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Eddie Robinson
The Greatest Football Coach, Period

*As Penn State saga demonstrates, winning is not the most important thing*

**By KENNETH MILLER**

Special to the NNPA from the LA Watts Times

Just as the Joe Paterno statue was being removed in the middle of the night from Beaver Stadium in Happy Valley, and while the NCAA was leveling the Penn State football program with the most severe penalties in the history of collegiate sports, officials in the small town of Grambling, La, were petitioning to restore the legendary Eddie Robinson as the all time victory leader in college football.

According to a recently published article in USA Today, Cynthia Breedlove, an attorney for the city of Grambling, petitioned to the NCAA to vacate some of Paterno's wins in hopes of getting Robinson restored as the record holder. She did so with the backing of Grambling Mayor Edward Jones.

Then on Monday, when the NCAA wiped out 111 wins from Paterno, Jones said the city was "elated" that Robinson has the record back. But he said the city's foremost thoughts were with the victims of the abuse, adding, "It's our prayer that everyone involved will heal."

The mayor said the petition was never meant to alter the NCAA process, just to voice the city's position.

Robinson led Grambling for 57 seasons to 408 victories before his final game in 1997. He died as gracefully as he had lived at the age of 88 in 2007.

The coach, affectionately called Coach Rob, is responsible for 200 players making it to the NFL, but his legacy is not that he just won football games it is how he molded boys to become men and productive citizens of society.

Coach Robinson did not have an unlimited budget, the best equipment or the most sophisticated facilities during his illustrious reign as his white contemporaries such as Paterno and Florida State's Bobby Bowden had.

Paterno was considered the winningest coach until the NCAA hammered Penn State for the

cover-up during the horrific Jerry Sandusky child molestation scandal that has since tarnished his legacy.

Even Bowden had victories vacated for NCAA sanctions, but Robinson's sterling legacy — at a historically Black college where many of his players were not recruited at major white universities— has never been questioned or tarnished.

He simply did more with less.

Former Grambling star Doug Williams, who became the first Black quarterback to win a Super Bowl with the Washington Redskins and is currently the head coach at his alma mater, did not celebrate in the demise of Paterno.

"Today doesn't change any player's opinion of Coach Rob," Williams said. "Players like Franco Harris that played for (Joe Paterno) held him in high esteem, and players that played for (Robinson) feel the same way.

"I don't think (Robinson) would be happy today."

"Today is mixed emotions for me," Robinson's son, Eddie Robinson Jr. said. "I've talked to a lot of people who've asked me if I was happy. I can't truly say that I am.

"I've known Coach Paterno for years, and the only thing I can say that I knew about him … is that to me, he was a great coach and a class individual.

"As far as what has happened, I don't have all the investigative facts and I'm not close enough to it to say what it should be and what it shouldn't be."

Grambling President Frank Pogue said he didn't think Robinson would have been celebrating Monday, either.

"Eddie Robinson would have been the first to express regret at this situation," Pogue said. "We at Grambling State University will always feel that Eddie G. Robinson was the smiling face of this university.

"The reason he will be known as the winningest Division I coach here is larger than football. He took men largely from small towns with virtually no equipment to play with, compared to Penn State and most of the larger universities.

"He was able to say to those men that you are somebody and you are attending Grambling and Grambling is the winning spirit of football and athletics."

In 2006, the NCAA during reorganization renamed a separate Football Championship Subdivision to only include colleges that qualified under the Bowl Championship Series format, thus separating the records of both Paterno and Bowden from the record of Robinson.

Therefore, many consider Bowden as the winningest college football coach now because of the grouping, but the record is clear as far as Division I victories, and Robinson is the all time leader.

Following Robinson's death, the Football Writers Association of America named its Coach of the Year Award for Robinson. The first recipient was Joe Paterno.