

Forsyth steps aside as LM football coach

Written by Jim Ecker

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Linn-Mar superintendent Quintin Shepherd said in June that it was "safe to assume" there would be personnel changes in the aftermath of serious accusations that had been lodged by parents against the high school football program.

Now the biggest change has occurred.

Head coach Bob Forsyth officially stepped aside as Linn-Mar's head coach after nine seasons Friday in the wake of a tumultuous year in the program, stating he made the decision to retire.

"The decision to step away from coaching is one that I alone have made," he declared in a story posted on the Linn-Mar football website.

Dr. Shepherd will not comment on personnel matters, so there is no clear evidence that Forsyth was forced to resign, but Forsyth had never previously indicated he planned to quit coaching at 55.

Linn-Mar assistant football coach Matt Casebolt, who was viewed as the main "culprit" by unhappy families in their complaints, was not allowed to coach the team this past season even though he had a contract that will pay him more than \$5,200 for work he did not perform.

Five Linn-Mar families filed formal complaints to the school district about Casebolt, Forsyth, former athletic director Scott Mahmens and Linn-Mar principal Jeff Gustason, alleging Casebolt engaged in verbal and physical abuse of their sons and that Forsyth, Mahmens and Gustason were the "enablers" who let it continue.

In addition to the five families who filed formal complaints, at least 15 other people came

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forward with their own complaints through social media and other outlets, although none of them filed a formal complaint.

The Linn-Mar school district conducted an in-house investigation last winter and cleared everyone due to "insufficient evidence," but the families felt the investigation was tainted because Mahmens and Gustason led the probe.

The families took their complaints to the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, which looked into their complaints and declined to file charges.

The Linn-Mar school district apparently conducted a second investigation - something Shepherd will neither confirm or deny - and on June 16 Shepherd told the Metro Sports Report it was "safe to assume" personnel changes would be coming.

Mahmens had already announced that he planned to retire as the athletic director at the end of the school year on June 30. It became obvious in August that Casebolt had been suspended from coaching and now Forsyth has stepped aside.

"I have been involved with coaching football for the past 36 years and have always put my energies into the football family," Forsyth declared. "I know the time is right now for me to step back from coaching and put more time back into my own family."

Forsyth claimed that two families made "false accusations" about the football program and misrepresented the number of families that had issues with the program.

Also in the story on the Linn-Mar football website, he acknowledged that the events of the past year took a toll on him.

Forsyth compiled a 51-39 record in nine years as Linn-Mar's head coach with five playoff appearances. He will remain at Linn-Mar High School as a physical education instructor and will

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serve as a strength and conditioning coach.

Forsyth and Casebolt have received strong support from the Linn-Mar football community during the entire situation the past year from current players, former players and parents. It is not clear if Casebolt will be a member of the football coaching staff in 2017.

David Brown, the new athletic director at Linn-Mar, thanked Forsyth for his years of service in a statement issued by the school district Friday morning.

The search for a new coach will begin immediately, according to the school district press release.