***January 16, 2013***

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An Interview With:

**JACK SWARBRICK**

JOHN HEISLER: This is John Heisler here at the University of Notre Dame. We have with us Jack Swarbrick. He's our Vice President and Director of Athletics. He's going to make opening comments. He'll be happy to take questions when he's finished with the opening statement. We'll take questions from you here in person. Just raise your hand as you would for a normal press conference, and we'll get a microphone to you. We will have a transcript of this we'll make available to you as well that will be on our website as well.

At this point, I'll turn it over to Jack Swarbrick.

JACK SWARBRICK: Good evening. Thanks to all of you for joining us on relatively short notice. We're here tonight, obviously, because of an article that appeared in Dead Spin earlier today and to address the subject matter of that article.

My focus here tonight is to talk to you about what the University knew, when we knew it, and what decisions we made based on that information. Much of what drove that process and those decisions relates in part to a fundamental view of the importance of student privacy, and that will likely play a role tonight also because, at the end of the day, this is Manti's story to tell and we believe he should have the right to tell it, which he is going to do.

So there may be some questions this evening which I defer to him, but I will try to be as responsive as I possibly can to all of your questions.

While we still don't know all of the dimensions of this ‑‑ and other than the perpetrators, I can assure you that no one knows all of the dimensions of this ‑‑ there are certain things that I feel confident we do know. The first is that this was a very elaborate, very sophisticated hoax perpetrated for reasons we can't fully understand but had a certain cruelty at its core, based on the exchanges that we were able to see between some of the people who perpetrated it.

Manti was the victim of that hoax. Manti is the victim of that hoax, and he will carry that with him for a while.

In many ways, Manti was the perfect mark because he is a guy who is so willing to believe in others and so ready to help that, as this hoax played out in a way that called upon those tendencies of Manti and roped him more and more into the trap. He was not a person who would have a second thought about offering his assistance and help in engaging fully.

Finally and reflective of that, I want to stress, as someone who has probably been as engaged in this as anyone in the past couple of weeks, that nothing about what I have learned has shaken my faith in Manti Te'o one iota. The same great young man, great student, and great athlete that we have been so proud to have be a member of our family is the same guy tonight, unchanged in any way, except for, as he indicated in a statement in his release, the embarrassment associated with having been a victim in this case.

On the morning of December 26th, very early morning, Manti called his coaches to inform them that, while he was in attendance at the ESPN awards show in Orlando, he received a phone call from a number he recognized as having been that he associated with Lennay Kekua. When he answered it, it was a person whose voice sounded like the same voice he had talked to, who told him that she was, in fact, not dead.

Manti was very unnerved by that, as you might imagine. I will let him again talk about that and his reaction to it. But he maintained that secret vis‑a‑vis the members of the football family until he called the coaches on the morning of the 26th. They promptly reached out to me to inform me of this shocking piece of news, and I arranged to meet Manti upon his return to campus and did so on the afternoon of the 27th.

I met with Manti for about an hour and 45 minutes and asked him to review every detail of the relationship as he knew it with this woman. Manti did so, was forthright, answered every question, and was eager to share the information with me.

I met with him again the next day, as I had put the notes together from the previous day's meeting, to just review again what we had gone over to make sure I had all the details correct. And, again, he was a full and excellent partner in making sure that the information I collected was accurate.

I then took that information and shared it with other leaders in the university for a deliberation as to next steps, what we should do. Some additional questions of Manti were then developed, which he again promptly responded, and a decision was made to engage in an independent investigative firm to see if they could determine what was at the nature of what increasingly appeared to us to be a sophisticated hoax.

While apprised by that investigative firm of their work along the way, we received a final report from them on January 4th. I met with Brian and Ottilia Te'o in Miami on the 5th to share with them the essence of those findings. We left that meeting with an understanding that they would think about what they had heard, engaged Manti's future representation, which would be determined later in the week, in consultation as to how to best respond, and keep the university fully informed of their intentions and work in concert with us when they were ready to communicate the story.

It was my understanding ‑‑ is my understanding that they were on a timetable to release the story themselves next week when today's story broke.

With that, I welcome the opportunity to take any questions.

Q. Jack, it said in the release that authorities are investigating it. Are there any ‑‑ aside from the people you mentioned, anyone else investigating this to see if any criminal action was done here?

JACK SWARBRICK: I can't tell you what Manti's representatives have done in that regard. I know they intended to pursue his rights fully. As it relates to the university, our lone engagement and referral was to the private firm to do the report for us.

Q. You talked a little about what you talked to him about. Can you say what you've seen or what the investigator saw that would ‑‑ some people obviously don't know the whole story and are going to question whether Manti was behind the hoax. What have you seen that would prove that that would not be the truth?

JACK SWARBRICK: Well, there's several things. One is I would refer all of you, if you're not already familiar with it, with both the documentary called "Catfish," the MTV show which is a derivative of that documentary, and the sort of associated things you'll find online and otherwise about catfish or catfishing.

It is a scam ‑‑ I'm probably revealing my television watching habits, but it was covered by Dr. Phil extensively recently ‑‑ that follows the exact arc of this, and it's perpetrated with shocking frequency for me ‑‑ shocking as an older guy who's not as versed in the online world ‑‑ and it is just as this one. An initial casual engagement, a developing relationship online, a subsequent trauma ‑‑ traffic accident, illness ‑‑ and then a death.

As hard as it is for me to get my arms around this, there's apparently some sport in doing this, in being able to do it successfully. So that was one that we sort of found this external guidebook, if you will, or platform for doing this.

Two were the internal consistencies, right? As we probe, ask questions, wanted to make sure it all lined up with what we knew independently, the facts as we understood them, we're very comfortable with the consistency in how it all fit together.

Thirdly, our investigators through their work were able to discover online chatter among the perpetrators that is sort of the ultimate proof of this, the joy they were taking, the sort of casualness with which among themselves they were referring to what they had accomplished and what they had done.

Q. There were some reports earlier in the year when this was going on that Manti and Kekua had met and spent time together in Hawaii. Did he explain how those came to be?

JACK SWARBRICK: He did, and, again, I'm going to let Manti tell the story because he deserves that right. What I will tell you, this was exclusively an online relationship.

Q. Do you know yet when and where he might be available to tell that, when he plans to come out and tell that story?

JACK SWARBRICK: I don't. I'm under the impression sometime tomorrow he will be, but I'm sorry, I don't know the details yet.

Q. And last one, did anybody at the school or with the football team, after Kekua's supposed death, try to reach out to her family and extend condolences in any way from the university?

JACK SWARBRICK: Not from the university. The Te'o family and Manti himself did. I'm not aware ‑‑ now, someone in the football program may have. I'm not aware ‑‑ I did not, and I'm not aware of anyone else that did.

Again, given the elaborateness of this, there was a place to send flowers, and that was ‑‑ there was no detail of the hoax left undone in that.

Q. By your discussions with Manti, when then did they meet? How long had this been going on?

JACK SWARBRICK: I don't remember the exact length of time, but it had ‑‑ it began with an online reaching out to him that he responded to.

Q. I guess the reason I asked is Brian Te'o had mentioned an in person meeting to me and several in person meetings. This had been all the way back to 2009. Does your timeline go back that far, and how do you explain, again, the differences in that story with what you're characterizing as purely an online situation?

JACK SWARBRICK: I think the timetable does line up, Eric. I don't have my notes in front of me, but I think that's right.

You know, I think, as Manti tells the story, you'll see the same thing I saw, that it does fully line up. I will forecast it only in two ways. One is, when I first talked to Manti on the 27th about this and we went through it and I asked him to take me to the beginning, he began by saying we met on. I said, what do you mean you met on? It was an online meeting. He used the verb "we met," and he was referring to an online meeting. He responded to an online inquiry. That was the first time he met her.

And as part of the hoax, several meetings were set up where Lennay never showed, including some in Hawaii.

Q. And did he talk about a brother that was involved in the hoax, a supposed brother that was involved in the hoax?

JACK SWARBRICK: There are a remarkable number of characters involved. We don't know how many people they represent. There are male and female characters, brothers, cousins, mother, and we don't know if it's two people playing multiple characters or multiple people.

But, again, it goes to the sophistication of this, that there are all these sort of independent pieces that reinforce elements of the story all the way through. Somebody else called ‑‑ brother, cousin, et cetera.

Q. And the tip‑off in his mind was the phone call, the one that came from her number, what was her number, that was when he became suspicious and not before then?

JACK SWARBRICK: Well, more than suspicious, he became startled, shocked ‑‑ and, yes, that's right. That was absolutely the first time.

Again, it goes to my comments about Manti and his character, but every single thing about this until that day in the first week of September was real to Manti. There was no suspicion that it wasn't, no belief that it might not be.

And so the pain was real. The grief was real. The affection was real. And that's the nature of this sad, cruel game.

Q. Was there ‑‑ after hearing the story and knowing that somebody might, in our business might find out about it, did you encourage him and say, hey, look, we should probably be the ones to tell the story first?

JACK SWARBRICK: No. And I'm glad you asked that because I'd like to touch on a couple of elements of it. There was a very vigorous discussion internally about what we do. What is my obligation at this point? It was governed by a few things. One is we didn't know a lot. So until the investigators had done their work, I didn't know we were talking about a girl who faked her death, a girl who didn't exist. We just didn't have any of that information.

We had no idea as to motive, and that was really significant to us. We're in a unique business here. Was there somebody trying to create an NCAA violation at the core of this? Was there somebody trying to impact the outcome of football games by manipulating the emotions of a key player? Was there an extortion request coming?

When you match the sort of lack of detail we still lacked until we got some help investigating it with the risk involved in some of these possible scenarios, it was clear to me that, until we knew more, we had to just continue to work to try to gather the facts.

Secondly and importantly ‑‑ and I referenced it before ‑‑ this is not different for us, notwithstanding that it played out in a very public way, this is not different for us than the circumstances that impact a lot of our students in a host of ways. And we believe very strongly in maintaining their right to confidentiality as students at this university.

So from the outset, we established a parameter that this was Manti's story to tell. We wanted to know it would be told. We wanted to know at the appropriate time when it would be told, but that it was his to tell.

Q. Not to belabor the point, but just so that I'm clear, is it your understanding then that Manti and this woman have never physically met face to face?

JACK SWARBRICK: Correct.

Q. Okay. Given your knowledge of the law, what sort of crime has been committed here, would you say, or can you say?

JACK SWARBRICK: I'm not allowed to practice law anymore. So I will avoid a legal interpretation of this. Let me say in response to that, though, that question had the potential to be central to how you manage this once it surfaced because a clear case of illegality would have been extortion, and one very legitimate response, I think, that Te'o might have opted for here was to let this play out and see if that came when he signed a contract or had some resources. They opted not to do that, but those are the sorts of things that impacted the thinking relative to timing and how you deal with this story.

On its face, I'll let somebody else who's still practicing law to interpret whether anything has been done to date constitutes criminal conduct. I haven't pursued that question.

Q. Has there been a way for you guys, for you and the people you've been dealing with, to just comprehend what this is all about? It's bizarre.

JACK SWARBRICK: As a parent of four children, it's been a really frightening experience. For people my age, this is unfathomable. Versions of this in different forms we would understand, but the sort of online social media, virtual nature of this, it's hard for us ‑‑ hard for me. I should speak for myself ‑‑ to get my arms around.

We know, for example, that these perpetrators didn't limit themselves to Manti in the targets. So my first reaction, frankly, was as a father. You know, the way in which young people, students or student‑athletes, my children, are at risk in this environment to things like this because you just don't know who you're dealing with.

Q. You said this is an online relationship, yet Manti has talked about speaking with a person he thought was Lennay. Did a person, in effect, take her position and talk to Manti as if she were his girlfriend?

JACK SWARBRICK: Yeah, and thanks for correcting that. Online and telephonic. There were lengthy, long telephone conversations. There was sleeping with the phone on connected to each other. So all of those things.

The issue of who it is, who's playing what role, what's real and what's not here is a more complex question than I can get into.

Q. You mentioned that the perpetrators, Manti wasn't the only one he targeted. Other people at Notre Dame or other ‑‑ a bigger scheme?

JACK SWARBRICK: I'm not aware of anyone else at Notre Dame.

Q. And the Dead Spin report said that Manti had a relationship with who they thought the perpetrator was, whether it was a cousin or a family friend. Was that true, and do you know if that played into the motive at all?

JACK SWARBRICK: That characterization does not square with my information, but I'll let the Te'os address it.

Q. And then last one for me. The day of the National Championship game, when you guys had knowledge of this, there was a pregame special on the news morning show about his story. Did you guys know they were planning on doing that? Did you do anything to try to talk them out of that? Or how did you handle that situation?

JACK SWARBRICK: Where did it air?

Q. I think it was a CBS morning show.

JACK SWARBRICK: I'm not familiar with it. So I guess the quick answer is, since I didn't know it, we didn't ‑‑ we were very conscious of the fact that we didn't know what we didn't know. And so we recognized the challenges of that. If Manti got a question in a media session about that, how do you respond to that? We recognized the challenge of that, and we weighed those difficulties against the ‑‑ on the other hand, these other issues that affecting timing.

I'll say one thing. When the investigation concluded and when we got the first report from the investigators, the one thing we were certain of was that this was coming out. There was too much online chatter about it. There was not an intention, a belief, anything that this story would not get told. It was clear it would. We had hoped the first person to tell it was going to be Manti, and, again, the expectation was it was going to happen next week.

He didn't get that opportunity without someone else having told the story, but he'll at least have an opportunity to talk about it in the future.

Q. Did he explain at all why he waited 2 1/2, 3 weeks to tell the coaches after he had the suspicion after he got that phone call?

JACK SWARBRICK: He wanted to talk to his parents, and he wanted to talk to them in person. He went home for Christmas break. That's Manti. That's the son he is. He wanted to have that conversation with his parents face to face. He wanted to consult with them, wanted to get their advice, and it was on the basis of that conversation, after having concluded it, that he called us.

Q. Jack, did Manti receive any other communications following the incident at the ESPN awards show from the people involved in this?

JACK SWARBRICK: Yes, they continued to be persistent. It wasn't a single contact.

Q. And when did that stop?

JACK SWARBRICK: I'm sorry. I don't know exactly. It dissipated in time, in part because he wasn't responding, but I don't know exactly when.

Q. And the last question for me. Does the Te'o family and Notre Dame intend to publish any part of the report, the findings in the future?

JACK SWARBRICK: We do not.

Q. Jack, you mentioned the parties being persistent with Manti. Did you get some more insight into what their motives were, and what did you discover through that continued contact?

JACK SWARBRICK: Well, they were ‑‑ everything here had a story. It wasn't ‑‑ there was another story to explain what had happened and to restart the relationship. And I'm not going to go into details of that, Manti can. But the next phase of the hoax was played out.

Here's why we did what we did, and now here we are back. Still in character.

Q. To be clear, when they tried to restart the relationship after Lennay admitted that she, in fact, had not died ‑‑

JACK SWARBRICK: Yes.

Q. When you talk about the online chatter that your investigators discovered, what did you discover about the motive at that point? You mentioned sport. Was that it? Was there any other motive that came to light?

JACK SWARBRICK: Well, all that comes through it is a sort of casual cruelty. They're enjoying the joke. The shockingly casual comments about what they were doing and how they were doing it.

Q. And in your investigation internally, did you find that Lennay had had contact with any other members of the team? Did you speak to the members of the team about what they recalled about this conversation, or is it strictly you only talked to Manti?

JACK SWARBRICK: Manti.

Q. He was at an awards show, the one in Orlando, ESPN, right?

JACK SWARBRICK: Yes.

Q. The investigators, Notre Dame investigators, or who were these investigators?

JACK SWARBRICK: No, they're private. They were independent, private investigators who had a special expertise in this sort of thing, who had experience of tracking online activity. I'm not going to identify the company. It's a national company, independent.

Q. Did ‑‑ just to clarify, did the team know at any point? The players are just finding out today, like anyone else?

JACK SWARBRICK: Yes. I mean, the two coaches knew. I knew. And Manti had taken a couple of teammates into his confidence.

Q. Are you able to tell us which coaches he talked to?

JACK SWARBRICK: Diamondback owe and Kelly. For those that don't follow us, that's the defensive coordinator and the head coach.

Q. The perpetrator, in the voice calls, you said they would sleep with the phone up to their ear and what not. Do we know where she is? I assume investigators have had to make contact with an apology forthcoming in the future. Will we ever hear from her, the one that provided the voice?

JACK SWARBRICK: I don't know the answers to that. You wind up with online footprints in this case, and at that point, we didn't ‑‑ once we were satisfied we understood the dimensions of this, we shared the information with the Te'os and left it to them and the people they'll be working with to decide what next steps to take.

Q. And lastly, what's the university's response to, say, the 20‑some‑year‑old fans who have experience with this and say, if you haven't actually met her in person, it seems slightly deceiving on his part to bring such attention to it.

JACK SWARBRICK: Then you don't know Manti is my answer. Manti lives his life on his sleeve, and he is out there. As I said earlier ‑‑ and I don't think this was an accident ‑‑ they understood, given the nature, the extraordinary nature of this man, the more trouble she was in ‑‑ car accident, diagnosis of leukemia, failing health ‑‑ the more engaged he would become, the more focused he would become, and the more dedicated he would become, and that's exactly what happened here.

And for those who are suspicious that that can happen in sort of a virtual environment, I think there are a lot of examples out there that suggest otherwise. I mean, this documentary chronicles one of them, but as we've gotten into this, I've been surprised to learn the frequency with which it exists and the cautionary tale it affords to those same young people. The people who will be least skeptical of this are the people who live their life in the social media as an important component of it.

Skepticism probably increases with age, but it's harder for those of us who aren't fully engaged in that medium to understand how it can be used to this effect.

Q. Jack, what did you guys advise Manti to say had he gotten a question directly after about Lennay? I know he got one question, but it was kind of within the context of another question, and he was able to avoid it. But what did you guys advise him?

JACK SWARBRICK: We encouraged him to try to focus forward and focus on the game and not draw attention backward, if he could. It was that simple. It wasn't very complex. Again, we understood the challenge of that, but the weighing of those competing interests in a way that we felt was the right balance.

Q. One more. Do you think this affected his play that night?

JACK SWARBRICK: I don't want to say that. I will only tell you that starting with my interaction on the 27th and beginning today, it's affected Manti as a person significantly.

There's a lot of tragedy here. There's a lot of sorrow here. But the thing I am most sad of, sad about is ‑‑ sorry. That the single most trusting human being I've ever met will never be able to trust in the same way again in his life. That's an incredible tragedy.

Q. You said several people a few times. Do you have a ballpark of just how many people?

JACK SWARBRICK: We don't because we have no idea of all the characters here, how many were one person playing multiple roles. We just don't have any way to know that right now.

Q. Did Notre Dame notify any law enforcement agency or the enforcement arm of the NCAA?

JACK SWARBRICK: No, there's no factual predicate for an NCAA violation we could find. That, of course, was one of our important focuses early on. And, no, we did not refer this to criminal authorities. We shared, as I said, all of our information with the Te'os, who in turn shared it with their representatives to consider it further.

Q. Well, considering at the very least someone was harassing a star player for the university, and potentially there could have been an extortion component of it ‑‑ you said you didn't know at the beginning of it ‑‑ why didn't Notre Dame contact law enforcement?

JACK SWARBRICK: Well, because we believed that was the victim's decision to make, and Manti was the victim here. And he and his family, in consultation with whomever they choose to consult with, had that decision to make. We were not the victim. We've been impacted, but I don't want to confuse this at all. Manti Te'o was the victim of this scam.

Q. Was there a discussion about contacting law enforcement?

JACK SWARBRICK: Yes, there was a discussion of anything ‑‑ any response that might be appropriate.

Q. Do you still think that was the right decision based on what's happened to this point?

JACK SWARBRICK: I do.

Q. Thank you.

Q. Hi, Jack. Sorry to have to have this press conference tonight, but at any point during any investigation, was there anything uncovered where there may be at some point any extortion or money asked from Manti or the university?

JACK SWARBRICK: Nothing in our investigation revealed an ask which had been made. We're sensitive to the fact that one might be forthcoming in the future, and that's one of the things that impacted considerations of how to proceed.

Q. Two questions actually. One, I wish I could say it, I know there have been reports that Manti said he had an initial face to face meeting with his girlfriend at Stanford at some point. What's going on with that?

JACK SWARBRICK: Again, I'll let Manti provide the details, but as I said earlier in this press conference, when Manti took me through the entire story from start to finish, when he first described the contact, he used the verb met. For him, the fact that they connected online, that they met online, was consistent with using that verb. Not one that I might have chosen, but it was for him.

And the timing was consistent with the playing of that game.

Q. Okay. The other one is given that Manti thought there was an actual girlfriend and that she had died and then someone called and said that it was her, I'm still having a hard time reconciling why he wouldn't have gone to authorities when there was a possible death ‑‑ or there had to be some confusion as to what was going on at that point?

JACK SWARBRICK: There's lots of confusion. There didn't appear to be a death. The evidence was a little bit to the contrary.

We asked the questions of people involved in the consideration of what the best steps were. Was there apparent criminal activity here? At that point, it was hard to identify any. A cruel, cruel hoax, but unfortunately, cruel hoaxes don't necessarily accelerate the criminal activity.

JOHN HEISLER: Thanks very much. We appreciate your being with us. We'll have a transcript of this that we'll make available to you within the hour. Thanks.

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