

After probe, UA scandal still not over

The report does not state why non-scholarship athletes received books they never saw

The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — At least one mystery remained as an investigator outlined his findings in a probe of an apparent athletic books-vouchers scandal at the University of Arizona.

Attorney Cary Sandman, hired by the university to investigate the situation, recently reported that 12 University of Arizona scholarship athletes used athletic department vouchers to buy textbooks that weren't required or to get books for other students.

Sandman also said the infractions probably would have been prevented if the department's academic office had followed the university's book distribution policy in the 1996-97 school year.

However, the report released Monday doesn't say why 33 non-scholarship athletes were listed as receiving books they say they never saw.

"The error in the athletic department's records has not been conclusively explained," Sandman said in the Dec. 29 report. He refused to elaborate on Monday.

Starting safety Mikal Smith, 21, and reserve cornerback Leland Gayles, 20, were arrested in June for allegedly stealing books from department return bins and sell-

ing them back to bookstores. Police said 60 books were found in Gayles' car.

Further investigation followed when a summer internal audit found that the department's academic staff ordered about \$6,850 in books for the non-scholarship athletes.

The report has been forwarded to Pac-10 officials, who will review it before deciding whether to pass it on to the NCAA, athletic director Jim Livengood said.

Pac-10 Associate Commissioner David Price said he received the report but hasn't had time to review it.

Livengood said the 12 athletes involved were declared ineligible once the infractions were discovered. Their eligibility was restored after they paid for the books, Livengood said.

Sandman concluded that while the athletic department's academics staff didn't know about the violations, the staff failed to check the athletes' course schedules before issuing vouchers.

"In addition, the book loan coordinator and his staff stated that they did not understand, that under NCAA rules, 'optional' course related books were not to be distributed to student athletes," the report states.

Mike Fisher, the athletic department's former academic di-

rector, said he was fired shortly after the July search but has never formally been offered a reason why.

"We [the academics staff] were doing the best we could with no facilities, reduced staff and no authority," Fisher said. "The administration of the athletic department was apprised at all times about the fragility of the system."

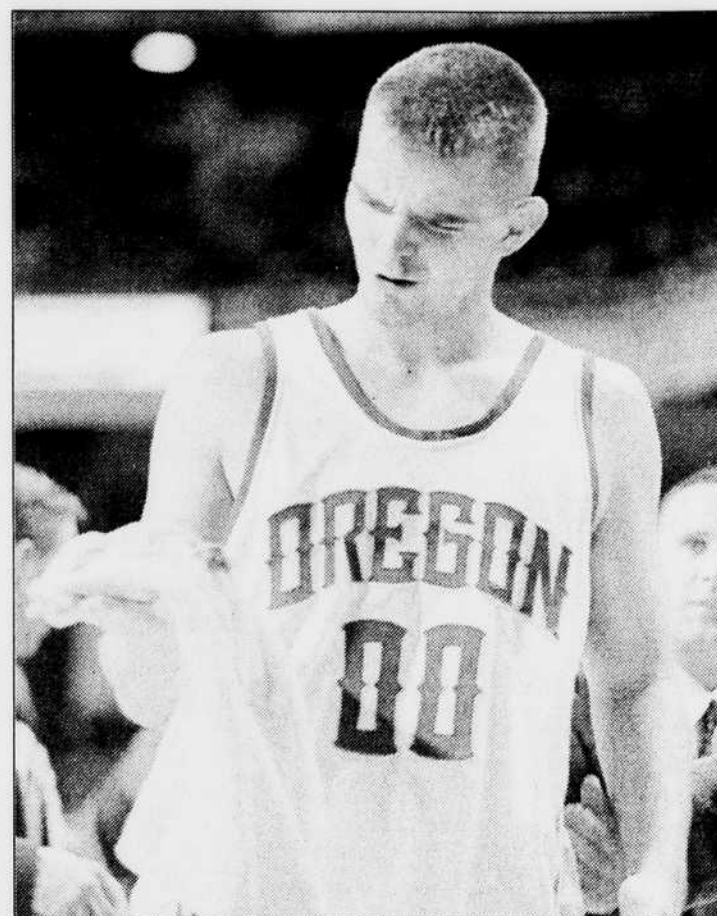
The book coordinator at that time, Ruben Berry, has repeatedly declined comment.

Livengood declined to comment on any personnel changes but said the athletics program moved the book distribution program last semester from the department's academic office to its compliance office.

"It's worked great," Livengood said. "We've been extremely pleased. I think the biggest lesson we've learned is that we need to pay attention to everything that we are doing and the policies that we have."

Harry Hueston, the campus police chief, said his investigation has been completed and that no other athletes will be arrested.

Gayles' attorney, George Royston, said Gayles and Smith have been referred to a diversion program. If accepted, they will be given a year's probationary period the successful completion of which would result in dismissal of the charges, he said. Each was charged with one count of fraud.



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

Smith received eight stitches for a cut in his head from a collision with Stanford's Tim Young during Monday's game.

Fans: Brown leads league in free throw percentage

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Chin music

Sophomore forward A.D. Smith had to leave Monday's game late in the second half when he banged his head into the chin of Stanford center Tim Young going for a rebound. Smith suffered a gash on the top of his head that required eight stitches to close. Young also had to leave the game with a cut on his chin. Smith isn't expected to miss Thursday night's game against Southern California.

Odds and ends

The Hoopscoop, a national re-

cruiting service, has ranked the Ducks' fall signing class of Barlow High School's Frederick Jones, Gresham's Dennis Nathan, junior-college transfer Alex Scales and Chris Christoffersen of California, as the 14th-best nationally and fourth best in the West. Arizona, Southern California and UNLV are the three West Coast schools ranked higher than Oregon.

Junior guard Terik Brown leads the Pac-10 in free-throw shooting percentage, making 90 percent of his attempts (27 for 30).

Women: Meharry leads team in points per game

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came against Kansas when the Ducks hit just 12 of 25 attempts in a six-point loss.

Oregon's 92.3-percent performance, a Pacific-10 Conference best, from the line against the Bears was the only time all season the Ducks have shot better than 67 percent for a game.

The Ducks are third in free-throw attempts in the Pac-10, but are only eighth in free-throw percentage, ahead of California and Oregon State.

Drawing a crowd

According to figures compiled by the Wisconsin Women's Sports Information staff, the Oregon women rank 17th in the nation in average home game attendance. The Ducks averaged a home crowd of

3,176 in games through Jan. 4

Young leader

Brianne Meharry is only a freshman, but she sure isn't playing like one.

With her 26 points in two games in the Bay Area over the weekend, the 6-foot-1 Gladstone native moved past Natalie Hughes to become the Ducks' leading scorer at 13.4 points per contest. Hughes, however, is still right behind Meharry with 13.3 per game.

Injury talk

Guard Natasha O'Brien, who left Sunday's game against Stanford with an injured wrist, has a severe sprain of her left hand. It is possible she could play against Southern California on Thursday.

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