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## **Allegations spur Grand Island coach's suspension, resignation**

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A criminal complaint was filed with state police against former Grand Island High School cross-country and track coach Don Sauer, who was suspended and has since resigned, The Buffalo News confirmed Thursday.

State police officials declined to release additional details about the allegations Thursday. State police investigators were reported, however, to be probing what the school district described as "a number of allegations" against him.

The Grand Island School Board unanimously accepted Sauer's resignation at a meeting Monday night.

"We have no reservations about the decision," Superintendent Robert W. Christmann said after the meeting.

Sauer, who will turn 60 on Oct. 7, was a popular figure in Grand Island school athletics.

Sauer had been a coach at Grand Island since 1997. He coached the boys and girls cross-country teams and the boys track and field team.

He previously retired from his full-time position with the school district, but had continued to coach.

He was honored along with others in 2008 and 2009 by the school's PTA Council during its annual "Celebration of Inspiration," for which Grand Island seniors choose a teacher or school staff member who has inspired them for the honor. At least four students tapped Sauer for the honor in 2009, according to reports.

In an open letter posted on the school district's website recently, Christmann indicated the school had been contacted by an outside authority that was investigating Sauer. Christmann's letter didn't name Sauer, but noted his position.

"Based on statements from several sources, including the coach himself, it was necessary for the district to suspend the coach from his athletic duties," Christmann wrote.

The allegations and Sauer's abrupt resignation are also apparently affecting scheduled athletic events on Grand Island.

According to a Grand Island cross-country and track and field website, the 2011 Grand Island Cross Country Invitational race scheduled for Oct. 22 has been canceled at the request of the school's athletic director. Entry forms for the race were to be submitted to Sauer by Sept. 30.

Christmann apologized to parents for not being able to divulge allegations against the coach.

"We understand very well that it raises many questions, first among the cross-country parents and then among our staff members and, indeed, likely the entire Grand Island community," Christmann wrote. "We understand that a great level of concern may have been raised as to why.

"All school districts are prohibited from discussing the details of any disciplinary matter involving staff or students. It is a black-and-white obligation that we have to maintain confidentially and the potential frustration that such an obligation may create for you as a parent is understandable and appropriate."

The district appointed Craig Davis interim coach when Sauer was suspended Sept. 14. Davis is the girls track coach. He scrambled to take over the cross country program so its season wouldn't be disrupted.

Sauer still is listed as the boys' track and field coordinator for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, a position he has held since the 1990s. He is race director of the Boston Mud Run, an event he started 32 years ago.

He was race director of the Evening Optimist Club Cross Country Invitational, now known as the Western New York Officials Invitational, which is being held this weekend at Beaver Island State Park.

Sauer, an Eden High alum, was an All-American runner for West Virginia University and attended the University at Buffalo as a post graduate.

He was track coach at West Seneca East in the 1980s, then took over physical education and athletics administration in the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda district. Sauer then spent one year as a teacher and coach in Akron before settling in at Grand Island.

