



## Hazing Hot Topic at NCAA Convention

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. —

The video, with photos of the dead college student lying on the floor after a night of drinking and snippets of the 911 call, created a rapt audience.

Then came a flood of information: 80 percent of NCAA athletes are hazed; half are forced to take part in drinking contests or alcohol-related hazing; two-thirds are subjected to physical humiliation; one of every two women athletes are hazed.

Defining the meaning of hazing seems easy enough.

Stopping it on college campuses and athletic teams was the focus of a four-hour seminar Thursday on the opening day of the NCAA convention. The topic filled a ballroom with administrators eager to learn more.

"Colleges in my opinion have a greater liability with athletic hazing than with (fraternities and sororities)," said Norman Pollard, dean of students at Alfred University who surveyed hazing in college sports in 1998 and 1999.

"After all, we recruit them. They wear our uniforms, and we went to their families to encourage them to be part of our campus community."

The video wasn't of an athlete, instead part of a trailer for an upcoming documentary on Lynn Gordon Bailey, Jr., who died in a fraternity hazing incident after drinking too much.

Today hazing is enough of a problem that the NCAA is publishing a handbook for members later this year. Organizers also hoped administrators will write their own policies once they return to campus.

The NCAA does not have an anti-hazing policy, and hazing rules are not written into the bylaws of any of its divisions.

Hazing ranges from sleep deprivation, shaving heads and screaming at teammates to making them drink until sick or passing out. One Division I swimmer, captain of her team, quit after nearly drowning because she was tossed in a pool as part of a "tradition." She lost her scholarship.

"That story I'm sure can be relayed by countless individuals who've never told their story," said Tim Marchell, director of mental health initiatives at Cornell. "This is the kind of consequences we need to be keeping in mind as we work toward preventing hazing."

Don McPherson, a quarterback at Syracuse and in the NFL who now works for the Hopewell Group, said hazing cloaked in the name of tradition and being tough enough for the sport isn't about the game.

"It's about humiliating one another," he said. "It's about our culture, our larger culture."

Hazing isn't being kept secret anymore thanks to cell phone cameras, videos and Web sites.

"More and more of our athletes are creating albums of these hazing experiences and posting them for the world to see," Pollard said. "So I'm sure many of you have experienced a phone call, an e-mail, somebody saying, 'I saw one of your athletes, one of your students on this web page.'"

Betsi Burns, director of student development at Northwestern, recounted her school's hazing incident involving

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the women's soccer team in 2006 in which photos wound up on badjocks.com. Only a month earlier, the team had heard someone speak against hazing.

The team was suspended, the captains removed, the coach resigned and the entire team had to do community service.

"Fortunately, no one was physically injured that evening. As we've heard throughout the day, we don't know what the hidden harms were and the repercussions those young women are facing to this day," Burns said.

Elizabeth Allan, a professor at the University of Maine, has studied hazing for more than 15 years and proposed a hazing law for her state. She found 22 percent of the athletes she surveyed indicated their coaches had been involved in hazing.

She previewed her study, to be released in March, in which 81 percent of athletes said they had experienced a behavior defined as hazing. Given the definition of hazing and asked if they had been hazed, only 7 percent answered yes.

"Current prevention efforts are falling short," Allan said. "We need to do more, and I'm very encouraged people are trying to do more."

Attorney Janet Judge, a former three-sport college athlete and coach, recommended schools set up a system to report hazing and involve athletes to help define hazing. She said athletes can determine what exactly is hazing.

Senior Kristie Martinez, a softball player at California-Riverside, agreed that involving athletes with administrators and coaches would be key.

"You'll do a better job of making this a big deal and a big deal on campus," she said. "Don't wait for something negative to happen to enforce change."

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On the Net:

<http://www.stophazing.org>

NCAA: <http://www.ncaa.org>

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