



CIAC COACHES UPDATE

Volume III, Issue I Dr. Bob Lehr, Editor

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PREVENTING SEXUAL OFFENDERS IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Greetings from the CIAC

I hope that your summer was relaxing and that you had time to do some of the things that needed attention. I also trust that you had time to enjoy London's Olympic Games. The coverage, at least in my opinion, was superb, and it was terrific to have an opportunity to watch athletes in action in sports not often covered.

While there was joy with the Olympians, there was also the disturbing news concerning the Lance Armstrong case. The specter of illegal substances seems to hang over many of our sports; good reason to be eternally vigilant and to thoroughly discuss the issue with our interscholastic student-athletes.

The first issue of "Update" deals with a tough subject. Many schools have experienced the heartbreak and the headache that occurs when a teacher or coach is identified by a student as having inappropriate contact with either himself/herself or a fellow student. This article addresses that issue and will hopefully prove valuable to each of our readers.

Best wishes for a very successful 2012-2013.

Enjoy your coaching efforts; you do make an amazing difference in student-athletes lives.

CEU MODULE OFFERINGS - NOVEMBER 2012

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Preventing Sexual Offenders in School Programs: What the Coach and Administrator Should Know

Catherine Sellers, Associate Director of High Performance, US Paralympic Track & Field

All too often, we read about a coach or teacher who was arrested for indecent activity with an athlete or student. As coaches and administrators, we are dismayed when we read of the misbehavior, arrest, or unethical behavior of a coach. We realize the dramatic affect this has on the athlete, his or her parents, the school or club, the community, and the coaching community as a whole.

Prevention is paramount. Background checks to identify criminal activity that might be associated with the potential coaches or employees is a crucial first step, but this strategy may have its limitations. A coach may have a history of offenses, but was never charged. The depth of a background check is also a concern; some agencies only run them for the state in which the person is currently residing. People with troubling histories or with these alleged tendencies will move - and do move - frequently.

More can be done. The great majority of coaches and administrators understand what appropriate and ethical behaviors are for a coach. How or where we learned those lessons is unclear, but we know there are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

Unacceptable behaviors include dating your athletes or having sexual relations with your athletes (regardless of sex or sexual orientation). Sexual relations include:

- a. fondling
- b. exposure to pornographic materials
- c. masturbation
- d. oral sex
- e. anal sex

As the coach or administrator, the statement must be very clearly and publicly made that these types of actions will not be tolerated in your school, district, organization, or club. We cannot assume that people receive this message today. By making this statement to your staff, those who may be involved in or considering this type of activity may avoid misconduct.

The vast majority of the coaching community understands the “positional power” they hold and the importance of trust between the coach, athlete, parents, school, and the community. Abuse of trust is one of the reasons we are so dismayed when reading about sexual violations against children. It is not that one person let us down; it is the fact that the whole belief system failed. How did all the people around an abused athlete (friends, assistant coaches, parents) miss the clues?

What clues might we have seen? Two or more of the following clues should be of concern:

1. Does the coach spend significant amounts of time with one athlete, often isolated from others?
2. Does this coach volunteer to transport the athlete home after practice?
3. Does the coach travel with an athlete in their car on long trips without others being present?

4. Is there a blind allegiance or unquestionable loyalty and obedience to the coach?
5. Does this person consider themselves the best coach and the only coach who can get your child to the next level (ex. college scholarship, Olympic team, etc.)?
6. Does the coach make your athlete feel particularly "special"?
7. How does the athlete react to punishment from this coach?

These are just some of the cues and red flags that can be cause for concern by adults, friends, or parents. Individually, these cues may not be cause for concern, but collectively they may give rise to suspicion. People who are sexual offenders tend to be expert manipulators and use their "power" to ensure that their secrets are safe. They work with athletes who want to please the coach and the sexual offender knows how to use this power. They can be very convincing in their concern for a particular athlete to avoid suspicion. They might use lines like, "they are having a hard time at home," or "I am concerned about who they are hanging out with," or other similar statements.

In 2010, the USOC convened the Working Group for Safe Training Environments and charged it with the task of developing a set of recommendations concerning misconduct in sport. The diverse group, that included individuals from the Olympic family as well as external experts, focused on four primary objectives:

- Address sexual and physical misconduct in sport
- Review the guidelines across sport and sport-related organizations for responding to these issues
- Assess the needs of athletes, coaches, staff, National Governing Bodies, clubs and other sport organizations
- Develop a set of recommendations to promote athlete well-being

In 2011, the USOC hired Director of Ethics and Safe Sport, Malia Arrington, who was charged with developing a robust program to address misconduct in sport by providing information, training, and resources. An 80-page handbook titled "Recognizing, Reducing and Responding to Misconduct in Sport: Creating Your Strategy," aims to guide the development, implementation, and internal review of effective athlete welfare and misconduct prevention strategies for local, regional, and national sport organizations. The handbook has been distributed to each of the NGBs in the U.S. Olympic family and is endorsed by the NGB Council.

In March of this year, the USOC launched Safe Sport, a training program aimed at improving the safety of athletes. The new website, safesport.org, offers downloadable material and other resources to identify the potential signs of abuse, the environments in which abuse can occur, and direction on how to raise a red flag before any inappropriate behavior occurs. Finally, a Safe Sport Legal Referral Network has been formed to provide NGBs free legal support to aid them in appropriately investigating claims of athlete maltreatment.

We all have a role to play in creating a healthy setting for sport. Safe Sport helps raise awareness about misconduct in sport, promote dialogue and provide training resources. When we work as a team, we can build a game plan to make sport safe - for everyone.

Common Sense Practices for Coaches:

1. When meeting with an athlete, never meet in private. Have another coach present and leave the door open.
2. Always be publicly open when working with athletes. Avoid situations where you and an individual athlete are isolated from the group.
3. Do not share a room with an athlete while on the road, even to save money.
4. Do not make it a practice to take athletes home from workouts. If you do, do not stop along the way; take them straight home and avoid having large blocks of time alone with one athlete. Let one of the other coaches know you are taking the athlete home. Have the athlete call their parents or guardians to relay how and what time he or she is getting home.
5. Do not have athletes stay at your home.
6. Avoid entering the dressing room when the athletes are dressing or showering.
7. When mixed teams compete away, have chaperones of both sexes present.
8. If an athlete needs to be touched, make sure that it is in an appropriate way. If it is a compromising area of his or her body, ask the athlete's permission and make sure you do so openly for the purposes of offering care for injury or risk of injury. Discuss alternatives with the athlete and provide instruction to avoid uncomfortable or perceived inappropriate action.
9. Avoid sarcasm. Sarcasm only develops feelings of resentment, discomfort and avoidance of the coach, which can be misconstrued.
10. Do not use sexually suggestive comments; they are easily misconstrued as well.

Catherine Sellers is the Director of U.S. Paralympic Track and Field High Performance based in Colorado Springs. Catherine served as the Manager of Coaching Education at the United States Olympic Committee prior to her work with Paralympic Track and Field where she was charged with developing innovative programs in education and recognition for US coaches. Catherine received her B.S. (All-Level HPE) from Texas Woman's University, a Masters of Education (University of Houston), and an Educational Mid-Management certification (Prairie View A & M University).

References:

- Scottish Athletics Federation- <http://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/index.php?p=152>
- Sarson, J. and L. MacDonald. The MO: The Modus Operandi of Pedophiles. <http://www.survivorsfirst.org/pedmo.html>
- StopSexOffenders.com <http://www.stopsexoffenders.com/childsafety/articles/childsafetyarticles3.shtml>
- Colorado Bureau of Investigation. Things you should know about sexual offending. <http://sor.state.co.us/index.cfm?SOR=home.youshouldknow>

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November 2012 **CEU** Module Offerings

Being offered at
CIAC OFFICE
30 Realty Drive, Cheshire, CT

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Thursday, November 15, 2012 (6-9pm)
Module 10 - Gender Equity & Diversity Awareness for Coaches

Friday, November 16, 2012 (6-9pm)
Module 13 - Nutrition, Performing Enhancing Supplements

Saturday, November 17, 2012 (8:30-11:30am)
Module 7 - CIAC Guide To the Roles & Responsibilities of a Coach

Saturday, November 17, 2012 (noon-3pm)
Module 17 - Dealing with Parents of Athletes

Saturday, November 17, 2012 (3:00-6:00pm)
Module 9 - Sport Psychology for Interscholastic Coaches

Registration for any or all of these 5 modules
must be done online at :

<http://www.ctcoachinged.org/CEU.html>

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