

Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation

Ethics in Athletics

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9 March 2009

What is ethics in Athletics? Does it deal with professional athletes making mouth dropping amounts of money? Does it deal with a select few college coaches that are the highest paid state employees in their respective states? Does it deal with A-Rod admitting that he took performance enhancing drugs for years? Is it how your team plays the game and how they respond to umpires, opposing teams, and opposing fans? Or, is it how a coach treats his/her players? You better believe it is. It is all of these questions and much, much more. Ethics in athletics, just like in all disciplines, is something that boosters, administrators, coaches, athletes, and parents deal with on a daily basis. For the sake of brevity, and I am sure some of my players over there are saying, "Yeah right Coach, you're never brief," I want to focus on three issues. These issues include treatment and motivation of student-athletes, behavior of student-athletes, and "how to play the game."

How should a coach treat his/her players? What type of coaching style is best? These questions are tough and don't necessarily have clear cut answers. There are all types coaches and all types of coaching styles. Most people in this room have probably heard of Bobby Knight, the famous, now retired basketball coach who was known for his intensity, fire, chair throwing abilities, and foul temper. Pat Summit, the famed women's basketball coach from Tennessee, is known as the female version of Bobby Knight with eyes and a stare that could burn a hole through anyone. These are examples of outstanding coaches who are known for their harsh styles. On the other hand you have coaches like Bobby Bowden and Mike Krzyzewski. Whatever style of coach you are, we all still wake up everyday and have to decide how we will best deal with our student-athletes and how we are going to motivate

our student-athletes to perform at their highest level of ability. All of this while, striving to teach student-athletes to perform within a team atmosphere and team concept.

Treatment of student-athletes is an ethical issue that I think many coaches struggle with. This doesn't mean whether a coach respects his or her athletes or whether they are feed well on road trips, this is a much deeper issue. When I say treatment of student-athletes, I am referring to the question of how to get the most out of our student-athletes. Isn't that what we are all trying to do. We are trying to get each of our student-athletes to maximize their God given talents and become something they never thought they could become. Not only are we trying to maximize the potential of the individual but we are most importantly trying to maximize the potential of our group as a whole. This is easier said than done and this is where I believe ethical issues in coaching arise. How many sprints are too many to run? How many pounds are too many to lift? How much time should I expect my athletes to put in while they are most importantly, here at Augustana to get an education? How high should the bar be set for both individuals and team work ethic and performance? These questions are tough and as a coach, you are constantly trying to seek a balance between realistic expectations and trying to push your athletes and team to be the best of their ability. If you don't push hard enough, you have failed as a coach and if you push too hard you can seriously do damage. It also isn't just how hard you push your team, it is how you go about doing it. Do you motivate by fear? Do you motivate by your own intensity and passion for the game? Do you motivate by positive reinforcement and encouragement or do you motivate by yelling? This is even a tougher question. I have been coaching for 11 years and I truly believe you have to use a combination of these strategies. There are times where positive reinforcement is needed, and there are times where raising one's voice is needed. I know my players understand that once I speak in my "stern voice" they truly better listen up, right guys.

As a coach, my main goal does not lie only with producing great athletes. It more importantly lies in helping produce good people who are going to make a difference in their careers and communities. We try to develop the whole person....the student, the athlete, and the person. As coaches, we use sports as our classroom. It is for these reasons that we push, and raise the bar higher, and demand only their best on a daily basis. In short, we are their "life coach" for four years, an awesome responsibility that should be taken with the utmost of importance.

The second issue I would like to touch on is behavior in athletics, behavior of student-athletes and coaches and behavior in how the game should or is played. The main theme in dealing with behavior is respect. Respect for the game, respect for oneself, respect for your teammates, respect for the opposing players, and respect for officials. Again, in athletics this is easier said than done. When the element of competition is involved and emotions are running high, it is sometimes hard to always be respectful and tempers do flare. Too often though, we hear the negative aspects of student-athlete behavior. We hear about the rare occasions when something goes wrong or someone loses control of themselves. We don't hear about the 1000's of games that are played "the right way" or in the true spirit of competition. For example, many of you may or may not be aware of what occurred last year in the Western Oregon vs. Central Washington softball game. Western Oregon senior Sarah Tucholsky had never hit a homerun in her career until that day. In the excitement of hitting her first homerun, Tucholsky missed first base. As she attempted to return to the base, she crumpled to the ground with an ACL injury. This created a sticky situation. If any of her teammates would have aided her in her quest around the bases, she would have been called out and if her coach were to put in a pinch runner for her, she would only be credited with a single. So, as the umpires were discussing the situation, Central Washington's first baseman Liz Wallace, asked the umpires if she could carry Tucholsky around the bases. Ironically, Wallace is known for her homerun hitting prowess. Wallace, along with the team's shortstop, Mallory Holtman, carried Tucholsky around the bases lowering her to be able to touch each

base. When asked about their act of sportsmanship both Wallace and Holtman echoed that Tucholsky had hit a homerun and deserved the chance to be credited for it. This is a perfect example of the good in athletics.

The second issue is how should the game be played? What does this mean? In each sport, like life, there are unwritten rules. Rules that everybody is supposed to know....the common phrase may be..."it's how the game is played." The problem lies in what is the acceptable version of "how the game is to be played." Some examples of this in the game of softball may include:

1. Do you teach your athletes to break up double plays?
2. Do you brush batters off the plate who are crowding it?
3. Do you try to pick the opposing team's signs?

There are many more examples of what could be considered ethical issues in "how the game should be played." In my opinion, you teach your players to play the game hard, aggressively, and within the rules. Would I teach my players to break-up double plays, you better believe it. Do you brush players off the plate, yes! This is playing the game. You play the game not with the intent to harm anyone but with the intent of going hard and playing aggressively to the fullest extent of the rules.

In conclusion, ethics are at the core of who we are as human beings. Without an ethical philosophy, we as coaches can be lead astray. It is our job as coaches to help provide our student-athletes with the "best equipment" for life. It is not good enough to just produce great athletes, we must produce great people who are productive human beings. If we don't, we have failed as educators and coaches.

Amen.



**SEMINARY VISIT** - A trip is being planned to visit Luther Seminary over the first weekend of Fall Break. If you are interested in going along, please contact Miranda Andersen [mmandersen06@ole.augie.edu](mailto:mmandersen06@ole.augie.edu)

**CHAIR OF MORAL VALUES SERIES** - "*Ethics in the Academic Disciplines*" series begins on Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> and continues on Mondays through Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>. The preachers will represent various departments on campus. **There will be a panel discussion to wrap up this series on Mar. 19<sup>th</sup>** in the 3-1 room.

**SPRING BREAK SERVICE TRIP** - Registration is wrapping up for the spring break service trip to flood-plagued Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Students will be leaving on Monday morning, March 23 and returning on Friday evening, March 27. Students will be staying in a local church and doing renovation/clean-up from the June 2008 flood. The cost of the trip is \$100 and it includes 2 meals/day and transportation to and from Cedar Rapids.

**Deadline is March 13th.**

A Tetanus shot is recommended but not required. The chapel is willing to pay for gas if anyone is willing to drive to Cedar Rapids and back (about 5-5.5 hours)

**CHAPEL STAFF and MUSICIANS - 09/10** - Applications are now available in the chapel office for chapel staff for next year. Please sign the sheet on the Narthex table and get an appl. from Carol in the chapel office. **Appls. are due back on Fri., March 13<sup>th</sup>.**

### CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Tuesday (10 <sup>th</sup> )	Koinonia, 10 am
Wednesday (11 <sup>th</sup> )	Holy Communion, 10 am - Melanie Bliss, Dir. Homeless Coalition
Friday (13 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Ashley Anderson, Sr. Spkr * <i>Chapel Staff and Musician applications due</i> *
Sunday (15 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Ben Eisele,
Monday (17 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - CMV series - Mary Isaacson, Nursing