

The WAGER Vol. 9(21) - Pushing the Limits: Gambling Among NCAA Athletes

May 26, 2004

Both at schools and other venues, people frequently wager on college sports. The behavior and performance of college athletes (particularly Division I) consequently determines the fate of a great many bets. In such a betting environment, it would not be surprising to find a higher rate of gambling within this population as Cross and Vallano (1999) discovered in their study of gambling behaviors of basketball and football players. It is important to identify college athlete gambling rates because research suggests that students athletes might be particularly vulnerable to gambling problems (see WAGERS 7(18), 7(10)). Recently the NCAA released a summary of findings from a study of student athletes' gambling behaviors (NCAA, 2004). This WAGER reports some NCAA gambling prevalence findings and similar data from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Studies (CAS) (LaBrie, Shaffer, LaPlante, & Wechsler, 2003).

The NCAA National Study on Collegiate Sports Wagering and Associated Behaviors collected data from students on intercollegiate athletic teams representing all NCAA divisions. The NCAA distributed surveys to all of their participating institutions and collected data from a maximum of three sports teams at each school sampled. School designated faculty athletics representatives distributed the surveys to students and instructed them to fill out the survey questionnaires anonymously. The representative also instructed the student who included the last questionnaire into a collection envelope to seal the envelope and remit the collected questionnaires to the researchers. Details on the CAS were reported in the September/October 2003 issue of the *Journal of American College Health* (LaBrie et al., 2003).

As shown in Table 1, the gambling behaviors of NCAA student athletes agree with those of student athletes from the earlier CAS (not previously reported). The NCAA reported a higher rate than the CAS of student athletes who gamble on anything (Men: 69% vs. 57%; Women: 47% vs. 33%). This increase may be

attributable in part to the difference in time periods reported on for each survey. The NCAA asked students about gambling in the past 12 months, whereas the CAS asked students about behavior during the current school year. However, both studies report very similar prevalence of student athletes who gamble on any sport, gamble on college sports, and gamble on the internet.

Table 1. Comparison between NCAA and CAS statistics on student athletes who gamble.

Study	Student athletes who gamble on anything		Student athletes who gamble on any sport		Student athletes who gamble on college sports		Student athletes who gamble on the internet	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
NCAA	47%	69%	10%	35%	6%	21%	2%	6%
CAS ^a	33%	57%	10%	33%	6%	26%	2%	5%

The NCAA did not collect information from students other than on members of intercollegiate sports teams. The CAS is preparing a report contrasting the gambling behavior and related characteristics of intercollegiate athletes to other groups of students such as participants in intramural sports and non-athletes.

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Notes

1 CAS student athletes self-reported that they played or practiced intercollegiate sports.

References

Cross, M. E., & Vollano, A. G. (1999). The extent and nature of gambling among college student athletes. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Athletics Department.

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NCAA. (2004, May 12). Executive Summary for the National Study on Collegiate Sports Wagering and Associated Health Risks. Retrieved 5/26/04, 2004, from NCAA Web site:

<http://www.ncaa.org/gambling/2003NationalStudy/slideShow>