

NCAA rules
tend to encourage
athletes to be . . .

on the take

Football coach Rich Brooks says they can be found at every school. Basketball coach Jim Haney agrees.

The fact is, NCAA rule violations are so common that only multiple and continuing offenses are investigated. Some of the violations are willful and others result from ignorance of the rules.

For 72 years, the NCAA manual has befuddled its members, and University representative Wendell Basye is no exception. "It is difficult to look at the book and know that every rule is complied with," he complains.

Hundreds of coaches, thousands of athletes and millions of alumni are expected to comply with the 266 pages of regulations, with stiff penalties accompanying exposed infractions.

Offending athletes and schools can be ineligible; once penalized, an athlete's collegiate career is ended.

Schools can lose all awards and cash benefits, as well as the right to recruit or appear on

television.

The University has never been penalized, but that doesn't mean there is no cheating in the athletic department. Says Brooks, "I can't watch every member of the team, and some of them are probably not aware of all the rules. The rules are so rigid that if you took a fine tooth comb you would find some violations everywhere."

Probation, the usual punishment, costs athletic programs credibility, as well as many top recruits. "The most common improper offenses occur in the recruiting process," says Mike Gilleran, an enforcement representative of the NCAA.

Coaches recruit every year with money and promises, and the average high school senior can be overwhelmed. Highly recruited athletes are likely to be offered "extra benefits."

When the coaches cheat, there is no room for pleading ignorance. "It's hard to buy the argument that they didn't know it was illegal,"

Gilleran points out.

Oregon's Haney thinks that coaches interpret the rules differently. "Most violations occur during recruiting. Some of the rules sound crazy, while other rules are just little things and coaches say 'why worry about it.'"

So when an athlete is hit with a barrage of offers, legal and illegal, he may gain a warped sense of reality. "The whole system is so out of proportion, so wild, that it can't help but alter the athlete's perspective of life," says Haney.

The difference between what is illegal and what is legal becomes minimal. The athlete is glorified, and expects to receive his suggested worth.

Other athletes may try to find an honest program, rather than to take advantage of a dishonest one. "He (the athlete) has seen violations throughout his recruitment, but hopefully when he is recruited by us he'll say 'these guys really try to adhere to the rules,'" Haney offers.

Once enrolled, the athlete, who is often poor, finds he must live with no spending money, while the school may profit from his talents.

Sports Commentary

Under current NCAA rules, the scholarship athlete can only receive room, board, tuition, fees and books.

Clothing and transportation costs are not included and to someone who has no money, this represents an injustice.

Athletes cannot work during the school year, so their yearly expenses are only to be earned during the summer.

University of Nevada at Las Vegas is under probation because of numerous violations, and basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian has fought the NCAA in court over the matter. Tarkanian, whose Long Beach State program was also placed on probation, claims the rules are too restrictive, and that he was not afforded due process.

Tarkanian says he cannot comment on the NCAA, but has been quoted as saying: "So many NCAA rules are unquibled, which is why every school is in violation to some degree."

You can't coach a poor kid and have him come to you at the end of the month saying he's totally broke and not find him a place to eat. You may not give him money, but you'll get him food. That's a violation."

So athletes are forced to seek the "extra benefits" that the NCAA is adamantly against. Freshmen may see their older teammates accepting under-the-table gifts and surmise that undetected cheating is acceptable.

Most coaches don't know if their players cheat, but Brooks isn't worried. "I would be surprised to find out that any of our players are cheating," he insists. "They're adults and we have to assume that they are following the rules."

Haney also talks to his players in order to build their values. "Each player is asked to make his own decision. I may be naive, but if I tell them not to do something, I don't think they will do it," he says.

Blind faith and undying optimism are good coaching qualities, but they don't help detect the cheating that coaches admit exists.

Athletes justify cheating because they need the money, and because "everyone else does."

How does one stop cheating? According to Haney it's difficult. "So many people come into contact with your players, there's only so much you can do," he says.

Alumni should be aware of possible infractions and warned from aiding athletes. "When I get alumni calls, I have to tell them not to do anything," says Haney.

But keeping the players in line is hard. "We bring in new players every year, and it's everyone's problem trying to police what is happening," states Haney. "I can't imagine what it would be like trying to manage 90 players like a football team."

What happens when a violation is discovered? "You want to stop it if you find out it's happening," says Haney. "Then you ask yourself if you are going to run and call the NCAA, or are you just going to go on. I would probably get the thing solved and go on, unless it was something of major proportion."

Something of major proportion could be a substantial gain in income for the athlete. The offender is ineligible if caught and subject to fraud charges if the income was not reported to the Internal Revenue Service.



Basketball coach Jim Haney admits that there is cheating present, but it is impossible for him to control all of his players. "Each player has to make his own decision. I may be naive, but if I tell them not to do something, I don't think they will do it."

According to the IRS, anyone who makes over \$2800 in one year must report all income, or chance a tax evasion charge.

NCAA penalties seem less severe, especially since some infractions go unpunished, according to Gilleran. "We have several sources of information, and there's no set policy other than common sense. If a kid at school 'A' had a car given to him, and a kid at school 'B' had a Coke bought for him, it's obvious which one we would investigate."

Gilleran says a pattern of cheating is important. "We are interested in whether or not there is a pattern, and whether coaches and boosters are involved," he says.

"There are rules that are more technical in nature, and it's hard for anybody to think they are wrong, but most violations are willful," he adds.

The following violations by players are not a result of poor coaching — rather a result of the poor rules themselves.

While these rules were instituted with a specific historical purpose, the NCAA requires too much of the athletes.

If scholarships were given on a need basis, athletes would be eligible for total expenses for the entire year.

Those ineligible for financial aid could receive parental funding, or could get a job. Employment during the off-season is reasonable, and would provide needed money.

Complimentary basketball tickets, given to all team members, represent \$408 at face value, and considerably more at black market prices. These should not be sold by the athlete at all. Complimentary tickets should be distributed before each game as a special arrangement for visiting friends or relatives. Otherwise this represents an extra benefit.

If the means and necessity for cheating are taken away, the amount of cheating will decrease. This will only happen with structural changes in the NCAA.

The House Oversight and Investigations Committee recently completed an investigation into the legality of the NCAA, and a list of suggested changes will soon be completed.

Almost any changes in the NCAA's self-defeating rules would help honest athletes stay honest, and would make paranoid coaches less defensive.

Stories by Ken Sands. Photos by Keith Allen.

Common violations beleaguer athletes

NCAA rules governing players, coaches and alumni are specific. Yet no one can expect players and alumni to know the rules well enough to obey them all.

One infraction makes a player ineligible, and the hundreds of rules make it impossible to ensure each player knows them all.

The following list of eight common player and alumni violations was compiled by the University athletic department.

1. Receiving merchandise or services at a price less than the cost to students in general. Mississippi State University was ordered last spring to forfeit 19 football games in which an ineligible player participated. The player lost his eligibility because he had been provided clothing at a discount not available to other students. The NCAA manual states that "it is a violation to provide anything for a student-athlete that you do not provide for a regular student — except — the cost of room, board, tuition and fees."

2. Having papers or reports typed by secretaries. Last spring the University of Missouri launched an internal investigation and admitted that its athletic department had been in violation of this rule for some time. The NCAA manual explains: "Is it permissible for the institution, as a part of the individual's regular grant-in-aid award or by any other means, to pay for the cost of typing the reports? No. Such charges would not be considered an institutional fee under NCAA legislation, and therefore the payment thereof would be considered an extra benefit not available to the student body in general."

3. Receiving loans or advances of money from coaches, alumni or other representatives of the institution. Last summer the University of Minnesota ordered an investigation into reports that its football coach made loans to players and allowed payment of a player's personal phone bill. Just two

weeks ago it's basketball program had a two-year probation lifted. The manual states: "The following practices . . . are expressly prohibited . . . special arrangements designed to provide a student-athlete . . . with extra benefits . . . loans without interest."

4. Selling of complimentary tickets for above the face value. Under NCAA rules, four free tickets are provided to each athlete, and they may sell these at face value. Mychal Thompson was placed on probation at the University of Minnesota for selling his tickets at more than face value. The rulebook is clear on this subject. "The student-athlete indirectly has used his athletic skill for pay and has obtained an extra benefit not available to the student body in general."

5. Use of name or picture in a commercial advertisement. The University of Hawaii received probation for breaking this rule. The NCAA rule manual poses this question: "Is it permissible for a student-athlete to permit his name or picture to be used in this manner without jeopardizing his eligibility under the Association's professional rulings? No."

6. Receiving compensation for teaching the sport in which involved. The manual states that an athlete shall not be employed to coach or teach in his sport. "A student-athlete may not be employed or receive compensation for teaching or coaching sports skills or techniques in his sport unless such instruction is a part of the overall terms of his employment (i.e., teaching and coaching shall not demand more than half of his employed time) and not on a fee-for-lesson basis."

7. Making personal calls from University office phones. Once again, any extra benefit not available to the student body in general is prohibited.

8. Be provided transportation by a coach or other member or representative of the athletic department. This also constitutes an extra benefit, and is prohibited.



Football players under Rich Brooks may encounter financial difficulties, but Brooks thinks that they follow the rules anyway. "They're adults and we have to assume that they are following the rules."



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