



FOLLOW-UP NOTES

“Coach Abuse of College Athletes – Are Coach Training, Certification, and Conduct Policies the Answer?”

The Drake Group Education Fund Webinar Series – Critical Issues in College Athletics

Hosted by



Thanks for attending or registering for our September 21, 2023 webinar on critical issues in intercollegiate athletics. A regular feature of our webinar series is “Follow-Up Notes” which provides links to the recorded webinar, answers to questions from the audience which panelists did not have the time to address or those emailed to us from telephone participants, and information on our next webinar.

1. Webinar #27 RECORDING

In case you missed any part of the September 21, 2023 webinar, you may access the recorded video here:

“Coach Abuse of College Athletes – Are Coach Training, Certification, and Conduct Policies the Answer?”

[ACCESS RECORDING HERE](#)

2. UNADDRESSED QUESTIONS FROM WEBINAR ATTENDEES

Following are answers to questions from the audience symposium that panelists did not have time to address. Responses are from Drake experts including some of the panelists.

Q1: Have there been any studies comparing the educational outcomes for varsity athletes and club sport athletes (i.e., between recruited athletes who must answer to coaches and administrators and worry about eligibility and self-selected athletes who answer only to themselves and their teammates)?

A1: We are not aware of such research. However, we believe this is a good idea as intercollegiate club sports are an understudied aspect of college sport. There certainly are studies that compare athletes among all three NCAA divisions, junior colleges, and NAIA schools by gender, race, sport, size of school, etc. We recommend reviews of TGDEF position papers and empirical literature by Ridpath, Moleski, Southall, Gurney and many others that have done comparative studies on varsity college athletes.

Q2: Is there a role for the establishment of an “ombudsman” in college sports, and does this position exist at any colleges today?

A2: While many colleges and universities have “student ombudsman” positions, we know of no institutions that have established an “athlete ombudsman” position. The Drake Group Education Fund has proposed the establishment of an “athlete ombudsman office” funded by the NCAA but independently administered. See Recommendation 13 on page 50 of our report, [*A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues*](#). Such positions are often developed by players unions or players associations, the latter of which do exist but have limited memberships because many college athletes are wary of such affiliations not being supported by their coaches or institutions. Within the institution, the athletic department usually sponsors an athletes’ advisory council, which by definition has no power. Thus, most observers agree that the college athlete does not currently have an adequate voice nor avenue to obtain independent advice when faced with abusive coaches or environments. The NCAA Faculty Representative may play this role on some campuses. However, as a practical matter, athletes are concerned that any complaints will get back to their coaches. Non-athletics faculty and student affairs professionals and counseling centers on campus offer are options, but most athletes are reticent to pursue any grievance lest they lose their scholarship or get branded a troublemaker. Having a defined outlet for reporting abuse and/or other practices would be a good thing but as of now there is little defined recourse for the athlete.

Q3: Coaches are educators. Starting from there, how can college athlete advocates on and off campus remove the barriers that separate athletics from academic departments?

A3: This is a core TDGEF principle. If college athletes are actually students, they should be fully integrated in the student experience and not be isolated from the rest of the campus. Sadly, since many athletic departments view their programs as commercial entities first and foremost rather than educational entities, controlling the athlete asset to assure a focus on sport performance as a priority over athlete educational outcomes. The TDGEF has long advocated the abolishment of athlete-only academic centers, specifically those that are funded and supervised by the athletic department, which primarily focus on eligibility and keeping the business running rather than academic efficacy. As an example, the athletic study center (ASC) at UC Berkeley does serve athletes but is not controlled by the athletic department. The authenticity of the Center's work is aided by its existence outside of the athletic department. Whereas many academic support units are funded by athletics, the ASC falls under the College of Letters and Sciences. This separation ensures that athletic department officials and coaches do not direct the center's work or services.

This is a model that should be replicated everywhere. Academic advisors should be faculty, faculty should review athletic department budgets, academic schedules of athletes and time demands to ensure the athlete has the time to become an engaged college student. In other words, treat the athlete as a student first and not as an employee. Leadership is key to promoting an atmosphere of inclusion and having the athletic department “as part of” rather than “apart” from the institution. If leaders let athletics operate the academic support system, integration of athletes with the faculty and non-athlete members of the student body becomes a significant challenge.

Q4: Would an empowered Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) system, completely autonomous from athletic or academic administration, be one step toward addressing boorish coaching behavior?

A4: The overall role of the FAR is one of little if any power to control coach behavior. Many FARs are more interested in the college athlete’s success on the playing field and participating in athletics activities (e.g., traveling with the team, free gear, complimentary athletics tickets, etc.) rather than being a real “inspector general.” One of the primary roles of the FAR is to verify eligibility for competition. At most institutions, this position has no authority over coaches. Many FARs are not paid, most serve at the pleasure of the president, and many do not want to rock the boat. Many FARs are selected by the Athletic Director rather than selected by the faculty which automatically creates an allegiance to the athletic department that compromises any type of effective oversight. Going back to the ombudsman questions, the FAR role could be expanded with pay, course release time, and authority to include ombudsman responsibilities, but we see no trends in this direction. Again—leadership is key here. If presidents and trustees empower the FAR this could be an effective strategy.

Q5: Regarding the idea of cohesion, sometimes coaches, by being awful to the players, have a way of uniting the team. It almost seems like a strategy at times. What do you suggest we do about this, especially if it "works"?

A5: As our coach/sports psychologist mentioned, there is no evidence that abusive behavior increases performance. Even if this appears to be true, do we want coaches to default to boorish behavior rather than effective teaching. An abuse strategy will never work over the long term and may lead to egregious outcomes. Recently, one of our panelists spoke to a 16-year who was describing ridiculous behaviors by his coach. He was told that the whole team knows he is a jerk and they just work around him. This athlete even recognized that the coach sensed the disdain of the team and the coach reacted by being “a bigger jerk.” When there is no training and no real expertise to rely on, people tend to coach by reaction instead of intention.

Q6: Do you agree that this question/discussion of coach quality, education, oversight, and transparency also requires a discussion about whether athletic directors and university presidents should be required to obtain a certificate or undergo a training program where there is a standard regarding the process of recruiting coaching candidates, vetting them, supervising coaching practices, holding them accountable for their implementation of coaching systems, etc. Many of the problems that can arise with abusive and harmful coaches, where athletes’ well-being is not safeguarded, do not occur in a vacuum. Athletic directors and university leadership are part of the problem.

A6: We agree that there certainly can and must be more education and certification in these areas -- at the very least requiring CEUs for people in these positions. We stress how important leadership is in setting standards and overseeing coaches to prevent this type of behavior. Not only should we require stronger certification measures for coaches but also for the administrators over them. Additionally, if athletic departments were held to the same hiring requirements as academic departments that included clear position descriptions, diverse search committees, candidate qualification and assessment instruments, full background checks, etc., many hiring mistakes could have been avoided. Instead, athletic directors use the excuse that they must hire quickly or lose a year of recruiting. They handle the process in-house with little attention to these important procedures.

Q7: Should coaching candidates have to undergo a public forum and confirmation process where student-athletes, former players, other coaches, members of the community, etc. are able to participate in the process that my help to flush out the type of coaching candidates who are hired?

A7: We agree that open and transparent searches are vital. However, even in cases where there are committees with athletes and other representatives, they are often advisory and the final authority rests with the athletic director, president, and/or trustees. Having a committee empowered to both conduct the search and make a choice and athletes with voting power can help, but certainly public forums can assist in exposing some of these things.

Q8: You mentioned a resource: Shape America? Where can this be located?

A8: The **Society of Health and Physical Educators**, known as [SHAPE America](#), has had six previous names, most recently the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), and previously the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER). Sets [national standards](#) for coaches.

Q9: Why are we not relying on the community and grassroots leaders/coaches that have cultural capital as opposed to financial capital? Should 'VALUE CAPITAL' -- trusted community leaders/coaches -- have a greater voice? How are we defining Value in our Society today? In the NCAA, it appears to be about the '\$\$ Capital'?

A9: If we are talking about college athletics, many coaches are hired and fired primarily on their ability to win and win big. You can be the best coach in developing future citizens and college graduates with meaningful degrees but if you don't win you will be gone. This is the dichotomy we face. If this is truly an educational endeavor, shouldn't we value education, personal development and winning (to an extent). Clearly some coaches are better than others, but it comes down to what institutions value and certainly in D-I it is clear what the priorities are and until our leaders change that paradigm, it will not change. Sadly, this winning first philosophy has trickled down to lower divisions and even high school and youth sports. Until we define what we want our coaches in the educational and developmental space to be holistically and certify that, we will continue to focus on winning only and miss the opportunity to develop real mentors and leaders as coaches. When we have no certification programs, we get the obsession with winning.

Q10: Providing one organization responsible for coaching oversight may be unrealistic in the US. Coaching certification at the youth level will be difficult when coaches are volunteers or academy owners. The NCAA, NAIA, USOC, may be the organizations to provide coaching education, but how do they overcome all the distractions like NILs, conference realignment, etc.

A10: There is no doubt that we need a central agency that has the full support of our federal government to establish coaching as a “profession” with coaching standards that would have to be met at every level. From there, coaching education could become the responsibility of different organizations such as NCAA, NGB’s, coaches’ associations, and other organizations that currently provide coach training. It is a very complex endeavor that would have to be well conceived and implemented. Many other countries have found ways to accomplish this, and their leaders could provide terrific insight into the processes they used and the challenges they have had to face.

Q11: Should governance organizations have the power to ban coaches for professional misconduct (a la the U.S. Center for Safe Sport independent agency now in place for non-school sport)?

A11: We agree that there should be mechanisms to ban coaches who commit misconduct for significant periods of time and lifetime bans for egregious misconduct – with due process of course. There certainly can be appellate avenues but this is a tool that governing bodies should have because it sends a message and establishes what behavior is acceptable. Enforcement of conduct standards must apply equally and cannot be soft pedaled with more popular and successful coaches. Consistency is the key but it should absolutely be a tool.

Q12: The biggest issue in US coaching is there is no driver for change. Who is responsible for holding the coaches accountable? How do we make this happen?

A12: We believe this was answered in question 10. Another significant challenge would be holding leadership accountable to hiring coaches that have met the standards and to act appropriately when unprofessional behavior is exhibited. There must be a meeting of the minds that coaching is a “profession” with clear standards of care and training. Currently, coaching in the US is not really a profession and we are putting athletes and coaches at considerable risk.

Q13: Where is the performance management system for coaches at college/pro level. How are coaches’ performances being measured? Are there alternatives or additions that should be considered?

A13: We are not experts in performance management at the pro level so we will limit our remarks to college sports. Of course, winning percentage as a measure of coaching competence is an important performance measure. However, educational outcomes must also be mandated as measures. Graduation rates should be tracked for every athlete a coach recruits. If a coach recruits underprepared student-athletes who are academically at risk, remediation of learning deficiencies must also be tracked. There are real challenges given the “wild west” of the transfer portal and NIL’s in that student-athletes maintaining enrollment at one university until graduation may become the exception rather than the rule. In the absence of national assessment standards, each individual athletic department creates and implements their own performance management system. Many institutions use end-of-season coach evaluation instruments completed by athletes. Another common form of

assessment is athlete exit surveys or interviews. Unfortunately, as already mentioned, athletes may be reluctant to express their concerns for fear of retaliation or fear of “throwing the coach under the bus.” Far too many athletic departments do not have advanced performance systems and just react emotionally when things go wrong rather than practicing gradually escalating discipline. Intentional versus reactionary management is seriously needed and there is no doubt that many athletic directors need training in this area.

Q14: How many coach educational degrees -- undergraduate and post graduate – are there in the U.S. compared to rest of world? Where are coaches being trained?

A14: Recent studies of youth coach training in the U.S. looked at a few of these questions. Regarding coaching degrees, Gano-Overway and Dieffenbach (2019) identified 308 institutions of higher education in the U.S. that offered coach education programs. Unfortunately, less than 5% are accredited by NCACE and less than 60% directly align with the National Standards for Sports Coaches. Unsurprisingly, there is great variance in program offerings, with many emerging from schools of Kinesiology that focus on the exercise sciences and rarely require practical internship experiences. While no comparative, per-capita data exists on sport coaching degrees, anecdotal evidence suggests that coaching degrees are more common internationally than in the U.S. The [International Council for Coach Excellence](#) (ICCE) has developed curriculum standards for bachelors degrees in coaching, which many international universities have adopted. Regarding coach training generally, I recommend a recent study by [Fawver, et al \(2020\)](#). Youth coach training currently takes place in a fragmented ecosystem where private providers, national governing bodies and non-profits offered largely episodic training opportunities (e.g. one- off workshops).

Q15: Can you comment on the absence of Coaches Codes of Conduct in school/college sport (a la Safe Sport Code of Conduct), an athlete complaint process, and assurances of no retaliation that might improve the identification and correction of abuse issues?

A15: All of these elements would have to be included in any coach certification program and implemented by the leadership at each institution or organization that provides sport opportunities. No different than the standards set by the American Medical Association or the American Bar Association, professional conduct matters and needs to be addressed when violated. Protection of whistleblowers is paramount to identification and correction of abuse.

Q16: Where can the coaching behavior evaluation tool mentioned by Connee Zotos be obtained?

A16: Donna Lopiano and Connee Zotos coauthored *The Athletic Director's Desk Reference*, published by Human Kinetics. Included with the book are hundreds of downloadable on-line policies and resources for the management of high school or university athletic programs. The coach practice observation instrument referenced by Dr. Zotos is one of those downloadable tools. The coach practice observation form measures time on task, types of feedback coaches provide, and other teaching strategies. You may also access this tool online: [Coach Training and Assessment Instrument](#).

3. OUR NEXT WEBINAR – “WHAT IS THE COST OF COLLEGE ATHLETE MENTAL HEALTH?”

A stellar panel of experts will explore what it looks like to truly cover the mental health needs of college athletes by moving beyond opinion and digging into the budget line items and numbers. After hiring a clinician or two, what are the other costs associated with college athletes’ mental health care? How are the investments currently made in college athlete mental health lived and experienced by the athletes? How are athletic departments assessing the return on these investments and, if necessary, adapting their cost models? How are the athletes themselves involved in these assessments? What does it truly cost to be compliant with NCAA Bylaw 16.4.2 that requires member institutions to provide mental health services and resources for college athletes consistent with the *Interassociation Consensus: Mental Health Best Practices*? Join us and find out.

OUR NEXT FREE WEBINAR! Thursday, October 19, 2023 – 2:00-3:30 p.m. EST

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5. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DRAKE GROUP EDUCATION FUND AND 2aDAYS.com

The Drake Group Education Fund (TDGEF) is the new 501(c)(3) non-profit education sister organization of The Drake Group (TDG) whose mission is to ensure that the promise of college athletics is realized for all stakeholders. TDGEF produces *The Allen Sack National Symposium on Integrity in College Sports* and the *Critical Issues in College Sports Webinar Series*, conducts fact-based research on intercollegiate athletics and develops position papers and other educational materials that influence public discourse on current issues and controversies in college sport. To access a full library of print and video educational materials on current issues in intercollegiate athletes, visit www.thedrakegroueducationfund.org. All educational materials are available free of charge. If you believe The Drake Group Education Fund is doing good work, please also consider making a tax-deductible donation to support our webinars, educational research, and programs. You can donate and learn what we do [HERE](#).

The Drake Group (TDG), a sister organization to TDGEF, is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization whose mission is to educate policymakers and advance legislative initiatives that foster academic integrity and athlete well-being in intercollegiate athletics. For the most current information on The Drake Group and college athletics related bills being considered by Congress, visit TDG [HERE](#). TDG needs volunteers to contact their senators and representatives to advance collegiate athletics reform legislation. Learn about legislation and [VOLUNTEER/JOIN HERE](#).

2aDays.com. Interested in helping high school and college athletes learn more about athletic programs at institutions they are considering attending – and the ratings of coaches in these sport programs? Check out our webinar partner [2aDays.com](#).

6. THANKS TO OUR WEBINAR #27 PANELISTS



B. DAVID RIDPATH, Ed.D. (Moderator), Professor of Sports Business at Ohio University. Prior to Ohio, he was an Assistant Professor of Sport Administration at Mississippi State University and has over 15 years of practical experience in intercollegiate athletics in administrative and coaching capacities at Marshall University, Weber State University and Ohio University. Dr. Ridpath is often cited by major media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *CNN* and *ESPN* as an expert on NCAA and intercollegiate athletic matters. He has appeared before Congressional committees and served as an expert witness in numerous cases involving intercollegiate athletics and college athlete rights. An accomplished researcher, he has authored over 30 academic journal articles, over 10 academic book chapters and monographs, and two books. His latest book is entitled *Alternative Models of Sport Development in America: Solutions to a Crisis in Education and Public Health*.



CONNIE ZOTOS, Ph.D., Senior Associate, Sports Management Resources and former Director of Athletics at Drew University. Dr. Zotos spent 42 years working in higher education as a sports management faculty member, college coach, and university athletic director. She was a head coach for 12 seasons at both NCAA Division II and Division III institutions and three-time Conference Coach of the Year. Dr. Zotos has conducted more than 20 coaching effectiveness workshops for high school and college coaches. During her tenure as Director of Athletics at Drew University, the Rangers enjoyed the most successful period in the history of the intercollegiate athletics program. Dr. Zotos is a member of the Sports Halls of Fame at Drew University and Rowan University, and a recipient of a *NACWAA Athletic Administrator of the Year* award, the *Garden State Award for Enduring Leadership in College Athletics*, and the *Women Leaders in College Sport Nike Lifetime Achievement Award*.



DANIEL LEIDL, Ph.D., Head Men's Lacrosse Coach at Drew University, and has spoken and written extensively about leadership, team and organizational leadership. With a PhD in Sport Psychology, Leidl has worked alongside corporate and athletic leaders and teams in efforts to enhance organizational culture and performance. He has written about leadership and organizational development for a variety of publications that range from *The Washington Post* and *Psychology Today* to *Fast Company* and *Harvard Business Review*, and is co-author of the book *Team Turnarounds*. Dr. Leidl's interests in teams and development evolved out of playing and coaching lacrosse at levels ranging from the NCAA to professional and international, and he owes much of his training to the lessons learned through sport.



VINCENT MINJARES, Ph.D., Project Manager of the Aspen Institute's Sports & Society Program with responsibility for driving Project Play's school sport and coaching portfolios. Minjares holds a Ph.D in Coaching & Pedagogy from AUT University in Auckland, NZ and an M.A. in Education from U.C. Berkeley. He has extensive international experience in coach development, including as a trainer, researcher, program designer and national consultant. Dr. Minjares played Div. III basketball at Claremont McKenna college, has coached for over 20 years, and has worked closely with athletes of all ages and stages of ability, including NCAA Division I sports while in Berkeley.



WAYNE MOSS, Executive Director, National Council on Youth Sports (NCYS). NCYS members comprise many of the leading organizations in the amateur youth sports industry and is well-known for its advocacy in promoting the importance and benefits of youth sports. Moss served as Senior Director, Sports, Fitness & Recreation for Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) for 15 years. He joined BGCA as Director, Program Planning in June 2003. Before BGCA, Moss served as the Director, Cleveland (Ohio) and DeKalb County Georgia Recreation Divisions. His experience includes front office capacities with the Detroit Lions and the Baltimore Orioles. Moss also served as Chairman, United States Olympic Committee's Multi-Sport Organization Council. He holds a Master's in Sports Administration & Facility Management from Ohio University and a Bachelor's in Journalism from Howard University.