

## ***NY Times: Blackhawks Ignored 2010 Sexual Assault Accusation, an Investigation Says***

An independent investigation commissioned by the N.H.L. club revealed on Tuesday that the team failed to act promptly after a player accused a video coach of sexual assault, in part because club executives were concerned about winning the Stanley Cup.

By [Kevin Draper](#)

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Several Chicago Blackhawks executives failed to report a 2010 accusation that a minor league player had been sexually assaulted by the team's video coach during that year's playoffs, according to an independent investigation commissioned by the team. Executives were concerned about distracting the team — Chicago won the Stanley Cup a month later — and did not thoroughly investigate the accusation or punish the coach, Brad Aldrich, according to the investigation.

The inaction by Blackhawks executives, who informed neither the N.H.L. nor law enforcement of the accusation, had devastating effects. Aldrich later made a sexual advance toward a Blackhawks intern during the [Stanley Cup](#) celebrations, according to the investigation's findings, which were released Tuesday. He was allowed to resign from his position after the 2009-10 season, and would go on to hold a number of other jobs in hockey, including at colleges and high schools. In 2013, Aldrich [pleaded guilty](#) to having sexual contact with a minor while he was volunteering as a high school coach in Michigan, and he remains on the state's sex offender registry because of that conviction.

The N.H.L. fined the Blackhawks \$2 million on Tuesday for the team's "inadequate internal procedures and insufficient and untimely response" to the 2010 allegations. Stan Bowman, the team's president of hockey operations, and Al MacIsaac, the senior director of hockey administration, resigned from their positions. Bowman and MacIsaac were among the team executives who were made aware in 2010 of the minor-leaguer's accusation, the investigation report said. None of the other executives who were made aware are still employed by the team.

The accusation first became public in May, when an unnamed former Blackhawks player [filed a lawsuit](#) saying that both he and a teammate had been assaulted by Aldrich, and that the team had ignored it. The former player said that Aldrich forced him into sexual acts by threatening both violence and his standing in hockey, the report said. A former high school player has also sued the Blackhawks, saying that the team had provided positive references for Aldrich, which enabled Aldrich to assault him.

In a [statement](#) after the results of the investigation were released, the Blackhawks wrote, "It is clear the organization and its executives at that time did not live up to our own standards or values in handling these disturbing incidents."

The investigation, which began in June, was conducted by a former federal prosecutor, Reid Schar from the Jenner & Block law firm. It found no evidence that the Blackhawks ownership or its current top executives, besides Bowman and MacIsaac, were aware of what happened in 2010 before the former minor leaguer was preparing to file his lawsuit earlier this year.

The investigation involved interviews with 139 people, including the former player who made the accusation and Aldrich, as well as 21 current and former players for the Blackhawks and their top minor league affiliate, the Rockford IceHogs. The player who made the accusation was what is known as a "black ace," a minor leaguer who travels with the team during the playoffs in case he is needed because of an injury or suspension.

According to [the investigative report](#), while both Aldrich and the unnamed player agreed that sexual contact occurred in May 2010, they disagreed about whether or not it was consensual.

According to the report, on May 23, 2010, MacIsaac was told by an unnamed employee that there might have been a sexual encounter between Aldrich and the player. MacIsaac had Jim Gary, the team's mental skills coach, speak with the player. Gary told investigators he was told that Aldrich was pressuring the player to have sex and threatening that his career would be harmed if he did not.

After the Blackhawks defeated the San Jose Sharks to advance to the Stanley Cup finals, Bowman, MacIsaac and Gary met with John McDonough, then the team's president; Kevin Cheveldayoff, the assistant general manager; Jay Blunk, the executive vice president; and Joel Quenneville, the head coach.

Accounts of that meeting varied, according to the report, with all participants acknowledging they were informed of an "unwelcome" sexual advance by Aldrich toward the player, but none of them said they were made aware of the nonconsensual sexual conduct the player described in his lawsuit.

Bowman told investigators that during the meeting McDonough and Quenneville "made comments about the challenge of getting to the Stanley Cup finals and a desire to focus on the team and the playoffs."

No Blackhawks employee would take any action until June 14, five days after the team won the Stanley Cup, and four days after Aldrich made a sexual advance toward a 22-year-old intern and touched him during a celebration of the championship, according to the report.

On June 14, McDonough told the head of human resources about the May incident, according to the report, and two days later the human resources leader met with Aldrich and said that either the team would begin an investigation or Aldrich could resign.

Aldrich chose to resign, and no investigation was conducted then. According to the report, he received a playoff bonus and continued to receive his salary for "several months." Aldrich also had his name engraved on the Stanley Cup and was allowed to celebrate with it in his hometown, and he received a championship ring and attended the banner-raising ceremony the next season.

According to the report, a different Blackhawks minor leaguer told investigators that during the 2010 playoffs Aldrich had sent him explicit text messages, which included a photograph of a penis. An unnamed front office employee was standing next to the player when he received the photograph, according to the investigation, and encouraged him to report what had happened, but the player never did.

Bowman, who on Tuesday also [resigned](#) as the general manager of the 2022 U.S. Olympic men's ice hockey team, said in a statement that after he had been made aware of potentially inappropriate behavior he reported it to the team's president and chief executive, and "relied on the direction of my superior that he would take appropriate action."

Cheveldayoff is now the general manager of the Winnipeg Jets, and Quenneville is the head coach of the Florida Panthers. According to the statement from the N.H.L., Commissioner Gary Bettman will arrange meetings with both of them soon, and will "reserve judgment on next steps, if any, with respect to them."

In July [Quenneville said](#) that he "first learned of these allegations through the media earlier this summer," and [Cheveldayoff said](#) that he did not know of any accusations against Aldrich "until asked if I was aware of anything just prior to the conclusion of his employment" with the Blackhawks.

Neither addressed the seeming contradiction between those initial statements to the news media and the report's conclusion that they both attended the meeting on May 23, 2010, where the player's accusations against Aldrich were raised to team executives.

Cheveldayoff said in a statement that he shared everything he knew with the investigators and wouldn't comment further until he talked to Bettman, while the Panthers said they would not comment before Quenneville met with Bettman.

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