



## **FOLLOW-UP NOTES**

### **Webinar #39**

### **Women in College Coaching and Administration – The Double Standard**

#### ***The Drake Group Education Fund Webinar Series – Critical Issues in College Athletics***

*Thanks for attending or registering for our May 16, 2024, webinar on critical issues in intercollegiate athletics. A regular feature of our webinar series is “Follow-Up Notes” which provides links to the recorded webinar, answers to questions from the audience which panelists did not have the time to address or those emailed to us from telephone participants, and information on our next webinar. Any questions about specific individuals or cases may be revised to be more generic.*

#### **1. Webinar #39 RECORDING**

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In case you missed any part of the May 16, 2024 webinar, you may access the recorded video here:

***“Women in College Coaching and Administration:  
The Double Standard***

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

#### **2. UNADDRESSED QUESTIONS FROM WEBINAR ATTENDEES**

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Following are answers to questions from the audience symposium that panelists did not have time to address. Responses are from The Drake Group Education Fund (TDGEF) and The Drake Group experts and/or panelists. Answers include any panelist or attendee responses from the chat area deemed helpful. General comments by attendees not phrased as questions are not included. We

ask attendees to avoid naming specific individuals when asking questions and, instead, request that you make an effort to generally describe a situation. If such questions are received, we reserve the right to modify the question so it is generically expressed

**Q1: Does the research show that male students are harsher evaluators of female teachers and professors or whether female student are harder on fellow women than male coaches, teachers or professors?**

**A1:** YES. Research shows both men and women are harsher on women teachers, professors, and coaches but if they have been exposed to a higher numbers of women over their educational careers, they have less gender bias. The same gendered bias also applies to female athletic administrators. As discussed, students are not trained administrators who know the difference between coaches' and teachers demanding execution, best effort, and following instructions and abusive teaching/coaching practices.

**Q2: A successful coach for almost 30 years, winning many NCAA D-I national and numerous conference championship titles and building teams demonstrating excellence in the classroom, was initially put on paid leave during an exhaustive six-month investigation, and then fired on the basis of bullying complaints of almost 20 current and former team members and six parents. After leaving the institution, the results of that investigation were reported to the US Center for Safe Sport, and she received a 3-months suspension and 12-months probation from coaching non-school teams in her sport. The coach admitted to yelling at her players and using profanity, the typical tough coaching that is common and unchallenged by male players when delivered by male coaches. What were the issues in this case?**

**A2:** The coach challenged a double standard for female coaches and an athletic department that tolerated "tough" coaching during periods of success instead of fulfilling their best practice obligation to immediately counsel the coach regarding any pedagogy concern rather than waiting 30 years to raise a concern and then uncovering all examples of behaviors that supervisors have ignored and not corrected during this period and then terminating the coaches' employment without having adhered to the institution's HR policy of "gradually escalating discipline." In such cases, it is not unusual to find zero unsatisfactory evaluations in the employee's personnel file.

The best practice of "gradually escalating discipline" is HR101 for any organization or business and involves a number of graduated steps in responding to unacceptable employee behavior. The first step is for the supervisor to immediately inform the employee that a behavior is not acceptable and how it must be corrected – a combination of "coaching" the employee that represents a verbal warning with counseling. It's how any person would expect to be treated if he or she makes a mistake. The second step occurs if the behavior is repeated – the admonition plus a written warning that goes in the employee's personnel file, often with an agreed-upon corrective action plan. The third step is a final written warning advising the employee of suspension or dismissal if there is a

reoccurrence. The last step is suspension or dismissal. When the athletic administrator requires employee supervisors to attend practices and competitions regularly and address issues as they occur, following HR policy, it is easy to understand why there may be a big difference in outcomes.

Administration best practice should also require never using student evaluations for termination of an employee. Students are more likely to take criticism personally and describe situations in less than objective ways (e.g., “the coach hates me”, “picks on me all the time”, “punishes me”, etc.) Evaluations differ based on whether a team member is a starter or a bench sitter, and if evaluations are optional (often the case with exit interviews), dissatisfied students are more likely to participate than others. Nevertheless, student evaluations are important if they are appropriately considered. Results should be shared and discussed with the employee as they are received. These evaluations are usually done at the end of the sport season rather than the end of the year, and should be discussed at that time rather than a supervisor saving up criticisms for end-of-year annual performance evaluations which have a different purpose. Immediate correction of unacceptable employee behavior is critical. To do otherwise is to allow unacceptable behavior to negatively affect the educational environment.

In contrast, the annual employee performance evaluation should focus on achievement of measurable objectives and performance of job responsibilities as they are contained in the employee’s job description, professional development plans identifying areas where growth is expected, suggestions from the employee for improving the athletic department environment and student experience, and succession planning.

**Q3: I am a lesbian former tackle football player and coach. Throughout my whole coaching career, I have been spoken down to and disrespected by male coaches who refuse to follow my practice plans and drills. Recently I was let go because I wanted to replace some of my male coaches on staff for these reasons. The male coaches were chosen over me and half the female athletes quit the team. How does a strong, football smart, well spoken, motivating, relationship-oriented coach like me fight this problem both in the moment and avoid this from happening again and again? What are some resources available to help women in my situation as it is happening?**

**A3:** Key to solving this problem in the moment, is the head coach following the gradually escalating discipline process to ensure there is documentation the assistant coach deficiencies for which replacement may be the solution. With regard to the frustration and anger experienced in response to experiencing discrimination, exploring professional counseling or the possibility of coach professional associations establishing support groups or similarly situated coaches should be considered, sadly, the latter resources are limited. With regard to legal options or someone representing you in discussions with your administration, the coach can [contact our panelists’ law firm](#) as they have indicated they are willing to take the call of any coach to talk through these issues

and figure out what resources or actions may be available. There is no charge for initial consultation with the panelist's firm. Speed is often the key to saving a job and so a call to get help is important.

Within the institution you are dealing with, the culture of the athletic program makes a difference. Is there an athletic director commitment to using staff meetings to educate all employees about sexism and the double standard? Is there a senior staff member who can make such a suggestion without identifying you? Is the employee environment safe enough for you or a colleague to raise the issue in a regular coaches or one-on-one meeting with a senior staff member?

If the head coach has tried one-on-one meetings with those he or she supervises, using the principles of gradually escalating discipline to respond to poor assistant coach performance expectations, and the athletic director or head coach's direct supervisor is unwilling to support the head coach's proper personnel practices, the situation may not be fixable.

**Q4: Assume that a coach has been improperly terminated or the coach leaves an unhealthy administrative environment in which the double standard is common practice or the administration has accepted parent or student complaints clearly not based on coach performance (e.g., player allegations of coach mental abuse or harassment such as not naming a senior as team captain or giving a player an award, etc.). I and several other coaches I know who have taken new jobs under similar circumstances, have had students or parents from their previous institutions, reach out to new employers to complain, thereby instigating problems at the coaches' new institutions that should not occur. Is there any advice for dealing with such situations?**

**A4:** In such cases, the coach should consider immediately having a straightforward conversation asking the advice of the new employer. Such a conversation allows the coach to confront untruths about former player or player/parent allegations, demonstrates the new employee's maturity in recognizing that confronting "stalking" players or parents may represent political issues for the new employer, and generally allows the employee an opportunity to reduce or eliminate the effectiveness of such former player/parent initiatives. Such an effort by the new employee should be documented in case it becomes an issue in new employer's treatment of the coach. With any situation involving student or parent complaints it is a good idea to reach out to get help. The panelists (Newkirk Zwagerman) consult on these issues regularly.

**Q5: What are those websites that track the rehiring of fired coaches?**

**A5:** There are informal databases kept by individuals on coaches who have brought cases and whether they have been rehired, but we know of no website carrying such information or comprehensive longitudinal documentation. There are reporter-driven examples of tracking coach turnover in the NFL or among college football and basketball coaches, but many of these

departures are single sex (all male) “revolving door” departures and rehires based on reactions to losing records or alumni/fan pressure rather than a behavior-based double standards applied to comparing the treatment of male and female coaches.

Panelist Nicole LaVoi and co-author Hannah Silva-Breen have conducted research ([Longitudinal Analysis of Head Coach Employee Turnover of Women’s NCAA D-I Teams](#)) that found discriminatory turnover patterns that appeared to be prevalent: “Men in this sample were twice as likely as women to be coaching, regardless of the institutional reason for their departure. When men are fired, they have a greater likelihood to be rehired, especially at the same level and in the same role. Men are also afforded twice the opportunity, as they can in turn coach men, coed, or women, while women are relegated to coaching women or coed teams.”

**Q6: What kind of resources are available to address the mental and emotional trauma female coaches have endured from their mistreatment?**

**A6:** Resources are limited other than seeking counseling from licensed mental health professionals. We are thinking there needs to be a coaches/administrators’ support group established by coaches’ associations or professional organizations like Women Leaders in College Sports. In addition to support from similarly situated women or professional counseling, the process of consulting with attorneys to explore a coach’s options re: fighting back (see Q&A3 above) may have a salutary impact on dealing with such mental anguish.

**Q7: Male coaches who misbehave and are fired often turn up somewhere else while female coaches, especially those who cases include retaliation expressing Title IX concerns, are blackballed, finding it difficult or impossible to be reemployed, especially those who choose litigation. Even the mediator during mediation told my clients that if they took the case to trial, their careers would be over. Does raising questions about Title IX inequities increase non-renewal or termination risks?**

**A7:** We concur that the chances of reemployment of female coaches who sue their institutions are slim and that raising Title IX issues elevates that risk because 90 percent of all institutions of higher education are out of compliance with title IX.

**Q8: Coaches often have promising swimmers work out with older girls or male athletes to contribute to success at an early age, not realizing that separating athletes from their peers may have adverse social, psychological, and mental health consequences. What can be done to improve coaches’ knowledge of the mental health side of sports?**

**A8:** In the USA, most coaches do not have to be licensed like other teachers. Required coach education programs are almost non-existent or are short online programs. Few school athletic departments or non-school sport organizations have [comprehensive coach professional conduct policies](#) that detail prohibited practices and behaviors. Education institutions and athletic

departments contribute to instances of abusive or unprofessional conduct when these policy mandates are not in place.

**Q9: How do you educate your administrator without your request or suggestion being perceived as a threat or interpreted as accusing the administration of being gender biased? Administration needs to be educated on their gender bias, but how do you encourage that education?**

**A9:** Professional women's coaches associations such as the Women's Basketball Coaches Association and women's administrators' organizations like Women Leaders of College Sports have a role to play in such education. Leaders of these organizations should consider communicating directly with athletic director organizations such as NACDA and conference offices, asking that their annual meetings or conventions offer such administrator education sessions and suggesting subject matter related to the "double standard." If the coach trusts the Senior Woman Administrator or another athletics senior staff member at her institution, suggesting that she might approach the athletic director about educating all coach supervisors about this issue is a feasible option. Is there a trusted person on the athletics advisory council who can make such a request? Consider inviting attorneys like Tom Newkirk and Jill Zwagerman to present a "reduction of employment legal risks" program at such meetings.

**Q10: Videotaping practices and games offer good protection. However, as a high school coach, I was told that I can't record my practices even if it's to protect myself & coaching staff.**

**A10:** When requesting permission to tape practices or games, coaches should consider presenting the rationale that videotaping is an important instructional aid. If football and other teams regularly use practice and game films as such instructional aids, this is a gender equity issue.

**Q11: How should student evaluations be handled in today's environment where the "student athlete experience" is one of the key buzz phrases used to justify the importance of such measures. How should the SA evaluations be handled so it protects the university and the coach and is respectful of the evaluation process?**

**A11:** Consider sharing this article on "[The Misuse of Student-Athlete Evaluations of Coaches and Exit Interviews.](#)"

**Q12: It appears that the key behind so many male coaches getting big salaries, managing crisis/complaints, and finding better jobs is agent representation. How common is it for female coaches to have agents?**

**A12:** Female coaches using agents appears to have become more commonplace in Division I in the revenue sports. Having a competent agent can be an effective layer of protection that should be considered. Cost is often a significant concern (e.g., 3-5 percent of salary for a certified sport agent or approximately \$400/hour for an attorney),

**Q13: The way an institution handles student complaints is only one type of “double standard” experienced by female coaches. What are some others?**

**A13:** Here is a good collection: [Using a Double Standard for Male and Female Coaching Behaviors](#).

**Q14: What about the current trend in women sports where athletes are trying to get their coaches fired just because they aren't happy? Teams could have good GPA, improved scoring, win-loss records, and athlete individual performances, and yet it takes just a few grumbling players or parents to create a storm. Are administrations aware that college athletes are using buzz words mental health, abuse, body shaming, and harassment to maximize the impact of their complaints?**

**A14:** There are many good administrators who understand the use of exaggerated language and inflammatory descriptions of behavior by athletes and parents. However, we suspect that more often, administrators are knowingly using student complaints and evaluations as “cover” for their failures to regularly and fairly evaluate female employees, justification for not using a proper disciplinary process (see Q&A 2 above), wanting to find a persuasive serious charge to terminate the employee for cause, or simply wanting to fire a coach or not renew a contract.

**Q15: If a coach is on last year of contract and school chooses to not renew contract due to the complaints of athletes/parents, how do you handle that situation?**

**A15:** Whether it is not renewing a contract or firing an employee prior to the end of a contract, both are terminations of employment. Any issue involving student-athlete complaints should cause the coach to reach out for help ASAP.

**Q16: Is it permissible for institutions to require coaches of women's teams to carry huge squad sizes? Such a practice seems to contribute to athletes complaining about coaches.**

**A16:** Forcing a coach to carry a minimum number of players or inflated rosters in order to meet the Prong One proportionality standard is most likely a Title IX violation as well as an example of a double standard if coaches of men's teams have no minimum limits.

**Q17: Do the panelists see age bias mixed into gender bias? Schools will hire men over 50 as experienced coaches, but they will not hire women over 50, claiming they can't relate to 20-year-olds. What is the real reason for this behavior? Gender bias? Not wanting to pay experienced female coaches what they are worth? Afraid that experienced coaches will speak up but young coaches will keep quiet to keep their jobs?**

**A17:** Yes – gender bias is at the root causes of all of the above. The promise of Title IX has been partially realized by female athletes, but not fulfilled for college coaches and administrators, still roughly an 80 percent male/20 percent female population and predominantly White.

### 3. OUR NEXT WEBINAR

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TDGEF webinars are on a summer break, but returning in the fall. If you want to mark your calendars:

Webinar #40	<a href="#">Reported Increases in College Athlete Suicide and Other Mental Health Risks</a>	Sept 19, 2024	THURSDAY 2:00-3:30 pm ET
Webinar #41	<a href="#">Political Assaults on DEI Programs: Implications for College Athletics</a>	Oct. 17, 2024	THURSDAY 2:00-3:30 pm ET

### 4. ACCESS RECORDINGS OF PREVIOUS WEBINARS

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[CLICK HERE](#) to see the table of contents of The Drake Group Education Fund Video Library for recordings of all 38 previous webinars including the full proceedings of the 2022, 2023, and 2024 Allen Sack National Symposium.

### 5. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DRAKE GROUP EDUCATION FUND

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**The Drake Group Education Fund** (TDGEF) is the year-old 501(c)(3) non-profit education sister organization of The Drake Group (TDG) whose mission is to ensure that the promise of college athletics is realized for all stakeholders. TDGEF produces *The Allen Sack National Symposium on Integrity in College Sports* and the *Critical Issues in College Sports Webinar Series*, conducts fact-based research on intercollegiate athletics and develops position papers and other educational materials that influence public discourse on current issues and controversies in college sport. To access a full library of print and video educational materials on current issues in intercollegiate athletes, visit [www.thedrakegroupeducationfund.org](http://www.thedrakegroupeducationfund.org). All educational materials are available free of charge. If you believe The Drake Group Education Fund is doing good work, please also consider making a tax-deductible donation to support our webinars, educational research, and programs. You can donate and learn what we do [HERE](#).

**The Drake Group** (TDG), a sister organization to TDGEF, was founded in 1999, and is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization whose mission is to educate policymakers and advance legislative initiatives that foster academic integrity and athlete well-being in intercollegiate athletics. For the most current information on The Drake Group and college athletics related bills being considered by Congress, visit TDG [HERE](#). TDG needs volunteers to contact their senators and representatives to advance collegiate athletics reform legislation. Learn about legislation and [VOLUNTEER/JOIN HERE](#).



## 6. THANKS TO OUR WEBINAR #39 PANELISTS

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### MEET OUR PANELISTS



**DONNA A. LOPIANO, Ph.D., MODERATOR, President, Sports**

**Management Resources, LLC and Adjunct Professor of Sports Management at Southern Connecticut State University.** She is the former Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Sports Foundation and served for 18 years as the University of Texas at Austin's Director of Women's Athletics. Recognized as one of the foremost national experts on gender equity in sport, she has testified about Title IX and gender equity before three Congressional committees and has served as an expert witness in over thirty court cases. Lopiano received her bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University, her master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Southern California and is the recipient of five honorary doctoral degrees. She is the current President of The Drake Group.



**RITA CROCKETT, former Assistant Athletic Director and Head Indoor and Beach Volleyball Coach, Florida International University.** Crockett played professional volleyball in Switzerland, Italy and Japan, was a member of the 1982 FIVB Bronze Medal and 1984 Silver Medal USA Olympic Volleyball Teams, and 1989 WPVA Beach Volleyball World Champion. She served as Head Volleyball Coach of the Swiss National Team, the RTV Basel Professional Club Team (Switzerland) and at the University of Iowa. Her honors include AVCA National Coach of the Year, an International Volleyball Hall of Fame, Texas Black Sports Hall of Fame, San Antonio Sports Hall of Fame and University of Houston Athletics Hall of Fame inductee. She is a graduate of the University of Iowa.



**NICOLE LaVOI, Director, the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport and Senior Lecturer, School of Kinesiology, University of Minnesota.** As a leading scholar on gender, leadership, and women coaches, Dr. LaVoi has published 100+ book chapters, research reports and peer-reviewed articles in top-rated journals. Her seminal research includes the annual *Women in College Coaching Report Card™* which is aimed at retaining and increasing the number of women in the coaching profession and holding decision makers accountable, a groundbreaking book *Women in Sports Coaching* (2016), and a documentary *GAME ON: Women Can Coach*. She is an award-winning athlete and coach, distinguished teacher, regional Emmy winner, two-time Hall of Fame inductee and was named a 2023 USTA Champion of Equality. She earned her M.A. and doctoral degrees from the University of Minnesota.



**PETRA MARTIN, Assistant Director of Graduate Recruitment and Student Support, College of Engineering, University of Arkansas.** Former Head Women's Swimming Coach Rutgers University and Bowling Green State University and Assistant Swimming Coach, University of Arkansas, George Mason University and the University of Maryland. Martin was an All-American swimmer at the University of Maryland and a member of the Czech National Team. Martin earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Finance and Marketing and Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Maryland College Park.



**THOMAS NEWKIRK is a civil rights attorney practicing in Iowa for almost 35 years.** During the last 20 years Tom has developed a specialization in implicit bias and developing methods to reduce bias as a risk in employment, medicine, criminal justice, and college athletics. As a lawyer, Tom applies this specialization to represent coaches in all sports and all divisions impacted by the student-athlete complaint phenomena. In addition to his law practice, Tom devotes a substantial portion of his time to educating universities on the harmful effects of stereotypes and works to develop methods to respond to the nationwide problem of student-athlete complaints that are undermining the coaching profession and holding women back from full equality in leadership roles in college sports.



**JILL ZWAGERMAN, Partner and Employment, Discrimination, and Civil Rights Attorney at Newkirk Zwagerman.** Zwagerman focuses much of her practice on helping employees who have been harassed and discriminated against based upon their gender. Zwagerman has a special interest in helping those who have been discriminated against in athletics, representing coaches and students across the country and has helped clients earn verdicts and settlements, including an \$11.8 million verdict in a sexual harassment case and a \$6.5 million settlement for gender discrimination in sports cases. She earned her undergraduate and J.D. with Honors from Drake University.