

## Forsyth could be finished as L-M coach

Written by Jim Ecker

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There are growing signs that these could be the final days for Bob Forsyth as the head football coach at Linn-Mar High School.

Three sources have told the Metro Sports Report that Forsyth will be vacating the position following a year of turmoil in the football program.

Forsyth has not responded to an e-mail from the Metro Sports Report regarding his status with the Lions. Neither has Dr. Quintin Shepherd, the Linn-Mar superintendent of schools.

Forsyth has compiled a 51-39 record in nine seasons at Linn-Mar, including a 3-6 mark this year, with five trips to the playoffs.

Five Linn-Mar families filed formal complaints about the football program with the school district following the 2015 season, charging that assistant coach Matt Casebolt bullied and harassed their sons and called people "show queers" if they participated in football and show choir. Two families claimed Casebolt physically abused their sons in weight-room incidents.

The families blamed Forsyth for enabling Casebolt's behavior with their sons. They also blamed Linn-Mar athletic director Scott Mahmens (now retired) and Linn-Mar Principal Jeff Gustason for not taking effective action to correct the alleged problems.

The Linn-Mar school district conducted an in-house investigation last winter and concluded there was not "sufficient evidence" to substantiate the charges. Mahmens and Gustason helped run the investigation, even though they were two of the accused.

At least 15 other families stepped forward with their own complaints, similar in nature to the

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original complaints from the five families who contacted the school district.

Following the in-house investigation, several families filed formal complaints with the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, which investigated the matter and declined to file charges against any of the Linn-Mar coaches or administrators.

The Linn-Mar school district apparently commissioned a second investigation of the matter, although Dr. Shepherd has neither confirmed nor denied a second probe.

Dr. Shepherd told the Metro Sports Report on June 15 that it would be "safe to assume" there would be personnel changes at Linn-Mar in the aftermath of the alleged problems, but he did not specify what they might be.

Mahmens took early retirement as Linn-Mar's athletic director at the end of the 2015-16 school year. He considered early retirement for more than a year and confirmed to the Metro Sports Report on March 10 that this would be his final year with the Lions.

Casebolt had a contract to serve as one of Linn-Mar's assistant coaches this season, but from all accounts he did not actively participate at practices or games during the entire campaign. Nonetheless, he is scheduled to be paid \$5,326 as an assistant football coach for the 2016 season, according to the Linn-Mar business office.

The Metro Sports Report has asked school district officials why Casebolt was paid for work he apparently did not perform and if he was suspended, but no answers have been forthcoming. Matthew May, a spokesman for the school district, declared that Casebolt's situation is a private personnel matter, neither confirming or denying that Casebolt was suspended.

Following a Linn-Mar school board meeting Aug. 15, Dr. Shepherd told the Metro Sports Report that he would comment on the football investigation and other matters "in due time," but he still has not commented publicly as of Nov. 1.

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It is not clear if any of these personnel matters - Mahmens retiring, Casebolt apparently suspended or Forsyth apparently finished as the head football coach - are directly or indirectly related to the alleged problems in the football program that have surfaced in the last year.

Forsyth was hired by Linn-Mar in February of 2008 after being the head coach at Council Bluffs Abraham Lincoln for five years. He previously had served as an assistant coach at Augustana College (S.D.), Morningside College and the University of South Dakota and had been a graduate assistant at the University of Iowa.

Linn-Mar finished 3-6 in his first year in 2008, snapping a 24-game losing streak, and he led the Lions to the playoffs in each of the next three seasons with a 9-2 record in 2009, an 8-3 mark in 2010 and a 10-1 record in 2011.

He told the Metro Sports Report in an interview in October of 2011 that he had found a home at Linn-Mar and never wanted to leave or coach anywhere else again. His wife, Dawn, is a former Linn-Mar athlete and cheerleader, and their three children were enrolled in the Linn-Mar school district at the time.

"This is my last stop," Forsyth said in early October of 2011, when he was 50 years old. "As long as they'll have me here, this is where I want to be.

"We're done moving," he said. "It's such a great school district and such a great community, and I want my kids to all graduate from here."

Linn-Mar has finished with losing records in four of the past five seasons. The Lions went 3-6 in 2012, 2-7 in 2013, 9-2 in 2014, 4-6 in 2015 and 3-6 this year.