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SPORT SOCIOLOGY

Gamesmanship Beliefs and Ethical Decision Making of College Athletes

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Abstract

Almost 30 years ago Eitzen (1988) stated, "American sport is plagued with problems. Coaches engage in outrageous behaviors but if they win, are rewarded handsomely. Gratuitous violence is glorified in the media. Some athletes take drugs. Many athletes in their search for a competitive edge cheat. Sports organizations take advantage of athletes" (p. 17). In many respects, not much has changed in the past 30 years and the issues of ethical practice, wrongdoing, and sportsmanship continue to be discussed (Doty, 2006; Garbin, 2010; Garner, 2013; Harrison-Dyer, 2011; May, 2001; Robbins, 2004; Rudd & Mondello, 2006; Ryska, 2003).

Sportsmanship has been defined as "a concern and respect for the rules and officials, social conventions, the opponent, as well as one's full commitment to one's sport and the relative absence of a negative approach toward sport participation" (Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard, & Provencher, 1997, p. 198). Most individuals engaged in sport participation or who simply enjoy watching sporting events understand what sportsmanship is and what it looks like. A sporting behavior that some might consider the opposite of sportsmanship and that is more difficult to define is gamesmanship. Howe (2004) defined gamesmanship as

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> the attempt to gain competitive advantage either by an artful manipulation of the rules that does not actually violate them or by the psychological manipulation or unsettling of the opponent (or sometimes the officials), whether this be by intimidation, nondisclosure of information, outright deception, or the first alternative (instrumental use of the rules). (p. 213)

Gamesmanship consists of efforts to push the boundaries but stay within the rules, pressure to undermine an opponent's psychological readiness during competition, or otherwise rely on indirect techniques to gain a competitive advantage in sport. In essence, the practice of gamesmanship might simply depend on one's personal ethical standards and/or moral development or moral reasoning. This study seeks to explore the gamesmanship beliefs of athletes participating in the competitive environment of college athletics.

Character, Sports, and Gamesmanship

A common claim in the field of sports is that sport participation "builds character" in athletes (Doty, 2006). Based on this claim, it logically follows that athletes have the opportunity to learn a set of values that could be used to guide a person's choices in sports competition and reflect a person's development of character. Kolhberg (1973) proposed six developmental stages of moral development, including (1) obedience and punishment orientation, (2) self-interest orientation, (3) interpersonal accord and conformity, (4) authority and social-order maintaining orientation, (5) social contract orientation, and (6) universal ethical principles. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe each stage, suffice to say that each stage leads to more advanced moral development. Kohlberg's theory posits that moral reasoning is the basis for ethical choices and behavior. Simply put, the more advanced a person's moral reasoning, the more likely he or she is to display sound ethical behavior.

For many years, scholars studying sport have examined ethical beliefs, moral development, and sportsmanship practices of athletes and coaches (Beller & Stoll, 1995; Doty, 2006; Hahm, 1989; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001; Rees, Howell, & Miracle, 1990; Rudd & Stoll, 2004; Weiss & Bredemeier, 1990). Many commentators, in fact, have suggested that sports participation plays a unique and spe-

cial role in facilitating character development (Green & Gabbard, 1999; National Federation of State High School Associations, n.d.; Sage, 1990; Sandlin, Keathley, & Sandlin, 2013). On the other hand, some have questioned if sport participation builds character and instead have suggested that the longer a person engages in sport, the more negatively affected his or her moral reasoning (Bredemeier & Shields, 1984; Stoll & Beller, n.d.). In addition, there is evidence that the type of values emphasized in a competitive sport context tends to be "social values" (e.g., teamwork) important to success in that environment rather than "moral values" (e.g., integrity; Rudd & Mondello, 2006). In other words, a person's decisions related to sportsmanship are likely to be shaped not only by moral reasoning but also by competitive pressures, peer and authority figure influences, and situational strategies.

An important topic that has not been studied as extensively as sportsmanship is the concept of gamesmanship (Howe, 2004). Almost all coaches talk with their athletes about sportsmanship, fair play, and doing the "right thing," but often, while in the heat of the moment during competition, they emphasize the win-at-all-cost approach (Garbin, 2010). This approach may be found in youth league, high school, and collegiate sports (Garber, 2006; Garner, 2013). The competitive environment of sports and the drive to win are where gamesmanship comes into play and result in difficult decision making for athletes and coaches.

Strand (2014) defined acts of gamesmanship to include "arguing with officials, opposing players, opposing coaches, and opposing fans as well as breaking, bending, or failing to assist in the application of rules that are implemented to protect the integrity of the game" (p. 20). The use of trick plays that bend the rules or embarrass an opposing team is an example of gamesmanship. Such strategies can include hidden ball tricks, distraction plays, or specific plays designed to deceive the opposing players intentionally. A different example occurs when an ice hockey coach calls on a player to enter a game as the "enforcer" or "goon" to intimidate opponents or protect a teammate. The choices and strategies utilized by athletes that reflect gamesmanship shed important light on a dimension of the sport environment that has been studied little and deserves further investigation.

Recently, researchers have investigated the gamesmanship beliefs and sport decision making of high school athletes, high school coaches, and college athletes (Chen, 2014; Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2007, 2008; Sandlin et al., 2013; Strand, 2014; Strand & Ziegler, 2010). At this point, there is little information on what strategies are considered to be acceptable or unacceptable by college-level athletes in the context of gamesmanship. Further, limited information exists on how college athletes vary in their gamesmanship beliefs by relevant contextual factors (e.g., gender, type of sport). This study continues to push forward a research emphasis in this area and investigates the gamesmanship beliefs and ethical decision making of college athletes. The following research questions were investigated:

- What percentage of college athletes identify gamesmanship statements as acceptable practices in athletics?
- Is there a difference in the percentage of subjects by gender, size of institution, academic standing, and type of sport who identify gamesmanship statements as acceptable practices in athletics?

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were 455 college athletes from four universities in two rural Midwestern states in the United States. As shown in Table 1, there were more male respondents (n = 283, 62.8%) than female respondents (n = 172, 37.2%) who elected to complete the survey. With respect to academic status, a greater number of freshmen (n = 173) completed the survey than did sophomore (n = 114), junior (n = 92), and senior (n = 76) athletes. Participating athletes represented Division I (n = 158), Division II (n = 81), Division III (n = 64), and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA; n = 152) institutions. Finally, subjects participated in seven sports including football (n = 113), track and field (n = 82), baseball (n = 69), basketball (n = 68), softball (n = 60), soccer (n = 33), and volleyball (n = 30).

Table 1
Demographic Data

Variable	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	283	62.2
Female	172	37.8
Academic Standing		
Freshman	173	38.0
Sophomore	114	25.1
Junior	92	20.2
Senior	76	16.7
Institution		
1 - Division I	158	34.7
2 - Division II	81	17.8
3 - Division III	64	15.1
4 - NAIA	152	33.4
Sport		
1 - Basketball	68	14.9
2 - Baseball	69	15.2
3 - Football	113	24.8
4 - Softball	60	13.2
5 - Track and Field	82	18.0
6 - Volleyball	30	6.6
7 - Soccer	33	7.3

Instrumentation

The Josephson Institute of Ethics developed a survey entitled Values, Attitudes, and Behavior in Sport. The survey for this study was adapted from the Josephson Institute survey and used to collect the data for this study. Permission was obtained from the Josephson Institute to use the instrument. The survey consisted of 25 sportsmanship and gamesmanship statements that asked individuals responding to indicate, using a 4-point Likert scale, if an action was clearly acceptable (1), acceptable (2), unacceptable (3), or clearly unacceptable (4). The survey also included four demographic items including gender, academic status, institution, and sport type. A reliability assessment of the gamesmanship survey questions was con-

ducted (Cronbach's α = .94), which indicated a high consistency and reliability for the statements on the survey instrument.

The survey was further validated for content, construct, and face validity by a panel of experts with experience in survey research and who were knowledgeable in the field of sport sociology. Additionally, this survey or adaptations of the survey have been used in previous research (Chen, 2014; Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2008; Sandlin et al., 2013; Strand, 2014; Strand & Ziegler, 2010).

Procedure

The university institutional review board (IRB) approved this research protocol prior to data collection. Upon IRB approval, researchers contacted coaches of the various teams at each institution, informing them of the purpose of the study and asking if they would be willing to allow the researchers to attend a practice to collect data. Upon approval, researchers visited the sport teams at each of the institutions. At the team meetings, athletes were informed of the purpose of study, asked to read and acknowledge their willingness to participate on a consent form that was approved by the IRB, and then completed the survey. All individuals who were surveyed were at least 18 years of age.

Analysis of the Data

Completed surveys were collected and data were entered into the SPSS (version 21) for analysis. To analyze the data, the researchers used statistical procedures including crosstabs to determine percentages and a contingency chi-square test to explore statistical differences for gender, academic status, institution size, and sport. For further analysis, the responses were combined into two categories: clearly acceptable/acceptable (aka acceptable) and unacceptable/clearly unacceptable (aka unacceptable). The researchers used a crosstabs analysis and Pearson chi-square tests of association to identify statistical significance within the variables.

Results

Table 2 highlights the survey statements related to gamesmanship and the percentage of college athletes who identified the statements as clearly acceptable/acceptable. The Pearson's chi-square test of association found significant differences at the $p \leq .05$ level, iden-

tifying the actions as clearly acceptable/acceptable or unacceptable/clearly unacceptable within gender for all but seven of the gamesmanship statements (Statement 4: "The idea that it's wrong to 'run up the score' is outdated. A team should continue to score as many points as they possibly can even when the outcome is no longer in doubt"; Statement 11: "After scoring, a player does an elaborate showboat dance in front of the opponent's bench"; Statement 15: "On the winning point of the game, a volleyball player touches the ball before it goes out, but the referee misses the touch. The player says nothing"; Statement 17: "In tennis, a ball is called out though the player is certain it hit the line. The player says nothing and takes the point"; Statement 18: "In soccer, a player deliberately fakes a foul hoping the best player on the other team will be red carded and removed from the game"; Statement 20: "In a game, an official makes a mistake in the score. The coach who benefits says nothing"; Statement 21: "Before an important game, a coach receives an anonymous envelope with an authentic playbook of the opponent. The coach uses the playbook in preparing his/her team"). For each of the 18 gamesmanship statements in which significant differences were identified by gender, female athletes were consistently more likely to identify the action as unacceptable/clearly unacceptable than male athletes. Thus, a consistent association was found between gender of the athlete and the likelihood of finding a suggested gamesmanship action to be acceptable, with a higher percentage of male athletes than female athletes responding that particular actions would be acceptable for each item where differences existed.

Table 2
Percentage of College Athletes Who Believe the Statement Is Clearly Acceptable or Acceptable

	Statement	%
1	In a contact sport, a coach instructs players to go after the injured shoulder of the other team's leading player to slow him/her down or to get him/her out of the game.	17.4
2	In baseball, a key player for X is hit by a pitch. In retaliation, X's coach orders his pitcher to throw at an opposing hitter.	20.2
3	In a contact sport, an athlete deliberately seeks to inflict pain on an opposing player to intimidate him.	29.9

Table 2 (cont.)

	Statement	%
4	The idea that it's wrong to "run up the score" is outdated. A team should continue to score as many points as they possibly can even when the outcome is no longer in doubt.	45.6
5	In a sport where certain types of contact with an opponent is illegal (e.g., holding, hand-checking, pushing, or grabbing), a coach teaches his or her players to violate the rules in ways that will be least likely to be detected.	26.2
6	In baseball/softball, a pitcher deliberately throws at a batter who homered the last time up.	16.0
7	Effective taunting and trash-talking that throws an opponent off his/her game is a legitimate part of competitive sports.	51.2
8	In a sport where only a certain number of team time-outs are allowed, a coach with no time-outs left instructs a player to fake an injury to get an "official" time-out.	16.2
9	In ice hockey, a coach sends in a player to intimidate opponents and protect his own players.	71.9
10	An athlete, who knows other athletes have done so without getting caught, illegally alters his/her equipment (e.g., hockey stick, baseball bat) to gain an advantage.	7.0
11	After scoring, a player does an elaborate showboat dance in front of the opponent's bench.	22.7
12	In basketball, player X is fouled. Player Y, the team's best free throw shooter, goes to the line undetected by the ref.	14.3
13	A coach instructs a groundskeeper to alter the field if the coach believes it will give his/her team an advantage (e.g., soaking a field to slow down opponents, sloping a foul line to keep bunts fair, letting grass grow long, etc.).	17.3
14	In soccer, during a penalty kick, a goalie, hoping the referee will not call it, deliberately violates the rules by moving forward three steps past the line before the ball is kicked.	20.7
15	On the winning point of the game, a volleyball player touches the ball before it goes out, but the referee misses the touch. The player says nothing.	65.9
16	A coach argues with an official intending to intimidate or influence future calls.	47.9

Table 2 (cont.)

	Statement	%
17	In tennis, a ball is called out though the player is certain it hit the line. The player says nothing and takes the point.	65.7
18	In soccer, a player deliberately fakes a foul hoping the best player on the other team will be red carded and removed from the game.	27.0
19	While on the bench, players boo, taunt, and jeer opponents.	33.7
20	In a game, an official makes a mistake in the score. The coach who benefits says nothing.	35.4
21	Before an important game, a coach receives an anonymous envelope with an authentic playbook of the opponent. The coach uses the playbook in preparing his/her team.	28.0
22	A coach deliberately swears at an official to get thrown out of the game in order to energize his/her team.	38.7
23	To motivate players, a coach uses profanity and personal insults while coaching.	29.5
24	After making a great play, an athlete pounds his/her chest boastfully and does an "in your face" celebration dance in front of an opponent.	35.0
25	A coach, knowing the star player on the other team is a hothead, instructs his/her team to taunt, provoke, and foul the star to get the player to react and get thrown out of the game.	55.1

When athletes were compared by size of the institution where they participated, Pearson chi-square tests revealed statistically significant differences at the $p \leq .05$ level for all but three gamesmanship statements (Statement 4: "The idea that it's wrong to 'run up the score' is outdated. A team should continue to score as many points as they possibly can even when the outcome is no longer in doubt"; Statement 15: "On the winning point of the game, a volleyball player touches the ball before it goes out, but the referee misses the touch. The player says nothing"; and Statement 17: "In tennis, a ball is called out though the player is certain it hit the line. The player says nothing and takes the point"). In response to gamesmanship examples for all other statements, athletes at smaller collegiate

institutions (e.g., NAIA school) were significantly more likely to find gamesmanship practices to be acceptable than were college athletes at larger institutions. Consistently, college athletes at the Division I and II levels (larger institutions) were more likely to respond that particular gamesmanship examples were unacceptable than athletes at the Division III or NAIA level.

When respondents were compared based on academic status (year in school), Pearson chi-square test statistics revealed statistically significant differences at the $p \leq .05$ level for only three gamesmanship statements (Statement 2: "In baseball, a key player for X is hit by a pitch. In retaliation, X's coach orders his pitcher to throw at an opposing hitter"; Statement 15: "On the winning point of the game, a volleyball player touches the ball before it goes out, but the referee misses the touch. The player says nothing"; Statement 24: "After making a great play, an athlete pounds his/her chest boastfully and does an 'in your face' celebration dance in front of an opponent"). In the first example, junior- and senior-level athletes, compared to freshman and sophomore athletes, were significantly more likely to indicate a baseball coach's order to throw the ball at an opposing player after a teammate had been hit was acceptable. Senior-level athletes were also more likely than athletes in earlier grades to agree Statement 15 was acceptable and a player could say nothing about a missed foul on a game-winning point. Finally, college athletes at the freshman through junior levels were more likely than senior athletes to agree that "showboat" behavior in front of opposing athletes was acceptable (Statement 24). However, in all other gamesmanship examples that were provided, the college athletes expressed similar levels of acceptance or nonacceptance regardless of their year in school.

A final examination of college athlete responses related to gamesmanship used a contingency table analysis and Pearson chi-square tests to investigate differences by type of sport. Due to the length and complexity of the significant differences by sport type across different gamesmanship practices, the full results of this analysis are not detailed here and are the subject of a separate study. However, in general when responses were compared across the seven sports that college athletes were engaged in, the Pearson chi-square tests revealed that statistically different patterns existed by sport type for

21 of the 25 gamesmanship statements. No significant differences at the $p \leq .05$ level were observed by sport type for four of the gamesmanship statements (Statement 4: "The idea that it's wrong to 'run up the score' is outdated. A team should continue to score as many points as they possibly can even when the outcome is no longer in doubt"; Statement 11: "After scoring, a player does an elaborate showboat dance in front of the opponent's bench"; Statement 12: "In basketball, player X is fouled. Player Y, the team's best free throw shooter, goes to the line to shoot the free throw undetected by the referee"; Statement 21: "Before an important game, a coach receives an anonymous envelope with an authentic playbook of the opponent. The coach uses the playbook in preparing his/her team"). Thus, college athletes across sport type demonstrate roughly similar levels of agreement on the acceptability of these four gamesmanship practices (i.e., running up the score, showboating, not informing the referee of a mistake, and using insider information to prepare for a contest). On all other items, however, there is distinct variation in how college athletes respond to the acceptability of particular scenarios depending on the type of sport being played and the context of the gamesmanship example.

Discussion

In a general sense, college athletes' responses to the survey statements indicated they would most often exhibit proper ethical decision making and gamesmanship for the actions the statements described. In fact, 68% (17 out of 25) of the gamesmanship scenarios suggested were deemed to be acceptable by less than one third of the college athletes (≤ 35%). However, for five of the specified gamesmanship statements, the athlete responses were quite different (Statement 7, 51.2%; Statement 9, 71.9%; Statement 15, 65.9%; Statement 17, 65.7%; and Statement 25, 55.1%), with more than 50% of the respondents indicating they found the action described to be acceptable. Three of these statements deal primarily with the practice of mental intimidation or "psyching out" an opponent, including effective verbal sparring or "trash-talking" (Statement 7), sending in a player to harass an opponent or protect one's own player (Statement 9), or instructing players to taunt or harass a player to provoke a frustrated reaction (Statement 25). Because mental toughness is often considered to be a component of successful athletic endeavor, such

gamesmanship strategies are designed to challenge an opponent's psychological strength and achieve a competitive advantage (Howe, 2004). It may be that college athletes are more inclined to frame such practices as acceptable because these practices push boundaries but do not directly violate rules, deceive, or cause bodily harm. The two other statements directly involve referee mistakes and lack of player disclosure, both dealing with when a referee misses a player violation or a technical call that would change a point (Statements 15 and 17). Because it is often argued that referees in sport are "human" and will make enough mistakes that the consequences will "even out" for each side, athletes may be prone to believe that it is the referee's responsibility to enforce rules rather than their own responsibility and thus consider lack of disclosure as acceptable (Strand, 2014).

These findings highlight the contrast between two patterns identified in relationship to young athletes, sport participation, and ethical decision making. First, Kohlberg's (1973) theory and developmental science suggest that an individual's cognitive ability and moral development tend to become more sophisticated as a person grows older. Conversely, it has been suggested that an athlete's moral reasoning diminishes the longer he or she participates in sport (Bredemeier & Shields, 1984). The study does not explicitly include high school students, but the findings advance a comparison between the two groups (high school vs. college) due to these contrasting ideas. Specifically, this study's findings support previous research about gamesmanship and ethical decision making in that college athletes are more likely to accept questionable behaviors than are high school students (Sandlin et al., 2013; Strand & Ziegler, 2010). Additionally, this study clearly shows that male athletes are more likely to accept questionable behaviors in the context of gamesmanship than are female athletes (Chen, 2014; Sandlin et al., 2013). In addition, these findings parallel the findings of sportsmanship research (Bredemeier & Shields, 1984; Stoll & Beller, n.d.) in that college athletes are less likely to display behaviors of sportsmanship than are high school athletes and male athletes less so than female athletes. Beyond these basic findings, the data from this study suggest that perhaps the reality of ethical decision making and gamesmanship at the collegiate level of athletics is more complex.

With regard to gender, the findings show that male and female college athletes think similarly with regard to their levels of acceptance of about a third (28%) of gamesmanship practices. Whatever the level of acceptance, men and women do not differ in their judgments regarding practices that include running up the score (Statement 4), showing off (Statement 11), not correcting referee mistakes (Statements 15, 17, and 20), faking a foul (Statement 18), or using insider information to prepare for a team (Statement 21). But on the other two thirds of the statements, the responses of male athletes showed that they were typically 1.5 to 3 times more likely than female athletes to find particular gamesmanship strategies to be acceptable, when the two groups differed. However, this is complicated by the fact that male and female athletes may respond differently to some gamesmanship scenarios more specific to the sport types in which they compete at the collegiate level, such as football or hockey (commonly participated in by men). This may require further investigation.

At the collegiate level, the sports environment changes to a degree and college athletes may become more attuned to a "social values" perspective (teamwork, loyalty, hard work, etc.) on their choices in athletic competition than a "moral values" perspective (honesty, respect, compassion, etc.; Rudd & Mondello, 2006). Why might this be so? College athletes are often put in difficult situations because of the high pressure to win. The prestige of championships for universities, the job advancements for coaches, the financial incentives for athletic departments, and the branding and merchandising of team apparel combine to blur the lines of what is right and what is acceptable for athletes during competition. At the same time, coaches often talk about doing the right thing and encourage their athletes to maintain high moral and ethical standards; at the same time, coaches promote a motto of "whatever it takes to win." Because college athletic programs are often under the microscope of local fan and media scrutiny, particularly as the visibility of a program increases, some programs may emphasize ethical issues in the context of gamesmanship more stringently to athletes. We found it interesting that the findings in this study showed that college athletes at the Division I and II levels consistently identified certain gamesmanship practices as unacceptable more often than athletes

at smaller institutions (Division III, NAIA levels). This finding again raises the issue of context for the college athlete and its effect on ethical perspectives and training, as larger programs may have more staff and greater expectations to abide by stringent external regulations related to sportsmanship.

Although much has been written about positive youth development through sport participation at the youth level (Brunelle, Danish, & Forneris, 2007; Camiré, Forneris, Trudel, & Bernard, 2011; Camiré & Trudel, 2013; Miller & Strand, 2015), little work has been done with college athletes. One might ask, what role do college coaches play in ensuring their athletes make good decisions, and in fact, is it even the coaches' responsibility to ensure such? At the collegiate level, coaches have an extended and intensive opportunity to work with athletes and shape their developing views on ethics in sport and gamesmanship practices. It might be hypothesized that increased age, maturity, and exposure to coaching would result in refined ethical decision making by college athletes, but again the contrasting perspective that time in sport simply correlates with reduced moral reasoning shows up as an issue. For this study, no differences were found between college athletes of freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior status on their judgments of acceptable gamesmanship practices except for three items. Strand (2014) questioned high school coaches regarding their gamesmanship beliefs and found statistically significant differences between the responses of coaches and those of high school athletes. In fact, few of the high school coaches supported the gamesmanship situations as being acceptable. So, although the high school coaches and high school athletes indicated differing views of what is acceptable, the role coaches played in fostering the views of their athletes is not known. In the aforementioned article (Strand, 2014), high school coaches were not asked if they intentionally tried to foster positive development, good decision making, or gamesmanship behaviors.

The intentionality of college coaches in fostering awareness of and adherence to ethical practices in gamesmanship among college athletes is certainly a factor in the developing perspectives of young athletes. College coaches, unlike their high school counterparts, have a unique opportunity to affect attitudes in that they or their support staff are in contact with their athletes many hours of a day

through practice, conditioning, strength training, and study tables. The opportunities to affect attitudes and beliefs are limitless and often depend on the culture of a team or athletic department that has been established and fostered. However, because they have such close affiliations with their athletes, they need to be careful; their words, actions, and other cues may be analyzed, interpreted, and sometimes embedded into the minds of young athletes and may be misinterpreted, misused, contorted, or negatively changed (Strand, 2014).

On the other hand, it is perhaps naïve to think that a coach or coaching staff can change beliefs and questionable behaviors that have been fostered since early days in youth sports and sometimes quasi-encouraged by parents, coaches, fans, supporters, and multiple media sources. That being said, however, if coaches want to positively affect their athletes, they need to intentionally plan to do so (Dungy, 2010). As an initial step, coaches might administer a gamesmanship or decision-making questionnaire to their athletes in an attempt to identify questionable beliefs. After identifying these beliefs, coaches can intentionally plan team discussions based on the questionable beliefs. For example, the results of this study indicated that approximately 23% of the athletes believed that it is acceptable for a player to do a showboat dance in front of his or her opponent's bench after scoring. If this is a behavior a coach wants to discourage or eliminate, he or she must discuss it with athletes, because it is unlikely to disappear on its own with fans and supporters cheering the behavior and media outlets repeatedly highlighting these types of incidents.

Limitations and Conclusion

As with any project, this study has a number of limitations. First, the study findings are reliant on the honesty of the athletes who were surveyed. Next, the study relies on the interpretation of the gamesmanship statements by the athletes, and it is possible that some statements were confusing and athletes could interpret some of the terminology differently than what was intended by the researchers. Also, the individual's response may reflect an athlete's uncertainty of the rules of particular sports. If an athlete was not familiar with the rules or gamesmanship values of a given sport, he or she may not have been able to make a fair evaluation of the statement. Finally, the

survey was administered to athletes at four universities in two states, thus limiting the analysis to the athletes attending those universities.

We found value in the findings of this study and gained awareness of gamesmanship beliefs of college athletes. We anticipate further investigating the influences of athlete sport type and other factors on gamesmanship beliefs. Also, further research could enhance the topic of gamesmanship and decision making by taking a qualitative focus and asking why athletes believe certain questionable actions are considered acceptable. Because gamesmanship practices represent a common element of sport experience for young athletes, developing athletes at all levels will benefit from parents, coaches, teachers, and other role models who strive to increase awareness of ethical choices, discuss options and demonstrate positive choices, and reinforce the value of positive gamesmanship in developing character and enhancing the benefit of sport.

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