

The WAGER, Vol. 15(4) - Sports Wagering Policies: European Athletes v. NCAA Athletes

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On April 15, 2010, the European Elite Athletes Association, in conjunction with the European Gaming and Betting Association and the European Sports Security Association, announced the development of a sports betting code of conduct and educational campaign for professional athletes (“EU Athletes & European betting industry launch educational campaign to support integrity in sports,” 2010). In the U.S., the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has a long-standing policy regarding gambling activities for its student athletes (National Collegiate Athletic Association). This week, the WAGER examines the newly released policy targeting European athletes and the NCAA policy governing sports wagering by student-athletes.

European Code of Conduct Policy for Athletes

- Development of the code was a coordinated effort of three organizations:
 - The European Elite Athletes Association (i.e., a federation of independent European athlete associations including athletes from many countries and a wide variety of sports)
 - The European Sports Security Association (i.e., a betting integrity watchdog organization)
 - The European Gaming & Betting Association (i.e., a gaming and betting operators association) (EU Athletes, The European Gaming and Betting Association, & The European Sports Security Association, 2010).
- The campaign targets professional athletes across Europe.
- The code includes the following five guiding principles:
 1. Know the rules. This principle encourages athletes to be familiar with the rules/regulations governing gambling for their particular sports in their home countries.

2. Never bet on yourself or the opponent.
 3. Play safe - don't bet on your own sport at all.
 4. Be careful about handling sensitive information.
 5. Fixing a competition: an absolute No-No (EU Athletes et al., 2010).
- An educational component will expound upon the code and will consist of online resources coupled with in-person presentations aimed at informing athletes about how they can maintain sports betting integrity ("EU Athletes & European betting industry launch educational campaign to support integrity in sports," 2010). The educational materials are not yet available.

NCAA Gambling Policy for Athletes

- The NCAA gambling policy applies to all student-athletes, the staff of NCAA member athletic departments, and NCAA staff. The NCAA policy prohibits the following gambling activities:
 - Providing information to individuals involved in organized gambling activities concerning intercollegiate competition.
 - Soliciting a bet on any intercollegiate team.
 - Accepting a bet on any team representing the institution.
 - Soliciting or accepting a bet on any intercollegiate competition for any item (e.g., cash, shirt, dinner) of value.
 - Participating in any gambling activity that involves intercollegiate athletics or professional athletics, a bookmaker, a parlay card or any other method employed by organized gambling (National Collegiate Athletic Association).
- The following sanctions apply to all NCAA student-athletes found to be in violation of the NCAA gambling policy:
 - Betting on sports contests at either the college or professional level results in the loss of eligibility to participate in collegiate sports for one year.
 - Engaging in activities designed to change the outcome of a sporting event or betting on sports contests at ones own educational institution results in permanent loss of eligibility (National Collegiate Athletic Association).

- The cornerstone of the NCAA “Don’t Bet on It” educational campaign is an interactive website which provides information on NCAA sports wagering policies and other gambling related resources. In addition, the campaign includes information sessions with players, coaches and officials and printed materials distributed to campuses (National Collegiate Athletic Association).

Table 1: Side-by-side comparison of the European and NCAA policies

	European Policy	NCAA Policy
Target	Professional athletes	Amateur student-athletes
Primary policy aim(s)	Protecting the integrity of athletic competition	Protecting student-athletes from dangers of sports wagering and protecting the integrity of athletic competition
Primary policy components	Recommendations for conduct	Sanctions
Punishment associated with violation of policy	None*	Loss of playing eligibility
Educational component	Yes**	Yes

*Athletes are subject to the rules and laws governing sports wagering in their home countries.

**Not currently implemented.

Discussion

In many ways, the new sports betting policy governing European athletes and the policy of the NCAA are very similar (see Table 1). Both policy strategies strive to protect the integrity of athletic competition by limiting behavior that can influence the outcomes of competition. Both are centered on educational campaigns with similar goals and methods of delivering their messages. There are, however, some key differences. In particular, the EU policy pertains to professional athletes and does not include sanctions on behavior, only guidelines for what is considered appropriate. In contrast, the NCAA policy has strict punitive consequences for amateur athletes that violate the gambling policy, including loss of the ability to engage in athletic competition at the collegiate level. The newly implemented EU policy and that of the NCAA seek to protect the integrity of athletic competition from the negative influences of sports wagering by athletes. It is still unclear whether the broad guidelines of the European policy

or the sanctions of the NCAA will be more successful in meeting their intended goals.

-Erica Marshall

What do you think? Please use the comment link below to provide feedback on this article.

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