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# The Drake Group, Inc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN COLLEGIATE SPORT

## FOLLOW-UP NOTES

### “Experts Speak Out on College Athletes’ Mental Health”

**The Drake Group Webinar Series – Critical Issues in College Athletics**  
**Hosted by LRT Sports**

*Thanks for registering for our September 30 webinar. A regular feature of our webinar series is “Follow-Up Notes” which provides a link to the recorded webinar, Drake answers to questions from the audience which panelists did not have the time to address, and information on our next webinar.*

#### **1. RECORDING**

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In case you missed any part of this webinar – Experts Speak Out on College Athletes’ Mental Health ...[\*\*ACCESS THE RECORDED SEPTEMBER 30 WEBINAR HERE.\*\*](#)

#### **2. UNADDRESSED QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE – SEPTEMBER 30, 2021**

*Every question is important, but the panelists are never able to get to all of them given webinar time constraints. So, following each webinar, Drake Group experts rather than panelists respond to each of the unanswered questions. However, because the nature of this webinar is so important and required the expertise and review of licensed mental health professionals, we hope you will understand the delay.*

*NOTE: “NIL” is an acronym for name, image, and likeness.*

**Q: How much of mental health stress is related to the demands now placed on athletes to spend so much time on their sport, leaving less time for academics and other extracurricular activities.**

**A:** With NIL, the “backside” of COVID, and the new normal on college campuses, college athletes have more opportunities and items on their agenda. One of the most important agenda items is re-connecting with other and nurturing relationships that were impacted by COVID. Renewing relationships takes time. One piece of advice for college athletes with little time

because of academics and athletics is to prioritize and plan. We are good at planning for today, but it's a skill to plan for what will happen in three weeks and to follow through in three weeks. Practicing delayed gratification skills during these times is worthwhile.

**Q: Are Universities required to have mental health services for all college athletes?**

A: Student-athletes in all three NCAA divisions are guaranteed access to mental health services and resources under legislation adopted in 2019. The following Division I provision is similar to the policies adopted for Division II and III.

*16.4.2 Mental Health Services and Resources. An institution shall make mental health services and resources available to its student-athletes. Such services and resources may be provided by the department of athletics and/or the institution's health services or counseling services department. Provision of services and resources should be consistent with the Interassociation Consensus: Mental Health Best Practices. In addition, an institution must distribute mental health educational materials and resources to student-athletes, including those transitioning out of their sport, coaches, athletics administrators and other athletics personnel throughout the year. Such educational materials and resources must include a guide to the mental health services and resources available at the institution and information regarding how to access them.<sup>1</sup>*

The *Interassociation Consensus: Mental Health Best Practices* is 40pp. booklet available as a [FREE DOWNLOAD](#).

**Q: Sometimes school and athletics can impact student athlete's stress/mental health. How can an athlete prioritize his/her mental health without it coming off as a lack of commitment to coaches?**

A: It starts with education. Educating student-athletes, as well as athletic staff members on the importance of mental wellness is essential. Possible signs and symptoms, the importance of self-care, and sleep and nutrition, are key topics to cover. Prioritizing mental health also includes student-athletes knowing and utilizing available resources. Not all schools have mental health services embedded with the athletic department, so knowing what's available and how to initiate services is a huge step in prioritizing mental health. Communication and relationship building is also instrumental to having good mental health outcomes. For some coaches the human side may be non-existent – “It's strictly business” -- so some of the signs and symptoms of distress may come across as disrespect or “behavioral concerns.” Having the relationship to be able to communicate those feelings can be what we commonly refer to as a “game changer.”

**Q: How do you think the pressures and possibilities related to new NIL rules will impact mental health?**

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<sup>1</sup> National Collegiate Athletic Association. 2019-20 NCAA Division I Manual, Section 16.4.2, 2019-20 NCAA Division II Manual, Section 16.4.1 and 2019-20 NCAA Division III Manual, Section 16.4.1.

A: In terms of pressures, the self-imposed need to secure an NIL deal is likely to be one of the most prevalent concerns. An NIL opportunity or deal is a new indicator of athletic success. Another related pressure is the push to spend time pursuing or fulfilling NIL obligations. The pressures related to time are internal and external because athletes' time allotment is influenced by professors, coaches, friends, family and fans. There are also interpersonal pressures with respect to athletes' relationships with teammates, coaches, and athletics staff because now they are competing for the various forms of capital that accompany NIL deals. Still, the opportunities presented by the freedom to pursue NIL deals are not necessarily "all" negative. For example, in terms of possibilities, athletes now have an opportunity to explore and expand their identities and roles and to avoid or prevent identity foreclosure. In addition to using identity exploration for brand development it can be used to increase athletes' interest in their coursework because classes like communication, marketing, and accounting are relevant to their NIL endeavors.

Athletes should also not assume that there are many athletes making significant money from NIL deals. Sharing data such as the [\*Opendorse NIL Industry Insights\*](#) (available for free online) may help athlete expectations match reality. For example, the average reported NIL compensation being received by a Division I athlete is \$497, \$108 for Division II and \$49 for Division III and 85% of all deals require athletes to post content on social media.

**Q: For black athletes at some schools like where I teach, what are the challenges of being African-American at a predominately white institution, and, in many cases, in a predominantly white community.**

A: What we have noticed as one of the biggest challenges is the underrepresentation of mental health clinicians of color. There just are not many clinicians of color in the field right now, though we believe that is changing. Having that connection is so important. Second, historically, in the Black community, there's been a stigma attached to going through the therapeutic process. Something is wrong with you or you're crazy. Third, there's the aspect of being vulnerable and trusting which is difficult with a total stranger who does not look or sound like the athlete. Fourth is the issue of accessibility, the clinician having to try and meet athletes more than halfway in some cases.

The Drake Group recently released a comprehensive report, [\*A Continuing Disgrace – Intercollegiate Athletics Race Issues\*](#) which contains the latest information on these issues including an extensive mental health section.

**Q: Do we need structural reform, like reduced practice/travel time, to help college athletes be in a better mental health space?**

A: A reduction in time spent in athletics activities overall might help with nurturing a positive mental space for college athletes. However, what is equally important are the types of activities athletes and athletic departments use to fill this additional time. College athletes tend to self-isolate, thus efforts to fill their extra time with activities that help with their mental health and wellness, needs to be semi-structured by athletic department mental health clinicians and other student-athlete development professionals.

Note that there are many loopholes in current NCAA rules limiting countable hours on athletics-related activities. For a complete discussion of the issue and suggested reforms, see [Excessive Athletics Time Demands Undermine College Athletes' Health and Education and Require Immediate Reform.](#)

**Q: How do you think Covid19 has affected mental health issues such as eating disorders? Is there a greater prevalence among different sports or positions within sports?**

A: The sports where eating disorders are most common include gymnastics, rowing, wrestling, and swimming. Eating disorders, like other mental health disorders, were likely impacted by COVID19. We should keep in mind that the impact could be positive or negative. With respect to forecasting the impact of COVID19 on eating disorders, the sport and the type of disorder is important to consider. The two most common types of disorders are anorexia and bulimia. People with anorexia generally view themselves as overweight and they tend to constantly monitor their weight, avoid eating certain types of foods, and severely restrict their calories. On the other hand, bulimia frequently eats unusually large amounts of food in a specific period of time. Thus, COVID19 could have had a positive impact on a rower who experiences anorexia because any pressure to be a certain body type may have been relieved because the athlete's sport was on pause. On the other hand, a wrestler with bulimia because of the absence or pause of their sport, may eat more. Thus, type of sport and type of disorder must be understood in order to predict how athletes are impacted.

“Disordered eating” and “eating disorders” are related but not always the same --“All eating disorders involve disordered eating, but not all disordered eating meets diagnostic criteria for an eating disorder” (There are great resources on this issue on the [NCAA Sports Science Institute web site](#)).

**Q: Are policies in place to protect the safety of student-athletes? How should coaches be trained in mental health and safe sport? Are there policies for this? Given that 1-in-4 women are sexually assaulted on campus, and 1-in-7 men,... is it unlikely a coach/ team will NOT have to deal with sexual violence. Coaches aren't mental health professionals, but what SHOULD they know? Is there a check-list of things to do to help survivors?**

There are no requirements regarding coaches' obligation to educate themselves regarding emotional, sexual or physical abuse or an obligation to protect their athletes. In terms of athletic departments, they are required to collect information and confirm information regarding sexual and interpersonal violence. Further, NCAA legislation calls for athletic departments/member institutions to develop collaborative teams that involve campus partners, to explore and develop policies and procedures, to prevent and respond to sexual and interpersonal violence. Athletic departments are required, annually, to affirm that they have engaged in the practices recommended in the NCAA legislation.

Many colleges and universities are struggling with the mechanisms for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating sexual harassment, sexual assault and related sexual violence complaints but all colleges and universities must have a Title IX (federal law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex and covering these areas) coordinator and published complaint process. It is

important for the athletic department to educate athletes about these processes. Institutional staff members, faculty, and coaches at many institutions are often required to complete training programs that cover their responsibilities as mandatory reporters, their immediate obligation to restore a safe educational environment, advising the victim of complaint procedures and reporting the incident to the Title IX coordinator. Students must know their rights in this area and institutions must be held accountable for providing every student with a safe educational environment. In addition to general university policies and complaint procedures which should be widely distributed and posted for all students, including student-athlete, every athletic department should have clear policies regarding athlete sexual violence (see [Need for National Collegiate Athletic Governance Organization Rules Related to Athlete Sexual Misconduct and Other Physical Violence](#)) and coach professional misconduct (see [Athletic Governance Organization and Institutional Responsibilities Related to Professional Coaching Conduct](#)) specific to athletic settings. With regard to helping survivors of sexual violence, there are many hotlines operated by non-profit organizations and a good guide to such resources as well as a checklist of specific things to do to help survivors is [A Guide for Friends and Family of Sexual Violence Survivors](#).

**Q: Why do you think high schools are lacking the same support system for mental health of student athletes? Have you had student athletes that have come from high schools with the same support systems and notice the difference it has made for them transitioning into college?**

A: High school athletic departments simply do not have the resources and bandwidth to provide a mental health support system for athletes. At best, a high school athletes may have access to a school social worker who coaches can depend on for support for their athletes.

While all school districts provide mental health and counseling services, few can afford to embed mental health professionals within each school, much less the athletic department. Even at the college and university level, while mental health and counseling services are usually available to all students, mental health professionals embedded as members of the athletic department staff are the rule rather than the exception only in Division I institutions and this is less likely to be the practice in Division II and III institutions.\

**Q: Some athletes make it seem they are not interested in the academic part of being a student-athlete or adopt this attitude in response to failure. Do you deal with this issue and, if so, can you share strategies on how to respond to this circumstance?**

A: Historically, college attendance was conceptualized as an opportunity for college students to identify their gifts and to develop them. This is one approach to trying to motivate athletes to become more interested or invested in academics. Motivational interviewing is a counseling method that helps people resolve ambivalent feelings and insecurities to find the internal motivation they need to change their behavior. While counseling techniques, like motivational interviewing, require extensive training, the rationale -- learning about what motivates an athlete -- can be essential in helping to change their attitude towards their academic endeavors.

### **3. OUR NEXT WEBINAR – TITLE IX AND THE NIL MARKETPLACE: Subterfuge or Opportunity to Remedy Historical Inequities**

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**SAVE THE DATE! Wednesday, November 17 from 2:00-3:15pm.**

**[REGISTER HERE](#)**

Panelists will discuss how the new NIL marketplace relates to the Title IX promotion, publicity, recruiting, and NIL education obligations of educational institutions. Also addressed will be whether the entities controlled by the institution can be used as subterfuge to evade the educational institution's Title IX legal obligations and why past and continuing less favorable treatment of female athletes in areas that significantly affect individual brand building will have a profound impact on NIL opportunities for female athletes if they remain unaddressed.

Panelists are:

**JAYMA MEYER** (Facilitator and Panelist), Counsel, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett; Visiting Clinical Professor, Sports Law, Indiana University.

**GLORIA NEVAREZ**, Commissioner, West Coast Conference, Member of the NCAA Men's Basketball Committee and Transfer Working Group and the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

**JULIE SOMMER**, Attorney, former four-time NCAA All-American swimmer at the University of Texas at Austin and USA Swimming National Team member, and member of The Drake Group Board of Directors.

**DONNA LOPIANO**, President, The Drake Group, gender equity consultant, and former UT-Austin Women's Athletics Director and CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation.

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### **4. LINKS TO RECORDINGS OF PREVIOUS WEBINARS**

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#### **WEBINAR #1**

**"Wild West or Brave New World – National Experts Share Their Thoughts on College Athlete Compensation"**

**[ACCESS AUGUST 19 RECORDING HERE](#)**

Featuring Val Ackerman, Commissioner, Big East Conference; Len Elmore, Co-Chair, Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics; Blake Lawrence, Co-Founder and CEO of Opendorse; Andrew Zimbalist, Robert A. Woods of Economics, Smith College and President-Elect -- The Drake Group

#### **WEBINAR #2**

**"Millionaires or Minimum Wage? Current and Former College Athletes Speak on Athletes' Compensation"**

**[ACCESS AUGUST 26 RECORDING HERE](#)**

Featuring Julie Sommer, four-time NCAA All-American swimmer; Maurice Clarett, former Ohio State football running back, acclaimed author; Brianna Ellis, sophomore basketball point guard at Univ. of New Orleans; Julian Ross, fifth year senior running back at Ohio Univ.

**WEBINAR #3**  
**"Experts Speak Out on College Athletes' Mental Health"**  
**[ACCESS SEPTEMBER 30 RECORDING HERE](#)**

Featuring Emmett Gill, Chief Visionary Officer for Athletes and Advocates for Social Justice in Sports; Shamaree Brown, Director/Student-Athlete Programs and Compliance, Atlantic Coast Conference; Daniel Chung, Sports Psychologist, Rutgers University Athletics; Brad Hambric, Clinician and Licensed Professional Counselor, University of Georgia Athletics; Abigail Eiler, Assistant Athletic Director, Director of Athletic Counseling, Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer, University of Michigan Athletics; Nicki Moore, Vice President and Athletic Director, Psychologist, Colgate University; Charles Small, Senior Associate Athletic Director for Student Services, Iowa State University

**WEBINAR #4**  
**"The Transgender Athlete in Girls' and Women's Sport: Science, Law, and Social Justice Explained"**  
**[ACCESS NOVEMBER 4 RECORDING HERE AFTER NOVEMBER 11](#)**

Featuring Donna Lopiano, President, The Drake Group, former UT-Austin Women's Athletics Director, former CEO, Women's Sports Foundation; Juniper Eastwood, first NCAA Division I openly transgender athlete competing on a women's team; Donna deVarona, two-time Olympic gold medalist swimmer, member of USOPC Board of Directors; Joanna Harper, Loughborough University (U.K.), medical physicist, former elite marathoner, transgender athlete; Martina Navratilova, former pro tennis player, most Grand Slam titles won by one player (male or female), long active in LGBTQ rights; Nancy Hogshead Makar, three-time gold medalist swimmer, CEO, Champion Women, civil rights lawyer; Tracy Sundlun, Director, National Scholastic Track and Field Championship, six-time Olympic coach.

## **5. WAYS YOU CAN HELP**

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If you believe The Drake Group is doing good work, please also consider making a small donation to support our work. You can donate, see our six-point plan for Congress, and learn what we do [HERE](#).

Stay safe...

Warm regards,

Donna