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Edward F. Stancik
Special Commissioner
NEWS RELEASE
March 31, 1998

**FOOTBALL PRACTICE AT WAGNER HIGH VIOLATED
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULATIONS**

Special Commissioner Edward F. Stancik today released a letter revealing that Alan Paturzo, the head football coach of Susan Wagner High School, organized unauthorized, pre-season practices that jeopardized the safety of high school football players. This office investigated these practices following the death of an incoming freshman trying out for the team. 14-year-old Marlon Albert died on July 29, 1997, hours after attending one of the practices scheduled by Coach Paturzo.

An autopsy was conducted and the Medical Examiner concluded that Marlon died from an inflammation of the heart. The Medical Examiner did not feel that the practice contributed to his death. There is no way of knowing whether Marlon's condition would have been detected had he obtained the required medical clearance. Because Paturzo scheduled unofficial practices before requiring students to turn in medical clearance forms, however, Marlon began training without a doctor's consent, a direct violation of Board of Education Public School Athletic League regulations.

The investigation revealed that the pre-season practices further violated Board regulations and placed students at risk.

- Practices began on July 28, more than two weeks before the August 16 official starting date of the football season.
- Because practices were held before the season began, players were not insured against physical injury.
- The July 29 practice was held in near-90° degree heat, several degrees above the 85° maximum temperature under which football practices are allowed to occur.
- No arrangements were made for the presence of someone licensed in first aid or CPR.
- No coach supervised the practices.

Paturzo, of 334 Ionia Avenue, Staten Island, cancelled all pre-season practices after he learned of the student's death. Paturzo has been a Board employee since 1969 and head coach at Wagner since 1984. Wagner is located at 1200 Manor Road in Staten Island.

This office recommends that the Board take strong disciplinary action against Paturzo and place him on formal notice of his obligation to follow all PSAL and Board regulations. Further, the Board should take disciplinary action against Principal Michael Tobin and Athletic Director Fred Hess. Finally, the Board should issue and enforce a Chancellor's regulation instructing all coaches, athletic directors, and principals that unofficial practices are prohibited.