaton that Floyd had not endorsed them. Alden said he believed that Floyd was supportive of the conditions. Floyd said that he expected Snyder’s performance to be evaluated at the end of the season.

In a September 12 memo to Bunky Wright and Bill Arnet, Alden confirms his understanding of the expectations for Snyder for the upcoming season, and passes along Snyder’s performance evaluations and other applicable communications.

On October 3, 2005, Snyder met again with Deaton and Alden in Alden's office. Snyder had requested this meeting and specifically asked that Deaton be present. In the meeting, Snyder asked that Deaton and Alden make a public statement that Snyder would continue coaching the Tigers through the end of his contract (2008). Neither Deaton nor Alden was willing to commit to make this statement and Alden reiterated the expectations for the upcoming year (top half of the conference and the NCAA – along with academic and rules compliance), including mentioning again the possibility that Snyder would resign if the season was not going to meet those expectations. Alden believes that his relationship with Snyder was severely impacted following the October 3 meeting.

We should discuss the relationship between Alden and Snyder as it is relevant to considering why certain actions were taken. Alden had hired Snyder, giving him his first head coaching opportunity. Despite this, several witnesses observed that the relationship was rocky from the start. Witnesses told us that Snyder would resist public appearances and other activities in which Alden thought he should participate. In addition, it is clear that they have completely opposite personalities and very different life experiences. All witnesses described both men as bright and very committed to their jobs and the University of Missouri. But their personalities clashed and the relationship was described as "strained". Despite this, by all accounts they performed their jobs and interacted professionally for most of Snyder's tenure at MU.

Alden tried to have regular meetings with Snyder. Following the October 3 meeting, however, Snyder resisted having the meetings, sometimes canceling or not appearing for the meeting. One person who worked closely with Snyder said he expressed frustration with the meetings and said after one meeting late in the first semester that he (Snyder) was not talking with Alden any more. Their relationship was described by one athletic department employee as "unique" among the relationships Alden had with other head coaches.

On the other hand, Link enjoyed a very good relationship with both Alden and Snyder. In addition, he is the only one of the Athletic Department senior management with a background in basketball. Link attended most of the basketball team's practices. Over time, Link's relationship with Alden and Snyder, as well as his outstanding reputation within the Athletic Department, had made him the defacto liaison between the two men. One witness described Link as the best friend that Snyder had in Columbia and that Link gave Snyder a lot of advice regarding both basketball and life. We believe that news reports identifying Link as a radio announcer, while technically true, are misleading and unfair to Link. While he does color commentary on Tiger broadcasts, those are only a part of his duties and technically are performed for Missouri Sports Properties. Link performs a variety of other duties as a Special Assistant to Alden and is an important and valuable member of the Athletic Department.

Link would meet with Alden both before and after about half of the basketball games. Before the game, he would give Alden a “scouting report” of the upcoming opponent. Afterwards, Link would share his observations of the game and the team with Alden. These meetings had been going on for a couple of years.

In September 2005, before the season began, Link discussed with Snyder the upcoming season and the conditions that had been set for Snyder. Link discussed with Snyder that it would likely be a tough season. He counseled Snyder that if he saw that the season was not going to end successfully, that it may be best to resign. Snyder said he would consider stepping down. Some of Snyder’s staff was also aware of the specific expectations.

After a promising start to the conference season, the team lost several games in a row by double figures. Several people commented that Snyder increasingly appeared to be feeling the pressure of these losses. Mike Kelly said that on one Monday evening at Tigertalk, Snyder was very particularly down about the season. He told Kelly that, “[Y]ou know I’m fired. You know it’s over.” The next day he saw Snyder and Snyder was back to being upbeat.

On February 7, the basketball team suffered a very difficult loss to Baylor, its sixth straight loss. At that point the team’s overall record was 10-11, 3-7 in the Big 12, putting it 11th in the conference standings with six games to go. The team and traveling party got back to Columbia about 3 a.m.

The next day, Alden and Link met for their regular post-game discussion. Link broke the game down for Alden. He told Alden that everyone (the coaching staff and the team) was hurting. They discussed the toll that the season was taking on Snyder. They talked about an incident that had occurred after the Nebraska road game in which some of the Nebraska students had been particularly rude and pointed in their comments toward Snyder, getting very personal. At Snyder’s request, Link had walked off the court with him. Snyder remarked that he was glad Link was there so that he didn’t go after a student who was particularly rude in his comments. Link and Alden talked about concern over similar situations that could occur the following weekend in Lawrence, Kansas.

At his point in the story, there are some differences in exactly what was said from Alden’s and Link’s interviews. Alden told us that he asked Link to see how Snyder was doing, to gauge what he was thinking. In that regard, he said he was referring to whether Snyder was thinking of taking the option that had been presented to him and resign before the end of the season. Alden said that Link said he wasn’t sure that everyone was supportive of the vote of confidence given a year earlier, nor would people have been entirely supportive of making a change then. Alden said that he told Link that Deaton was 100 percent on board with a change this year if the conditions were not met (which seemed a certainty), and that he had asked Deaton to keep Floyd informed. Alden knew that he had been in meetings with Floyd and Wright regarding the expectations the previous year. Alden also said that since he talks regularly with Don Walsworth, a

member of the Board of Curators, that Walsworth was aware of the expectations. Walsworth confirmed to us that he was aware of the expectations, but had not heard anything regarding the possibility of a resignation before season's end and did not believe such a resignation was good policy. Alden believed that the expectations had been clear and that people up the chain of command were supportive. Alden said he gave no directive or order that Link talk with Snyder (with which Link agrees, as set forth below), but simply asked if he would be willing to feel Snyder out on what he thought he wanted to do.

Link's account of the meeting differs in some respects and is very similar in others. He said that Alden said that Snyder would not be the coach next year. Link said that Alden said that Snyder really had two options. He could continue coaching the team through the end of the season and be terminated, or he could resign at any time before that, as had been discussed previously. Link asked two questions of Alden. First he asked if Snyder resigned would he be made whole, to which Alden answered yes. He then asked if there was any chance that there would be a change of mind regarding Snyder's future. Link said that Alden said no, that the Chancellor, President, and Don (Walsworth) were all on board. Link said that after he asked the two questions, he said he would go talk with Snyder. Link said that Alden gave him no directive or order to talk with Snyder. Link said that he felt that he could approach Snyder anytime up to the end of the season. He viewed this as business as usual; he dealt with Snyder everyday, so there was no reason why he wouldn't do this. Link slept on the issue and then decided to speak with Snyder the following day. Link had been concerned about the pressure on Snyder and the effect the team's performance was having on him and personally thought a resignation would be the right thing for all concerned. Link said that part of the reason he chose to talk to Snyder when he did was that he felt they could get through the weekend events (Kansas State game and 100-year celebration) and step down the following week. If Snyder had not made up his mind whether to resign by then, he would talk to him again about it on Monday or Tuesday.

On Thursday, February 9, Link went to Snyder's office first thing in the morning and spoke with Snyder's assistant, Donna Snyder (no relation to Quin Snyder). He told her that he needed 15 minutes to speak with Quin Snyder. She told Link that Snyder did not feel well and was at home. Link said that he couldn't do the conversation over the phone and that he could just speak with Snyder the next day.

Snyder did come in for practice that day, although he still did not look well. Snyder had his usual meeting with the media before practice and before meeting with his staff to prepare for practice. During the meeting with the press, in response to a question, Snyder said he had no intent to resign. Immediately after talking with the press, Snyder met with his staff for a pre-practice meeting. As he often did, Link attended that meeting. At the end of the meeting, Snyder told his assistant coaches that he needed to talk in private with Link.

Link said that he believes Snyder knew what he had come to say. Link told him that there was going to be a change. Link said that Snyder could either coach the team through the end of the season and be terminated then, or he could resign before the end of the season. In the event he resigned, Link said that Alden had assured him that he (Snyder) would be made whole. Snyder asked is there anything he could do to save his job. Link said no, that Alden had said that Deaton, Floyd and Walsworth were all on board. Link said that Snyder didn't seem surprised, but he was hurt. Their meeting ended at this point and Link assumed Snyder would consider what he should do.

Before heading out to practice, Snyder called his attorney Wally Bley, who arrived at the gym before the end of practice, and his agent. Link was not aware of these calls. As he often did, Link stayed for practice. After running practice, Snyder and Bley approached Link. Snyder told Link that he had decided he would resign, but that he would need the University's offer regarding his compensation to be in writing before doing so. Link said that he would inform Alden.

Link called Alden on his cell phone as Alden was returning from a meeting in Kansas City. Link told Alden that Snyder was going to resign and that Alden should get with Wright and Bley regarding the details. Neither Alden nor Link believed that Snyder was going to resign until the paperwork was done. Alden tried to call Snyder that evening and left him a voice message on his cell phone.

Snyder called Link about 11:30 p.m. or midnight. He said that he was finished and couldn't coach his team any more. He said he didn't need to wait for the paperwork to be done, that Link's word was good enough. Link told Snyder he should sleep on it.

Link said that Assistant Coach Melvin Watkins called him the next morning and said that Snyder had called him and said he intended to resign. Watkins said they (he and Link) needed to meet and talk. They agreed to meet for coffee. Watkins said that Snyder had told him he needed to be prepared to take over the team. Link told Watkins he should plan on speaking to Alden and that Link would set up a meeting for after practice. Link ran into Alden and told him of the meeting with Watkins and that Alden should plan on meeting later with Watkins. Alden told Link that he had not yet heard back from Snyder.

Alden tried to reach Snyder again Friday morning, leaving another voice message. Alden also tried to reach him about 8 a.m. through Tammy Armentrout, who was filling in for Donna Snyder, who was delayed in getting to work that morning. Upon Donna Snyder's return, she passed Alden's message on to Quin Snyder. Quin Snyder did not return any of Alden's messages. Alden said he was not comfortable doing anything about a resignation until he had a personal conversation with Snyder. Alden called Deaton, who was on his way to a meeting in New York. He told Deaton that he had heard the previous evening that Snyder might resign, but couldn't reach him to confirm. Deaton said that Alden had a real concern that he had not heard from Snyder.

According to Donna Snyder, Quin Snyder called her around 11 a.m. and asked her to gather the staff for a meeting at noon. Alden called again around 11:30 still trying to locate Snyder.

Around 2:15 or 2:30 p.m., David Reiter, Assistant Media Relations Director (with responsibility for men's basketball), received a call from Andy Katz at ESPN. Katz had heard from Jay Bilas (through a producer in Spokane, Washington) that Snyder intended to resign that day and he was seeking official confirmation. Reiter did not know anything about this. He went to see his boss, Moller, who also didn't know anything about it. Although it's a little unclear exactly who made the call, someone called Alden and let him know what the media was reporting. Link also spoke with Alden around 2:30 and told him that Snyder was definitely stepping down immediately.

Moller and Reiter decided to go to Mizzou Arena to see what they could find out. They arrived at the arena about 3 p.m. and the team was in a meeting with Snyder and the other coaches. They later learned Snyder was telling the team that he was being forced out. Snyder had met previously individually with his staff. After the meeting, Reiter and Moller met with Snyder and Lee Rashman, Director of Men's Basketball Operations, for about 45 minutes. He told them he was resigning. He said that he wanted to step away and let the team just play ball. He discussed with them the alternatives he had considered, including coaching to the end of the season, but that he had decided the previous evening that the best thing to do would be to resign. They discussed how they should deal with media inquiries and Snyder said he didn't want to do any kind of press conference at that time.

Walsworth had been in Columbia that day and stopped by the Athletic Department on an unrelated matter and visited Alden in his office. Alden told Walsworth he had been trying to contact Snyder for some time, but that Snyder had not returned his phone calls. Alden seemed very surprised by the news that Snyder was resigning. Walsworth said he was flabbergasted by Snyder's decision to resign. He did note that he believed that Snyder had recently been very fragile emotionally and had been under tremendous pressure due to the team's performance.

After this meeting, Reiter and Moller went to meet with Alden. A little after 4 p.m., Snyder called Alden and told him that he was going to resign. Alden expressed his surprise at the timing and said he was caught off guard. Snyder responded that Alden should have known what was going on and that he thought others should finalize the deal and that he and Alden should not talk further. Everyone interviewed who had contact with Alden during this time described Alden as surprised by the timing of Snyder's decision. Moller said that Alden was "incredulous" and didn't expect Snyder to do this. Many also described him as extremely upset that Snyder would not return his phone calls to discuss the situation.

Moller and Reiter drafted a press statement that was eventually edited by others to a two-sentence statement that Moller was to deliver saying that Snyder would not coach

on Sunday. Reiter received a text message right before the 6 p.m. news conference from Rashman that Snyder was available and would coach the game on Sunday. He said this left him confused and wondering what kinds of games were being played.

On Saturday there were various discussions between counsel for both parties and the principals to negotiate the terms of Snyder's settlement with the University. Late in the afternoon there was a meeting of the Curators (primarily by phone).

The Curators met on Sunday morning and approved the terms of the Severance Agreement with Snyder. Alden held a news conference after this meeting.

After the Curators had approved the terms of the Settlement Agreement and Release, Reiter spoke with Snyder about 10 a.m. Snyder said the deal was going to be done and that he wanted to talk with the media. They agreed to set up a news conference for between 5 and 6 p.m. somewhere at Mizzou Arena. Reiter sent out a media advisory to that effect. About 3:45 p.m., Snyder called Reiter and said he would not do the news conference because there was no signed agreement. A large number of media were already arriving and they were concerned about how it would look to cancel the press conference. They informed Alden of what had happened. Reiter and Moller decided to drive out to Snyder's house and try to convince him to still hold the news conference. They met with Snyder and Bley at Snyder's house, but were unable to persuade him to hold the news conference that afternoon. Bley gave them a statement to read and they decided to refer all future press contacts for Snyder to Bley.

On Monday, after reviewing media reports and receiving messages of concern from various people, Floyd decided to ask Deaton to perform an investigation of the circumstances surrounding Snyder's decision to resign. Our assigned task was not to review or critique that investigation, though we note that our findings are largely consistent with that of Deaton.

After review of the Agreement by an outside attorney for the University, the parties signed it on Tuesday, February 14. Snyder held a news conference that evening.

Conclusions/Observations

It was very clear to Snyder, Deaton, Alden, and most of the senior athletic department staff what the conditions were for the employment of Snyder beyond the 2005-06 season. With respect to Floyd and Walsworth, they clearly understood that the expectations had been placed on Snyder, though it is unclear whether they specifically approved. It was not unreasonable for Alden to conclude that there had been tacit approval of the conditions given the level of documentation that he made on the issue. With respect to the issue of resignation before the end of the season as an option, it is also clear that, at the very least; Snyder, Deaton, Alden, and Link understood that this was an option that had been discussed. At least Alden and Link knew that Snyder had indicated he would consider that as an option.

With respect to the events beginning on February 8, it is clear that Alden did not direct or order Link to talk to Snyder. At the same time, it is also clear that Alden and Link both thought that would be a good procedure to follow and Alden approved of it. While the exact versions of what was said differ, it is also clear from both men that Alden told Link that there was some level of approval for this action from the Chancellor, President, and Walsworth. Given the documentation that Alden had made on the issue, and the conversations that he had, he could have reasonably believed he had such approval. In any event, Link operated on the information he had been given. It should be noted that no one we spoke with believed there was any chance following the Baylor loss that the team would have met the expectations that had been set and all believed Snyder would have been terminated.

Link did not feel put upon in the role that he performed, nor did he think it was inappropriate in any way. He believed he was doing what was best for the team and for Snyder personally. He was doing his best to counsel someone for whom he has great respect and affection. He thought he was the best person to do this. Both he and Alden believed that if Snyder decided to resign, that it would happen after discussions between counsel and the signing of settlement papers. No one expected it to happen the way it did and all were caught off guard on the timing.

The handling of the media aspects of this story reflects what has been a continuing problem with handling “crisis” situations. We do not believe that the problem lies at any one level of governance (athletic department, campus, university), and that the solution therefore will not be forged at any particular level. The school needs the benefit of good advice on how to handle crisis situations and needs a unified process that allows it to get out in front of the story, rather than be constantly behind it. In this particular situation, either no information or the whole story should have been told. Instead, the school’s story came out in incomplete versions that did not accurately convey what had happened. We understand that during settlement negotiations it may be advisable not to go into detail regarding everything that had happened, but in that event it may have been more prudent to just say nothing at all.

In the end, however, the result was fair. No one was cheated, and no laws were broken. Coach Snyder made a very difficult personal decision and we believe he made it for all of the right reasons. One witness told us that after meeting with Link on Thursday that he held practice and watched his players and came to the conclusion that stepping down would remove a lot of pressure from them. At the same time, Alden and Link believed that the resignation would be in the best interests of the school and Snyder. No coach would resign if it meant leaving hundreds of thousands of dollars on the table. The University treated Snyder very fairly in reaching the Settlement Agreement and Release. The parties treated each other fairly and the result is what everyone knew was going to happen.

We hope that this report will end this chapter and that the experiences can assist the school in seeing that future events are handled more smoothly and with better communication. We look forward to moving on to the question of who will next lead the basketball Tigers as head coach.