

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Sports

Unit 4 of 4

Amateur Athletics

College Athletics

What is an amateur athlete? See Appendix 1. All sports teams at colleges and universities in the United States are made up of amateur athletes. There is no payment allowed for playing. Athletic scholarships cover food, housing, tuition, and other college expenses. Essentially athletes are paid to attend classes, but not to play a sport. There are very strict rules about gifts, from recruitment through an athlete's college career, and these rules include gifts and favors to family members. College athletes are not allowed to endorse products the way professional athletes do all the time.

Yup, those are the rules. But what's the reality? Many athletes and their families have been found, often long after their college days, to be in violation of these rules. Heisman Trophy* winner Reggie Bush, currently playing professional football, is one example. The NCAA* investigated the USC* program and found that Bush accepted gifts from an agent while a student athlete. Bush had to return his 2005 Heisman Trophy and USC was punished by vacating its National Championship and other wins, being banned from postseason play for two years, and losing 30 scholarships over three years. See Appendix 2.

1. Do you think Bush should have had his Heisman Trophy taken away for accepting gifts? How do you think the situation should have been handled?

2. Do you think the school should have been punished because Bush broke the rules? Were the punishments appropriate?

Jim Calhoun recently retired as men's basketball coach at UConn.* Last year the NCAA found that Calhoun "failed to create an atmosphere of compliance" within his program. This was because a person previously connected with the program had provided food, lodging and transportation to a recruit as encouragement to enroll at UConn. Calhoun was given a three-game suspension and the program received recruiting restrictions and scholarship reductions. The NCAA found that the head coach should have been aware of the situation and kept it from happening.

3. Is it possible for a head coach of a major college program to be aware of everything that goes on? Should he be held responsible? What does punishing the head coach and the program accomplish?

Bruce Pearl was fired as coach of the University of Tennessee basketball coach after he admitted lying to the NCAA. He had hosted some high school juniors at his home, hoping they'd end up playing for him at Tennessee. This is against NCAA rules. At first he denied, and then admitted to hosting the party.

4. Was Pearl's lying to the NCAA serious enough to get him fired? What do you think should have happened to Pearl and his basketball program?

Other coaches have lost their jobs after charging personal expenses to their programs, or because of behavior deemed inappropriate for a representative of a college or university.

5. How much and in what ways should a coach's personal life be considered a reason for hiring or firing?

Several college programs have members of the coach's family working in the program. Tubby Smith (University of Minnesota) has his son as an assistant coach. Pat Knight worked for his father and then became coach at Texas Tech after his father, Bobby Knight, quit midseason. Pat Knight has since been fired. Those are just two examples, both from basketball. Other sports have similar situations.

6. Should coaches be allowed to hire members of their own families to work in their programs? Do you think they are apt to hire family members, even if they aren't as qualified as other candidates? Is this a fair practice?

One of the most well-regarded coaches in college history has recently come under fire for something he didn't do. Joe Paterno had been coach of Penn State football for 45 years (yes, really!) before being dismissed following a child sex abuse scandal involving a former assistant coach. And then he died of lung cancer just a few months later. Paterno supposedly knew that Jerry Sandusky had been seen in compromising situations with young boys, and yet he did nothing more than tell the athletic director and University president. Sandusky has since been found guilty of 45 counts of sexually abusing 10 boys over 15 years. Not only did Paterno lose his job, but he also lost his good name. Some people feel Paterno should have done more to prevent further abuse. Others say it wasn't his fault--that it was Sandusky who committed the crimes and therefore he is the only one who should be punished. Regardless, a statue of Paterno at the college has been taken down, and many feel the library (named for Paterno) deserves a new name.

7. How do you feel about Paterno's statue being removed? Good idea or bad? Why?

8. The library was named for Coach Paterno because he contributed millions of dollars toward its construction. Is it appropriate to rename the library now because of the Sandusky situation?

9. How do you feel about Paterno's family's claim that he is being unfairly judged? He died in January 2012, and certainly can't be asked what really happened. Is he being made a scapegoat?

The NCAA came down hard on the Penn State football program after the child sex abuse scandal. See Appendix 3 and Appendix 4. Taking away those wins punishes everyone who played for the school in the past 13 years.

10. Is it fair for the NCAA to take away wins and change the records of games that were already played? What do the scores of football games have to do with the child sex abuse situation? Does this sort of punishment help the victims in any way?

The courts have found Sandusky guilty. Two former college employees are also charged with covering up the situation. Several others, including the college president, Paterno, and some of the trustees, have lost their positions over the Sandusky case. Reread Appendix 3 before answering this next question.

11. There is some question about whether the NCAA has any business handing out further punishments. What is your opinion? Is this any of the NCAA's business?

By the way, not every college coach or program is beset with problems, although it seems like if we wait long enough something will come up. Coach K,* basketball coach at Duke University, continues to be held up as a fine example of a coach and a man. And Pat Summit, former women's basketball coach at Tennessee, is well-loved and respected. Sadly, she had to step down as coach recently because of early-onset Alzheimer's.

Let's move on from scandals and look at some other aspects of college sports. Take another look at Appendix 3. You will notice there are three divisions in college sports. Requirements for becoming a Division I school are complicated, but include the number of sports available for both men and women, and in some ways the size of the school can make a difference. There has been some discussion this year about Savannah State opening its football season with away games against Oklahoma State and Florida State. Appendix 5 gives some comparative data about the schools. Savannah State lost the first game 84-0 and the second 55-0.

12. What do you think Savannah State might gain from playing these games?

13. Are there any reasons (besides losing) that these games shouldn't be scheduled?

Does the size of a school really matter? Tiny Norwich University (2200 students) has brought home Division III men's and women's ice hockey national championships and most recently a women's 7s rugby* championship (2011 vs Div I teams) and a Div II women's 15s* rugby championship (2012). Rugby is not an NCAA sanctioned sport, so the requirements for what division a team plays in are less strict than for other sports. The Norwich women's rugby team has won games against much larger Div I schools and has moved up to Div I. This in spite of having only about 600 women in the school. In its first two D1 games, Norwich beat Amry 34-15 and defeated UConn 152-0.

14. Is this move to DI a good call for such a tiny school? What is necessary for them to continue to be successful in DI competition?

NCAA Division I and II schools are allowed to offer athletic scholarships. Division III schools do not have that opportunity.

15. How do you feel about college scholarships being given out for athletic skills rather than academics? Does this approach benefit the schools in any way?

Some college teams, particularly basketball, have been changing on a yearly basis because many players leave for the pros after one year. There is a lot of controversy about whether students should be expected to stay in school for a full four years.

16. Do you think there should be any restrictions on athletes leaving school for the pros whenever they wish? What rules would you suggest?

The Olympics

The modern Olympics are based on ancient games held in Olympia Greece starting in the 8th century BC. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was established in 1894, and is the governing body for the current games. There have been many changes over the years. Originally all competitors had to be amateurs, and Jim Thorpe was even temporarily stripped of his medals when it was discovered he had been paid as a semi-pro baseball player before competing in the Olympics. Since the 1980s it is no longer required that Olympic athletes maintain amateur status.

17. What reasons can you think of for this change?

18. Obvious examples of professional athletes in the Olympics have included the US men's basketball and hockey teams. What are some advantages and disadvantages for the professional players who decide to participate?

19. Summer and Winter Olympic Games used to occur in the same year, every four years, but now are held two year apart. What do you think influenced this change?

Competition to become the host city for the Olympic Games is very strong, and it is considered an honor to be chosen.

20. What do you think some of the responsibilities are for a host city? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages to be chosen as a location for the Olympics?

Politics and political unrest have played a part in some of the modern day Olympics. The event has been canceled due to wars and countries invited or not because of political issues. Several countries boycotted the Olympics in 1956 because of the Suez crisis, which was a military confrontation between Egypt on one side and Israel, France and Great Britain on the other. The issue was control of the Suez Canal, the only direct way to travel from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. China boycotted the same year over Taiwan being allowed to compete, and the Soviet Union/ Hungary water polo match was marred by violent play and near rioting of spectators. President Carter ordered a US boycott in 1980 as a protest of the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan. These are only a few of the political issues that have arisen.

In 1972, nine members of the Israeli delegation to the Olympic Games were killed in a terrorist attack on the Olympic Village. In 1996, a bomb went off in Olympic Park in Atlanta Georgia, killing two people.

21. What changes do you think these situations have made in the Olympic Games?

Oscar Pistorius from the Republic of South Africa represented his country in the 400 meter and 400 meter relay track events. His participation had been challenged because he is a double amputee, and there was some concern that he gained an unfair advantage because of his artificial limbs. Scientific tests were completed, and the verdict was that the blades he wears didn't give him any advantage over other runners, and Pistorius was allowed to compete in the 2012 Olympics.

Many people feel Pistorius deserves the right to participate if only because he has overcome remarkable odds. Others still feel it's unfair.

22. What is your opinion about letting Pistorius compete in the Olympics?

23. Pistorius also ran in the 2012 Paralympic Games. How do you feel about his competing in both the regular Olympics and the Paralympics in the same year?

The way the Olympic Games are set up, athletes represent their countries. Even though they win medals for themselves, statistics are also kept for numbers of medals won by each country. The issue of citizenship is a big one. Zola Budd was a South African runner who emigrated to the United Kingdom when South Africa was banned from the Olympics for apartheid.* Her grandfather had been born in the UK, so she was eligible for citizenship. Bernard Lagat became a US citizen after originally representing Kenya. And Becky Hammon is an example of an athlete who joined another country's team after not making her own country's Olympic team.

24. What are some of the issues you see about citizenship requirements for Olympic participation?

25. Suggest some criteria for what country an athlete can represent. How fluid should requirements for "citizenship" be?

Michael Phelps, an American swimmer, holds the record for most total Olympic medals. His total is 22 medals--18 of which are gold. That's more medals than some countries have ever earned! Appendix 6 gives some Olympics hosting information and Appendices G and H show recent medal history for ten countries. Use information from all three of those appendices to answer the next four questions.

Some countries have consistent success in winning medals at both Summer and Winter Games. Others are more successful in one particular season.

26. What might be some contributing factors for success at either or both Summer and Winter Games?

27. Can you suggest three countries not included in the Appendices who might do better in the Winter Games than in the Summer Games?

28. China won twelve more medals in the summer of 2008 than in the summer of 2012. Can you suggest a reason for this difference?

29. Comparing the medal information in both summer and winter, what three countries would you say have had the most success overall? Explain your choices.

Some countries send many athletes to the Olympic Games; some countries don't go at all. For the Summer Games 2012, 10,500 athletes represented 204 National Olympic Committee countries. Host Great Britain had the most competitors, with 541; the US was next with 530. Several countries, including Somalia and Sierra Leone sent only two athletes.

30. How would you feel about being one of only few athletes representing your country at the Olympic Games?

Since this is your final Unit, we'd appreciate any feedback or suggestions you have for improving the Course!

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

Appendices Sports: Unit 4 of 4

Appendix 1: Definition of Amateur

Part of one definition (www.dictionary.com) is "a person who engages in a sport for pleasure rather than for financial benefit or professional reasons." The same source continues with "an athlete who has never competed for payment or for a monetary prize.

Appendix 2: Explanation of Terms and Abbreviations

NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association

The Heisman Trophy is awarded yearly to the most outstanding collegiate football player. USC = University of Southern California

UConn = University of Connecticut

Coach K = Coach Mike Krzyzewski

Rugby can be played with seven players or with fifteen players.

Apartheid = a rigid policy of segregation of the nonwhite population in South Africa

Appendix 3: From the NCAA Website

Founded more than one hundred years ago as a way to protect student-athletes, the NCAA continues to implement that principle with increased emphasis on both athletics and academic excellence. The NCAA is made up of three membership classifications that are known as Divisions I, II and III. Each division creates its own rules governing personnel, amateurism, recruiting, eligibility, benefits, financial aid, and playing and practice seasons – consistent with the overall governing principles of the Association. Every program must affiliate its core program with one of the three divisions.

Appendix 4: Penn State Sanctions

\$60 million fine

Erasing wins from 1998-2011 (112 wins) Four-year
postseason ban

Four-year scholarship reduction (10 initial; 20 total)

Players may transfer and play immediately at other schools (different from usual rule) Athletic
department on probation for five years

Appendix 5: Comparative Data for Three Schools

School	Students	Location	Stadium	Seats
Savannah State	3,800	Savannah, GA	Theodore Wright	7,500
Oklahoma State	18,200	Stillwater, OK	Boone Pickens	60,000
Florida State	31,400	Tallahassee, FL	Doak Campbell	84,300

Appendix 6: Olympic Host Cities from 2000-2018

City	Country	Continent	Winter/Summer	Year
Sydney	Australia	Oceania	Summer	2000
Salt Lake City	United States	North America	Winter	2002
Athens	Greece	Europe	Summer	2004
Turin	Italy	Europe	Winter	2006
Beijing	China	Asia	Summer	2008
Vancouver	Canada	North America	Winter	2010
London	United Kingdom	Europe	Summer	2012
Sochi	Russia	Europe	Winter	2014
Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	South America	Summer	2016
Pyeongchang	Korea	Asia	Winter	2018

The following Appendix includes medal information for only ten countries. G, S, and B refer to gold, silver, and bronze medals.

Appendix 7: Medals for 2012 and 2008 Summer Olympics

Country	2010 Olympics				2006 Olympics			
	G	S	B	Total	G	S	B	Total
Australia	2	1	0	3	1	0	1	2
China	5	2	4	11	2	4	5	11
France	2	3	6	11	3	2	4	9
Germany	10	13	7	30	11	12	6	29
Gr. Britain	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Italy	1	1	3	5	5	0	6	11
Japan	0	3	2	5	1	0	0	1
Russia	3	5	7	15	8	6	8	22
So. Korea	6	6	2	14	6	3	2	11
USA	9	15	13	37	9	9	7	25