

IUPUI Athletics

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Hazing and Harassment: How Jokes Land Jocks in Jail

by Justin Kuhn

Hazing: to most people, the word brings to mind frat houses and wooden paddles. However, the problem of hazing goes far beyond fraternities and is just as common in the locker room as the frat house. Take a moment to ask yourself; have you ever witnessed hazing? Have you ever been hazed yourself? Before you answer, consider the following definition of hazing:

“Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”

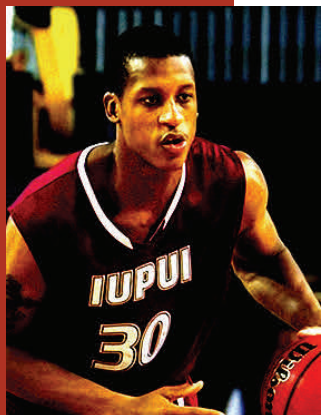
A University of Maine study found that approximately three out of four varsity student-athletes reported participating in at least one activity that met this definition of hazing. However, only 12% of those student-athletes thought the behavior was actually hazing. This is because participants often view these dangerous or degrading activities as “tradition” or “a rite of passage” that everyone has to go through. Likewise, many believe that hazing is only an activity that an individual is forced to take part in. This is simply not true. Just because a fellow teammate consents to participate in a questionable activity doesn’t mean they want to participate. In fact, they may feel pressured or coerced to take part for fear of being ostracized by their teammates.

POP QUIZ: Recruiting, Hosting & Social Media

Maria Supernova is a prospective student-athlete (PSA) being recruited by the IUPUI Tennis coaches. Decide whether the following activities are permissible or impermissible under NCAA rules.

1. You are a Tennis player and a friend of Maria’s from high school. While you are home for break, you and Maria decide to go out to lunch together.
2. Maria is coming on an official visit and the coach has you host her because you are friends. You tweet “hosting my gurl @MariSupernova at IUPUI this weekend.”
3. Before lunch, you tweet “Bout to take @MariSupernova to Bazbeaux’s for lunch.”
4. Before lunch, you direct message Maria telling her to meet you at Bazbeaux’s at noon.
5. Afterward, you instagram a picture the waiter took of you and Maria eating.
6. You text Maria and ask her what she is doing this weekend.
7. Maria had shoulder surgery last year. Your coach tells you to call Maria and ask her how her shoulder is feeling this season.
8. You are a member of another team (not Tennis) and do not know Maria personally. You tweet “@MariSupernova come to IUPUI and help Tennis win a title next year!”
9. Maria has not signed a National Letter of Intent (NLI) but tweets “Made up my mind. I’m going to IUPUI next year!!” You retweet her.

(Answers on Page 4)



Hazing, continued from page 1

Alcohol and Hazing

Consuming alcohol and participating in drinking contests are common examples of hazing that are often not treated as a serious issue. Many younger student-athletes feel compelled to take part and are often put in serious physical danger as a result (not to mention that underage drinking is illegal and a good way to earn an arrest record and lose a scholarship). Last month, Cornell suspended its lacrosse team (ranked 3rd nationally) for the entire season after reports of a drinking competition. A report on Cornell's hazing website says the team held a "keg race," in which freshman were challenged to chug a large amount of beer in a competition against other team members (resulting in many of the freshman vomiting). The school chose to punish the entire team, not just the organizers of the event, and suspended the team for 365 days.

Violent Hazing

Although losing an entire season of competition sounds bad, it is nowhere near the worst consequence of hazing. Hazing is illegal in most states, including Indiana, and for good reason. College hazing has led to the serious injury and death of numerous individuals. Many such injuries are alcohol related but others, such as the list below, involve more direct and violent behavior.

- Beating, paddling or other forms of assault
- Branding
- Water intoxication (being forced to drink excessive amounts water causing hysteria, paralysis, and death)
- Abductions/kidnaps
- Exposure to cold weather or extreme heat without appropriate protection
- Other illegal activity

CASES OF HAZING RESULTING IN INJURY AND DEATH

In 2011, a Florida A&M band member was killed after agreeing to a ritual called "crossing bus C," in which he entered a dark bus and was kicked and punched while trying to make his way to the back. Twelve of the A&M band members are currently facing charges of manslaughter. The fact that the victim was not forced to participate in the ritual doesn't make the result any easier to stomach and shows that many times individuals will feel pressured to volunteer for hazing.

In 2007, a Wabash freshman suffered serious brain damage when fellow fraternity members were attempting to "shower" him ("showering" involved forcefully placing individuals under running water in the shower and was often done to celebrate birthdays or other occasions). As the victim was being carried to the shower, one fraternity brother, a former Wabash wrestler, put the victim in a chokehold until he fell unconscious. The other fraternity brothers panicked and dropped the victim, resulting in serious head trauma. The victim sued the school and all the fraternity brothers involved in the incident.

Hazing, continued from page 2

Subtle Hazing

Although incidents of violent physical hazing receive more media coverage, “subtle hazing” is a much more common problem. Subtle hazing is often a result of behavior that emphasizes a power imbalance between new and older members of a team. The term “subtle hazing” includes general harassment and verbal or emotional abuse. This type of hazing is often taken for granted or accepted as harmless. Subtle hazing typically involves activities or attitudes that breach reasonable standards of mutual respect, and place new members on the receiving end of ridicule, embarrassment and/or humiliation. New members often feel the need to endure subtle hazing to feel like part of the team. The NCAA listed the following as examples of subtle hazing:

- Deception
- Assigning demerits with implied consequences
- Silence periods with implied threats for violation
- Deprivation of privileges granted to other members
- Requiring new members to perform duties not assigned to other members
- Socially isolating new members
- Line-ups and drills/tests on meaningless information
- Name calling
- Identifying new members with demeaning names or titles



Solution: Team Leadership

Team captains and upperclassmen have a special role in combatting the hazing problem. As the individuals that organize most team functions, it is the upperclassmen’s job to spot and prevent potential issues. Remember, an activity that may seem light-hearted to you may be embarrassing, emotionally damaging or outright dangerous to someone else. It is important for team leaders to take an active role in facilitating safety and make sure that teammates (especially underclassmen) do not feel pressured to take part in questionable activities (particularly underage drinking). Team leaders should focus on activities that build trust and cohesiveness. Hazing only creates divisiveness and schisms between teammates. The NCAA suggests team leaders use the following questions to help think about issues of hazing when planning activities.

- Is this a team activity in which members are encouraged or expected to attend and in which minors are consuming alcohol?
- Will upperclassmen refuse to participate with the underclassmen (e.g. freshman v. upperclassmen competitions)?
- Does the activity risk emotional or physical abuse?
- Is there a risk of injury or a question of safety?
- Would you have any reservations describing the activity to your parents, coach, professor or university official?
- Would you object to the activity being photographed for the school newspaper or local television news?

Now ask yourself again if you’ve ever been involved in hazing, or if you’ve ever been pressured into an uncomfortable or questionable situation by your teammates or friends. Even teammates don’t **force** anyone to take part, the **expectation that others join in** is enough to merit concern. So what can you do if you witness hazing?

- 1. Don’t turn a blind eye to hazing – just because its ‘tradition’ doesn’t make it okay.**
- 2. Recognize hazing behavior for what it is – don’t write it off as ‘just teasing.’**
- 3. Talk to somebody – coach, teammates, team captain, or athletic administrators.**

Even if you don’t participate in the activity, you still have a responsibility to intervene. Remember, the consequences can affect the entire team, not just those perpetrating the behavior. Finally, make sure it’s not YOU that’s engaging in harassing behavior. It’s easy for a joke to go too far or for a younger apprehensive teammate to take something the wrong way.

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ASK BEFORE YOU ACT!!!!

Pop-Quiz Answers

1. Permissible. The NCAA does not prohibit you from hanging out with friends who happen to be PSAs (unless a coach tells you to hang out with the PSA, which would make it impermissible).
2. Impermissible. The NCAA does not allow schools to publicize a PSA's activities regarding a visit to the campus.
3. Impermissible. For the same reason as above, you cannot post information about the PSA's visit that the public can see (even if your twitter has restricted access).
4. Permissible. It is okay to contact a PSA via text or social media as long as the communication is private (i.e. IM, direct message, or facebook chat are okay – posting on PSA's wall or tweeting them is not.)
5. Impermissible. IUPUI cannot post pictures of PSAs on visits to campus before they sign a NLI.
6. Permissible. It is okay for enrolled student-athletes to text PSAs, provided it is not done at the direction of an IUPUI staff member.
7. Impermissible. A coach is not allowed to tell a student-athlete to contact a PSA.
8. Impermissible. IUPUI staff and athletes are not allowed to comment publicly on a PSAs athletic ability or contribution they could make at IUPUI. Note: it doesn't matter if you play a different sport, the same rules still apply to you!
9. Impermissible. IUPUI staff and athletes cannot comment publicly about the likelihood of a PSA committing to IUPUI until after they signed a NLI.