



PRESS RELEASE

Coaches' Opinions Considered

ATLANTA, Ga. (January 10, 2007) -- The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) announced on Monday, January 8, 2007, that the NCAA Division III proposed legislation restricting the use of male practice players at the NCAA Division III level has been deferred for further consideration. The proposed legislation, termed Official Notice Number 6 and 6-1, will be discussed again during the NCAA Division III Management Council meeting in mid-April.

"The WBCA and its entire membership are pleased that the NCAA Division III leadership chose to defer this legislation until more information is gathered," said WBCA CEO Beth Bass. "In the fall of 2006, the WBCA conducted a survey in which all three divisions overwhelmingly supported the use of male practice players. We encourage the NCAA Division III leadership to have open dialogue and take our coaches' opinions into consideration, steps that NCAA Division I and Division II are currently taking."

In December 2006, the NCAA's Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA) called for a ban on male practice players. It concluded the custom violates the spirit of gender equity and Title IX, the 1972 federal law banning sex discrimination in sports. NCAA Division III had the only legislation currently in cycle – Official Notice Number 6 and Official Notice 6-1. Official Notice Number 6 states that male practice players will only be permitted to practice in the traditional segment, will be limited to one practice per week and the number of male practice players shall not exceed half of the number of student-athletes required to field a starting unit in that sport. Official Notice 6-1 amends Official Notice 6 and states that male practice players will be limited to three practices per week and the number of male practice players for each team sport shall not exceed the number of student-athletes required to field a starting unit in that sport.

NCAA Division I and Division II are each surveying their membership to determine the next steps for legislation on the issue and Division III is now considering similar action. The WBCA has extended the opportunity to several NCAA Division III member coaches and their student-athletes to allow them to voice their opinion on the use of male practice players:

Nan Carney-DeBord, Ohio Wesleyan University: "As a result of being at academically challenging institutions, the Division III basketball coaches do not always have full rosters at practice. Academic guest speakers, science labs as well as additional study opportunities often take place during the practice times. Male practice players offer practice opportunities on those days without full rosters. Additionally, they have been helpful to those institutions who struggle with numbers in any given year. The

Division III athlete plays for the love of the game only and there is no scholarship underlying motivation, thus there are many variables affecting playing and practice organization. Male practice players tend to be those individuals who played high school ball, but are not talented enough for college ball, however, have more physical prowess than those female athletes on campus who have never played the game. The female athletes with basketball prowess on Division III campuses tend to be on the varsity roster. Over the years, the players on my bench who do not get "game minutes" have complained about being "practice dummies". The use of male practice players offer EVERY member of the team the opportunity to practice against strong individuals without constantly "beating up" each other. The teaching tool is using the male practice players as a 'scout team'. It challenges the more talented players and provides lesser skilled players more 'game-like' conditions without hurting the dynamics and relationships of the women within the team."

Rachel Messaros (Senior, Captain), Emily Lloyd (Senior, Captain) and Lindsey Macklin (Junior, Starter), Ohio Wesleyan University: "Male practice players allow the opportunity to play 'new personnel' and individuals for whom we do not already know their tendencies, thus preparing us for gamelike situations. The majority of basketball talented women on campus are participating in varsity basketball, while the availability of male basketball talent is more prevalent. It allows for learning opportunities in the form of a scout team. In the 'male perspective' as indicated by our peers that are the male practice players, it provides 'school pride' and enhanced respect and admiration of the female athlete."

Tim Shea, Salem State College: "DIII needs to step back and perform more research before passing restrictive legislation. This is exactly what the other divisions are doing currently. If legislation is necessary then we should take a more moderate approach and support the Mass State College Athletic Conference amendment. This would allow males to be used with little change and give us time to reassess if any action is really needed. The practice arena is not an area that should be legislated. Coaches should not be told who and when and how to use personnel. The coaches know best what the team needs to succeed. If a coach is not competent to utilize all of their personnel, female and male, then that is poor coaching and the Athletic Director should handle this issue. Legislation is not the cure all."

Michelle Gosselin (Junior, Captain), Salem State College: "I don't think there is anything wrong with using male practice players. I know my sophomore year they were used as a benefit to us because of the low number of players on the team. No one on the women's team was negatively affected by this. I feel as long as they are used within reason there is nothing wrong with the use of male practice players."

Pam Ruder, Southwestern University: "As a coach I want to prepare my team for competition by creating more intense situations for my players to practice against so that when it comes game time we will be ready to handle what our opponents present. One way of doing this is to utilize male practice players who because they are bigger and faster they make our players improve their skills and encourage them to speed up their decision making process. Limiting the use of male practice players should simply be at the discretion of the coach who is working with their team on a daily basis to become the best that they can be."

Meg Connelly (Senior, Post), Southwestern University: "Male practice players are

helpful because they provide an opportunity to go against someone other than the same teammates day after day. Males also can help us prepare better for our opponents as they can run their sets or emulate their players. In our practices every player has the opportunity to go against the male practice players and therefore it doesn't take anything away but rather by challenging us with bigger, faster opponents everybody improves."

"The WBCA will persistently fight for the continued use of male practice players at all levels. We feel strongly that the use of male practice players is vital to the growth of women's basketball and female student-athletes. In order to ensure this growth, we have to stay out of our coaches' classrooms," Bass said. "We have fought for 30 years for the opportunity to compete in intercollegiate athletics. We should not have to fight for the opportunity to improve."