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# 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**

Commissioner, Big Ten Conference

**A**FTER 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 naïve 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 play-  
ers.** 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 col-  
lege. As much attention should be paid a player's scholastic  
and personal reputation as his athletic prowess.

**2. Guarantee players protection.** In many cases, hood-  
lums 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 re-  
porting bribes and point out that experience has shown the  
danger in *not* reporting them. A number of personal safe-  
guards have been provided players—and they must be told  
about them.

**3. Give players a true sense of values.** An assistant dis-  
trict 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 basket-  
ball is wonderful—for young men. But in the world in gen-  
eral 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 recruit-  
ment deals.** A phrase I heard after the last scandals cer-  
tainly 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 for-  
get 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.