

8 Ways to End Basketball Fixes

We always will have gamblers, says this noted authority—
but we don't have to let them corrupt our youth



By **WILLIAM R. REED** as told to **Bill Surface**

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AFTER COLLEGE BASKETBALL was hurt by the fix scandals in 1951, an optimistic theory existed: "It can't happen again; players have learned a lesson."

But fixes did recur, and now there is another slogan: "College basketball must be cleaned up—we've got to stop gambling on basketball!"

Today's belief, in my opinion, is as faulty as the old one. College basketball is clean. That's why it is so attractive to gamblers. The cleaner the game, the more betting. Nobody is naive enough to make a large bet on, say, professional boxing nowadays.

In essence, we are repeating an error that contributed to the recent scandals. We should recognize gambling, not dodge it. I don't mean gambling should be legalized. But there always will be people who gamble, so we must adopt rules to keep them a safe distance from our athletes.

Here are some rules which could help stop any future basketball scandals—not stop gambling, mind you, but stop the corrupting influence of gamblers on our young players.

1. Eliminate undesirables and poor risks among players. Every type of student was involved in the most recent scandals, from the honor student to marginal student—but the poorer student was involved in two-thirds of the cases and was a definite educational risk before attending college. As much attention should be paid a player's scholastic and personal reputation as his athletic prowess.

2. Guarantee players protection. In many cases, hoodlums have implied that the players will get into trouble by reporting bribe offers, despite refusing them. Every coach must educate his players to the importance of reporting bribes and point out that experience has shown the danger in not reporting them. A number of personal safeguards have been provided players—and they must be told about them.

3. Give players a true sense of values. An assistant district attorney who interviewed players involved in the scandals found that they felt they were more important to their school than the school was to them.

Coaches are also teachers: they should be able to give

their players a true perspective on life. Excelling at basketball is wonderful—for young men. But in the world in general it's really not so important. If a player cannot grasp that college lesson, he is an all-around poor risk.

4. Enforce stiffer penalties for college coaches who "bribe" high-school players with under-the-table recruitment deals. A phrase I heard after the last scandals certainly holds true: "If you can pay a boy to make baskets, you can certainly pay him to miss them." Case histories of fixers show most of them went wrong in recruiting.

5. Watch the point spread, the margin a team must win or lose by to collect bets. At one time, I was able to get opening odds and fluctuations on all Big Ten games, and anytime there was a major shift I wanted to know why.

6. Make fixing of sports events a Federal crime. State laws on bribery vary, and gamblers are able to manipulate without fear in some areas. Once, a fixer tried to rig an Oregon-Michigan football game. A player reported the offer, and the briber was arrested. Yet the police could only book the gambler on a charge of registering in a hotel under a false name!

7. Scare the gamblers. A burglar skips places that are well-protected. Conferences should appoint investigators to guard against gamblers. Constant surveillance would make gamblers more reluctant to approach college players.

8. Use convicted "fixers" as an example. I don't mean to ridicule any individuals publicly, but rather remind young players how easy it is to hit rock bottom and become losers all their lives.

The players involved in the recent scandals were about 10 years old when the previous scandal erupted. They had forgotten the consequences.

We should never let players of today and tomorrow forget the lessons of the past. They should be reminded of the answer a fixer gave when asked about the possibilities of anybody following in his footsteps:

"If anybody knew all the hell I've gone through, all the side streets I've walked down, all the insults thrown me—just for a few thousand dollars—nobody would consider shaving points for a million dollars." And he said that years ago—before the last scandal broke.

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