To Tweet or Not to Tweet

As the popularity of social networking websites continues to skyrocket, so does the potential for a violation of NCAA legislation. While it is permissible for coaches to communicate with prospects via social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), it is not permissible for coaches to publicize the recruitment of a particular prospect. For example, a coach may not post the names of prospects they are recruiting on a social networking website. In addition, it is not permissible for a coach to publicize a prospect’s visit to campus. For example, it would not be permissible to post the following message on a coach’s Twitter page: “Our top recruit, Slam Dunk, was on campus this weekend.”

NCAA legislation does not allow coaches to communicate with prospects via the e-mail feature of the social networking website, provided the message is sent only between the coach and the prospect. Communication with a prospect that can be seen by the public (e.g., Twitter “@replies” or “mentions”) is impermissible and constitutes an impermissible form of electronic communication with a prospect.

While it is permissible for coaches to communicate with prospects via social networking websites, boosters may not contact a prospect via any means of communication (e.g., social networking websites, chat rooms, message boards, blogs). Boosters may not initiate contact with a prospect for any reason (e.g., encourage prospect to attend a specific institution, encourage prospect to take a recruiting visit to campus). Impermissible contact with a prospect by a booster would result in a NCAA violation and could impact the booster’s relationship with the institution.

Fall Reminders

With fall sports in full swing, it is important to review some key legislation that pertains to boosters. NCAA legislation prohibits boosters from being involved in the recruitment of prospective student-athletes. In addition, boosters are prohibited from providing current and prospective student-athletes with extra benefits. Please note the following guidelines.

- Boosters may not invite current or prospective student-athletes to tailgate parties before or after football games (or any other athletic event).
- Boosters may not provide current or prospective student-athletes with tickets to athletic events.
- Boosters may not provide current or prospective student-athletes with access to special areas of a facility during an athletics event (e.g., sideline pass in football, access to the Spartan Club or Stadium Suites, courtside seating in basketball, Munn Club/Suites in ice hockey).
- Boosters may not bring prospects to Spartan Fund functions (unless the Continued on page 2
**Division I Proposed Legislation**

Approximately 80 proposals are in the legislative cycle for the 2009-10 academic year. Some legislation, if adopted, will become effective this academic year while other proposals will have an effective date of August 1, 2010. Here are a few proposals up for consideration this year.

- **Recruiting - No Printed Media Guides or Recruiting Brochures.** This legislation would prohibit institutions from producing a media guide, recruiting brochure or any other athletics publication printed in a hard copy format other than a game program. Institutions would be able to post a media guide or recruiting brochure on its website, but would not be able to print the items and provide them to a prospect.

- **Eligibility - Core-Curriculum Requirements.** This legislation would provide further clarification on the use of nontraditional courses for initial-eligibility purposes. Specifically, in order for a nontraditional course (e.g., internet course, distance-learning, independent-study) to satisfy NCAA core-course requirements, the course must be one in which the instructor and the student have ongoing access to one another and regular interaction with one another for purposes of teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course; the student’s work (e.g., exams, papers, assignments) is available for review and validation; and a defined time period for completion of the course is included. The goal of this legislation is to ensure that individuals who take nontraditional courses are enrolled in quality courses that satisfy the intent of the NCAA core-curriculum requirements.

- **Playing and Practice Season - Time Limits for Athletically Related Activities.** This legislation would specify that countable athletically related activities (e.g., team meetings, films, practice, strength training and conditioning) may not occur between midnight and 5 a.m., except for during participation in a conference championship or an NCAA championship, in any competition that begins prior to midnight and concludes after midnight, or a promotional practice activity (e.g., first practice of the season).

**Fall Reminders** *Continued from page 1*

- Boosters may not have any contact with a prospect or the prospect’s family or friends during the prospect’s visit to campus. This includes both on- and off-campus contact.
- Boosters may not have written contact with a prospect. This includes general correspondence, electronic mail (e.g., e-mail, text messages) and the internet (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, chat rooms, message boards, blogs).
- Boosters may not provide transportation to a prospect or the prospect’s family or friends from the prospect’s home, airport, train or bus station to campus for any reason.
- Boosters may not provide current or prospective student-athletes with any free or reduced-cost goods or services.

MSU is responsible for the actions of its boosters. An inappropriate action by a booster could result in a violation of NCAA legislation which could impact the eligibility of current and prospective student-athletes.
The following penalties were imposed: three years probation ending September 2012; the baseball program did not receive a scheduled increase of 3.0 athletics grants-in-aid for five years; the institution was fined $61,000; and the institution will vacate all wins in which the ineligible student-athletes competed.

In men’s basketball, members of the coaching staff were present during the basketball student-athletes’ participation in summer strength and conditioning activities and, at times, required the team to report back on their participation in such activities. In addition, the coaching staff briefly observed the athletes participating in a few out-of-season pick-up games. Also, two student-athletes were provided extra benefits by the coaching staff. One athlete received $239 to pay an overdue tuition bill. A second athlete receive impermissible transportation.

The following penalties were imposed: three years of probation added to the institution’s current two-year probationary period ending June 2013; reduction in grant-in-aid and off-campus recruiting opportunities in men’s basketball; reduction in the number of summer conditioning workouts by the men’s basketball student-athletes; in women’s basketball the booster was disassociated for three years; vacation of wins in men’s basketball; three year show cause penalty for the head men’s basketball coach; one year show cause for the assistant men’s basketball coach; and mandatory attendance at NCAA Regional Rules Seminar for both the head and assistant basketball coaches. The institution was cited with a failure to monitor and unethical conduct by both the men’s and women’s basketball coaching staff.

The topic of countable athletically related activities has received a great deal of media attention recently. A countable athletically related activity is defined as any required activity with an athletics purpose involving student-athletes held at the direction of, or supervised by one or more of an institution’s coaching staff (including strength and conditioning coaches). Countable athletically related activities must be counted within the team’s daily and weekly hour limitations. Countable athletically related activities include required practice, competition, strength training and conditioning, film sessions and team meetings. Activities that are not countable within the daily and weekly hour limitations include voluntary strength and conditioning workouts, administrative meetings (e.g., compliance), time spent in the training room and academic meetings (e.g., tutors, study hall).

The academic year is divided into two segments referred to as the playing season and outside the playing season. During the playing season student-athletes may participate in a maximum of 20 hours of countable athletically related activities per week with no more than four hours per day.

Student-athletes must receive a minimum of one day off per week from all countable athletically related activities. In basketball when a team participates in three contests in a week, the team is not subject to the one-day-off-per-week requirement, provided the athletes do not engage in any countable athletically related activities for two days during either the preceding or the following week.

Outside the playing season student-athletes may participate in a maximum of eight hours of countable athletically related activities.
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Hot Topic — National Letter of Intent

Recently, some institutions have allowed prospects to sign a National Letter of Intent with conditions attached that would allow the prospect to be released from his/her NLI obligation should the current coaching staff leave the institution. In response to this practice, the NLI committee has adopted a policy which would render a NLI null and void if the NLI contains an advance agreement that would release the prospect in the case of a coaching staff change.

Find the Infraction

Facts: All Star, a football prospect, is on-campus for an official visit. During All Star’s tour of the football stadium he has the opportunity to run onto the field while his name and number is announced over the PA system. In addition, a highlight video (featuring All Star) is being played on the video board. After the tour of the stadium, All Star participates in a mock press conference in which he receives a jersey which includes his name and jersey number. All Star and his parents proceed to have lunch with the Director of Athletics, Board of Trustees and a few football donors.

Infractions: NCAA legislation prohibits institutions from arranging miscellaneous, personalized recruiting aids (e.g., personalized jerseys, personalized video board presentations) and prospects from participating in game-day simulations (e.g., mock press conference). While it is permissible for a prospect to have contact with institutional staff during a visit to campus, it is not permissible to eat with donors or the Board of Trustees.

Countable Athletically Related Activities

Continued from page 3

activities per week with no more than four hours per day. During the offseason student-athletes must receive a minimum of two days off per week from all countable athletically related activities. Required activities during the eight hour weeks are limited to weight training and conditioning and skill related instruction of which no more than two of the eight hours may be spent on skill instruction.

In football, the team’s offseason is split into three segments. In general, football student-athletes are limited to eight hours per week with no more than four hours per day of weight training and conditioning and review of film. Of the eight hours, no more than two may be spent on film. Student-athletes are required to take a minimum of two days off per week. The legislation regarding offshore workouts does not apply to spring practice.

It is important to note that only the time period that athletes are required to participate in countable athletically related activities actually counts in their daily and weekly time limitations. In addition to required athletically related activities, student-athletes may participate in voluntary athletically related activities. In order for any athletically related activities to be considered voluntary all of the following conditions must be met:

- Coaches may not watch athletes participating in voluntary activities. In addition, coaches may not participate in voluntary activities with student-athletes.
- The athlete may not be required to report back to a coach any information related to the activity.
- The activity must be initiated by the student-athlete. The student-athletes may not be required to participate in the voluntary activity.
- The athlete’s attendance and participation in the activity (or lack thereof) may not be recorded for the purpose of providing the information to the coaching staff.
- The athlete may not be subjected to penalty or receive recognition or an award for his/her participation in (or lack thereof) the voluntary activity.

Institutions are responsible for monitoring daily and weekly practice hour limitations for each sport.

In the News

“Free Meals Cost Restaurateur a Link to Kentucky Athletics” was the headline of June 6, 2009 article (Kentucky.com) regarding a violation involving a booster and the University of Kentucky basketball players. The booster owns and operates a restaurant near the institution. The booster was in charge of the men’s basketball team’s training table meals several years earlier and missed being around the team, so he knowingly violated NCAA rules and allowed the team to eat at his restaurant free of charge. The athletes were required to repay the amount of extra benefit they received to a local charity. The booster and his business were disassociated for three years. UK players are not permitted to eat at the restaurant and the school will not take recruits to the restaurant. In addition the booster cannot buy season tickets nor advertise in UK game programs or other UK publications.