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Questions about volleyball coach's past prompt his removal amid review

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Shaun Assael, ESPN Senior Writer

The AAU, the largest youth-sports group in the nation, has announced a sweeping review of its child-protection policies amid scrutiny about whether it has ignored reforms put in place in the four years since [sexual-abuse allegations were made](#) against its former president.

The review came after Outside the Lines sought to question Amateur Athletic Union leadership about the group's affiliation with Rick Butler, a prominent and successful volleyball coach. Butler had been banned for life from coaching girls by a different national organization in 1995 after an ethics panel found he had had sexual relationships with three underage players several years prior.

[The AAU's announcement](#), which was placed in the middle of an emailed newsletter to its 670,000 members and was signed by its president, Roger Goudy, also announced that Butler would "step aside from his volunteer



Prominent volleyball coach Rick Butler, who was removed from his role in the AAU amid the organization's review of child-protection policies. ESPN

administrative activities at AAU." The reason, it said, was to allow for "an independent review of our practices and procedures throughout the organization, especially those that relate to our youth."

Goudy's email on Thursday did not address what prompted the review, who would complete it or why Butler, who has been affiliated with the AAU since 1981, was stepping aside. It came hours after Outside the Lines had requested to interview Goudy about Butler, whose name was later removed from a list of district sports directors on the AAU's website.

Butler is considered by many to be the most powerful coach in the sport of youth volleyball. His Chicago-based club, Sports Performance, routinely turns out college-scholarship-level players and has a waiting list for its elite-level camps. In June, Butler coached his 18-and-under girls' team to a [third straight national title](#) at the AAU's open championships, a tournament played at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando, Florida.

But the 60-year-old has not entirely been able to distance himself from the allegations of three women who accused him of seducing them while he was a coach in his mid-20s; two said they were 16 at the time of the relationships and one 17. [Various media reports](#) over the past two decades have detailed the allegations, and even a simple Google query of Butler's name and "volleyball" produces the allegations associated with him.

Although the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services [investigated and found "credible evidence"](#) the allegations in 1995 were true, Butler never faced criminal charges. In its August 1995 decision banning Butler from coaching girls for life, a USA Volleyball ethics panel rejected Butler's denials and ruled that his conduct constituted "immorality, lack of judgment and unacceptable behavior." Butler sued, but an Illinois appellate court upheld the original decision in 1996.

He insisted in the hearing that all three women were 18 and the sex had been consensual: "The accusers have literally conspired to ruin my life and business," he said then. Butler declined comment to Outside the Lines.

In an interview with Outside the Lines, one of the women, Sarah Powers-Barnhard, publicly described for the first time what happened to her: "I felt I was special to Rick. I thought I was rare," said the 50-year-old, who runs her own club in Jacksonville, Florida. "I don't think we ever talked about it being wrong. But it was very clear it was, because my dad didn't know. My mom didn't know. ... It was a full sexual relationship with him."

Butler, whose volleyball practices are legendary for their intensity, never stopped

fighting to remain affiliated with volleyball. USA Volleyball allowed him to reapply for admittance after five years, and he did so in 2000, earning a conditional membership that let him work as an administrator but not a coach.

In 2006, Butler helped form a league called the Junior Volleyball Association. As a rival to the U.S. Olympic-affiliated USA Volleyball, the JVA was an instant hit. Its low entry fees and easy access were popular with local clubs, and in a few short years, it had tens of thousands of members.

The JVA's influence grew even more when it struck a partnership in 2010 that made the AAU's championship the JVA's official end-of-year event. The moves swelled the AAU's membership with new players who made volleyball the organization's second-biggest sport -- behind boys' basketball.

The marriage with the AAU, however, was taking place just as that organization's leader began facing his own sexual-abuse allegations.

In 2011, [Outside the Lines](#) reported that two men said then-AAU president Bobby Dodd had molested them while they were teens under his care as a basketball coach in Memphis. Although Dodd never faced criminal charges, he was placed on leave. And the disclosures in the Outside the Lines story spurred the creation of two task forces that were charged with improving ways to police the AAU's 100,000 coaches and volunteers.

One recommendation in the [2012 task force report](#) states, "A determination of ineligibility to have access to youth by another" group that serves youths "is sufficient grounds to render the person ineligible to participate in the AAU."

Lauren Book, a Florida-based child-protection advocate who helped to write that rule, believes it should have been used to remove Butler from any AAU affiliation. "We put our name on a document that said, 'Things are going to change here,'" she told Outside the Lines in an interview last month. "We didn't give the AAU a get-out-of-jail-free card."

Ron Book, Lauren's father and a Florida attorney, said that the two tried to engage Goudy, the AAU's president.

"We have been met with stonewalling," he said. "It's inconceivable, irresponsible and reprehensible. There is absolutely no reason why the AAU should have this man in contact with children."



Sarah Powers-Barnhard said her relationship with Butler, her former volleyball coach, as a teenager has affected her "whole life." ESPN

In 2012, Butler received the AAU's Emil Breitreutz Leadership Award, which, according to a news release, is a "prestigious honor ... awarded to the individual who shows outstanding leadership and dedication to AAU Volleyball."

Henry Forrest, president of the AAU until last year, said that he first learned about Butler's 1995 ethics case last summer, when a rival coach complained about Butler's rising role in the AAU.

Forrest said he tried to invite one of Butler's accusers to testify before the AAU's National Board of Review, which regulates membership, but was rejected. "I got an opinion from the chairman that it was outside the scope of my authority," he told Outside the Lines. "I was floored."

He lost the AAU's presidency to Goudy in an election last fall.

Forrest has even called on the U.S. Olympic Committee to become involved. In a June 15 letter, he asked it to investigate both the AAU and its own USA Volleyball, which recertified Butler again as recently as October 2014. He said he has not yet received a response.

side the Lines declining comment, Butler infighting within AAU: "It's certainly not AAU National Championship. Because I

have been doing that since 1981."

For Powers-Barnhard, it has been hard watching Butler continue to coach teenage girls.

"That whole situation, why it happened, it's affected my whole life," she said. "It started me down a course, and there is a script for who I was. So I needed to get clarity and work on being healthy. Because that is not a normal, healthy way to start your teenage years, or have your first sexual experience.

"I don't like to relive it. But if I can help any other athlete -- any girl, any boy -- with a coach that has an intention to do something inappropriate, then I want to do that."

Producer Michael Sciallo of ESPN's Enterprise/Investigative Unit contributed to this report.



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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- The [Kansas City Royals](#) acquired [Johnny Cueto](#) in a trade with [Cincinnati](#) on Sunday, sending three prospects to the Reds for a legitimate ace for the front of their beleaguered rotation.



Royals @Royals Follow

[#Royals](#) officially acquire RHP Johnny Cueto from the Cincinnati Reds! [#ForeverRoyal](#)

2:56 PM - 26 Jul 2015 · Kansas City, MO, United States

2,194 1,867

Kansas City has the best record in the American League after it lost to San Francisco in Game 7 of the World Series last October. But [Yordano Ventura](#) has underperformed this year and [Jason Vargas](#) will miss the rest of the season after he injured his elbow last week -- increasing the need for pitching help.

The Royals last won the title in 1985, and the trade was greeted with a loud ovation when it was announced during the third inning of Kansas City's home game against Houston on Sunday, a [5-1 win](#).

"I'm excited about my next chapter," Cueto said with Reds catcher [Brayan Pena](#) serving as his translator. "I know they play baseball very good. I'm excited because I know it's going to be good for my career and good for the team."

Cueto, who is eligible for free agency after the season, had spent his entire career with Cincinnati. But the fourth-place Reds are looking to the future and could trade several more significant pieces before Friday's non-waiver deadline, including right-hander [Mike Leake](#) and All-Star closer [Aroldis Chapman](#).

Cincinnati got minor league left-handers [Brandon Finnegan](#), [John Lamb](#) and

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Cody Reed in the trade for Cueto, who was one of the top starters on the market. The Reds also are sending money to the Royals to help pay Cueto's remaining salary for the year.

EDITOR'S PICKS

Kahl: Winning is the Royals' business, and Cueto will make it so

The Kansas City Royals are going for it by trading for Cincinnati Reds ace Johnny Cueto, which is exactly what they should be doing.



"There is a lot interest in Johnny and we felt that this was the best value we could get," Reds general manager Walt Jocketty said. "Johnny is going to a great situation there. He has people that he'll know. He's on a team that has a chance to go to the World Series."

Finnegan and Lamb were assigned to Triple-A Louisville, and Reed went to Double-A Pensacola.

Finnegan was selected by the Royals in the first round of last year's draft. He made seven playoff appearances in 2014, but has split time between Triple-A Omaha and Kansas City this year. The 25-year-old Lamb, a fifth-round pick in 2008, is 9-1 with a 2.67 ERA in 17 starts for Omaha.

Cueto, 29, won 20 games last season and is 7-6 with a 2.62 ERA in 19 starts this year. He pitched eight scoreless innings in Cincinnati's 5-2 victory at Colorado on Saturday night.

Cueto said a teammate had told him he already had been traded before Saturday's start.

Cueto Will Help Royals

The addition of Johnny Cueto will help the Royals rotation. Their starters are dead last in the AL in innings per start, so Cueto's average start of 6.9 innings will help get to KC's exceptional trio of relievers.

Royals Starting Pitching This Season

| | STAT | AL RANK |
|----------|------|---------|
| IP/start | 5.5 | Last |
| ERA | 4.30 | 11th |
| K/9 | 6.1 | 13th |

-- ESPN Stats & Information

"They said something to me," Cueto told reporters after Saturday's game. "I don't want to use a bad word in this location, but it was really bad the way I found out what happened. My head went around the whole way. My thoughts were all over the place."

Fox Sports reported earlier Sunday that Kansas City had been on the verge of acquiring Cueto but the deal fell through because a Royals player who was to be included in the swap had a medical issue. Sources told ESPN the teams still were working to make the trade happen despite Saturday's hiccup, leading to its finalization later Sunday.

Cueto made his major league debut with Cincinnati in 2008 and is 92-63 with a 3.21 ERA in eight seasons.

"It's a very emotional time for me," Cueto said. "But I understand it's part of the game and I'm just excited about my next step."

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The deal for Cueto is indicative of the new reality for Kansas City, which used to trade away its top players for prospects at the deadline. Not so much right now, and the Royals are trying to take full advantage of their window for contention.

Several top young players, such as first baseman [Eric Hosmer](#) and All-Star third baseman [Mike Moustakas](#), are eligible for arbitration and becoming more expensive by the year. While Royals owner David Glass has been willing to increase their payroll to franchise-record levels, Kansas City may have only a couple of years to make another run at a title before finances force them into a rebuilding mode.

The deal also reunites [Edinson Volquez](#) and Cueto after the pitchers spent four years together in Cincinnati. The close friends are from the Dominican Republic, and Volquez, who signed a \$20 million, two-year deal with the Royals this past offseason, served as a mentor to Cueto when he broke into the big leagues in 2008. They have even spoken of their desire to play together once again.

Information from ESPN's Jim Bowden and The Associated Press was used in this report.



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