

Big Ten Commissioner Tony Petitti Stands By Decision To Suspend Harbaugh Three Games, Not Aware Of Timetable For NCAA Investigation Into Michigan



When Tony Petitti spoke on the first day at Big Ten media days, one of the topics discussed was how he had to deal with Michigan's sign-stealing scandal so early on into his tenure as the conference commissioner.

When asked about what it was like dealing that so early on, Petitti said that he believes the punishment the conference ended up giving to the Wolverines - suspending then-head coach Jim Harbaugh three games - was appropriate, and he stands by it.

"I understand, having come from MLB and watching some of the discipline things that have happened there, it's a difficult process when you're forced into a situation where you have to decide what to do with a member. That's part of it, you go into it with a lot of respect and try to understand, do what's fair and protect the entire conference. That was the approach we took, and I stand by the results of the decision we made."

It wasn't a conclusion he came to himself. He said that the NCAA cooperated with the Big Ten's investigation and gave them any information they needed for it and that many people participated in the decision that they landed on.

"It was a collaborative process inside the conference office with staff first trying to understand and gather information," Petitti said. "There was a lot of cooperation with the NCAA in terms of the information we had access to. Working with our administrators and ultimately our presidents and chancellors as well. So, it was a completely collaborative process."

The investigation that the Big Ten had into Michigan has been officially closed since then, but the NCAA still hasn't come to a conclusion on how it will handle what the Wolverines did over multiple seasons. Petitti said that he isn't aware of any timetable that the NCAA might have on the investigation.

During Harbaugh's second three-game suspension of the season - the first of which was handed down by the university due to recruiting violations - Sherrone Moore took over as the head coach and was able to keep Michigan's perfect record, beating Ohio State in the final week of the regular season. When he returned, Harbaugh was able to return to lead the team to a Big Ten championship win over Iowa and a win in the national championship, Michigan's first since 1997.