

## YAHOO! SPORTS

### MIAMI INVESTIGATION

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EXCLUSIVE



### Why Miami is in trouble



By Dan Wetzel, Yahoo! Sports 12 hours, 24 minutes ago

## YAHOO! SPORTS

Nevin Shapiro says he was drunk, humiliated and belligerent.

It was Miami's final home game ever at the Orange Bowl, Nov. 10, 2007. The halftime scoreboard read Virginia

31-0 (en route to a 48-0 embarrassment). Everything Shapiro held dear about the Hurricanes was being stomped on.

As a major booster to the program Shapiro had access to the Orange Bowl press box and that's where he spotted David Reed, the school's associate athletic director for compliance. Shapiro felt Reed had been implementing rules that were too stringent, trying to keep boosters and players apart.

To Shapiro, the results of Reed's efforts were manifesting themselves on the field. A once-powerful program was a competitive disgrace.

"So I tried to kick his ass," said Shapiro, who despite standing just 5-foot-5 was always willing to fight. "I was screaming at him, calling him a sissy over and over, at least five times. I



shouted, 'these guys are a bunch of (expletives) playing for a real (expletive) (head coach Randy Shannon) and, by the way, you're a (expletive) too.'

"I had to be held back from hitting him. I wanted to punch him in the face."

The scene was confirmed to Yahoo! Sports by a separate source who helped break up the situation. The University of Miami declined comment and didn't make Reed available for an interview.

### **[Y! Sports probe: Miami booster spells out illicit benefits to players]**

Shapiro never laid a hand on Reed but the wild, public scene is perhaps the most blatant example of a lack of institutional control ever seen in college athletics.

It almost perfectly sums up the depths the Miami program sank, except, well, that wasn't even rock bottom for the Hurricanes.

As bad as it was for a notorious booster to try to punch out the compliance director, worse is that the school allowed Shapiro to continue operating as he wished.

Shapiro said an athletic department official told him that after the confrontation Reed investigated Shapiro and discovered his troubling ties to athletes, coaches and his part ownership in a professional sports agency.

Shapiro said he was never questioned by Miami though and never limited in his activities until April 2010, when he was charged with running a \$930 million Ponzi scheme. He's since pled guilty and is currently serving a 20-year term in federal prison.

Shapiro was so welcome in the Miami family that in 2008 he even threw a fundraiser for the basketball program at the trendy Lucky Strike Lanes bowling alley in South Beach. It was attended by no less than UM president Donna Shalala, the former Secretary of Health and Human Services in the Clinton White House.

A small ceremony celebrating Shapiro's generosity was staged in front of the bowling lanes. A photo was snapped, revealing UM hoops coach Frank Haith and school mascot Sebastian the Ibis looking on, as Shapiro, clad in a Canes golf shirt, barked into a microphone. Standing next to him, Shalala stared happily at the \$50,000 check just presented her.

The money, Shapiro would later reveal, was all stolen. It was Ponzi cash.

The NCAA has a checklist when it comes to major infractions cases and Shapiro can click through most of it quickly. There's no denying his role as an official Miami booster – "an ardent, devoted, intense supporter," the school website once described him. There is no question he owned part of Axxess Sports, which had signed Vince Wilfork and Jon Beason, Hurricane players who became first-round NFL picks.

And there is no question Shapiro provided scores of Miami athletes with impermissible benefits from 2002-2010. In March 2011, he began working with a team of NCAA investigators and Shapiro said they call it, "the biggest case they've ever had." Multiple media reports say NCAA investigators were on the Coral Gables campus Monday.

The most difficult issue for Miami, the one that will cause the NCAA hammer to drop harder and swifter than any other is this: did school officials know, or should they have known, of Shapiro's actions?

"Everybody knew," said Shapiro, who tried to hide specific actions but overall wanted to be seen as a big-time player on the scene. "The whole town knew. I didn't care who knew. With all that I was doing (illegally), do you think I cared about the NCAA? I thought I was invincible. My mentality with Miami was, 'what are you going to do about it?'"

“And you know what? They didn’t do anything.”

Not even after he tried to fight the compliance director.

Both the scope and severity of the major violations that Shapiro both cops to and backs up with bank records, financial statements, credit card receipts, emails, phone bills and witnesses is simply unprecedented in the history of the NCAA.

Most damning, however, is the Miami administration allowing Nevin Shapiro into its world and then never kicking him out.

Just this year Ohio State was able to avoid a lack of institutional control charge by arguing only then-head coach Jim Tressel knew of violations within the program. North Carolina was able to do the same by cordoning blame solely on associate head coach John Blake.

Plausible deniability is a school’s best friend in the NCAA’s enforcement process; setting up walls between frontline coaches and the administrators who serve as the conscience of the university.



Even by the loose standards the NCAA allows, it doesn’t seem plausible Miami could make that claim with Nevin Shapiro. This wasn’t the case of just one action or one relationship with a coach, Shapiro says he dealt with seven different football and basketball coaches, regularly took them out to dinner and strip clubs and even loaned one \$5,000.

Shapiro was always begging for attention. His relationships with players were out in the open – from hugs in the postgame locker room, to meals at popular South Beach restaurants, to huge gatherings in VIP sections, all bankrolled by him. Shapiro had been honored by the school on the field during games and taken in action from the Canes sideline. He had access to practices. He twice led the team onto the field and once flew to a road game on the team charter.

When Miami was looking for a replacement for head coach Larry Coker after the 2006 season, Shapiro met with Shalala and offered not to just coach the team for free, but to personally pay \$1 million a year for the nation’s best offensive and defensive coordinators.

“Just let me walk the sidelines,” Shapiro said he told Shalala. “She was laughing. I wasn’t.”

When Randy Shannon got the job, Shapiro said he had a face-to-face meeting with him on his first day as coach.

#### **[Related: Who is Nevin Shapiro?]**

If anything, Shapiro became even bigger and bolder after nearly fighting David Reed. The next fall, when the program moved its home games to what is now called Land Shark Stadium, he rented luxury box 239B.

It promptly became home to wild partying, excessive drinking and open gambling from a rather non-collegiate cast of characters – everyone from former rapper and notorious Miami fan Luther Campbell to assorted ladies of the night.

“I had an architect try to put a stripper pole in the suite,” Shapiro said. “Aesthetically it wouldn’t work.”

Shapiro said Shalala's own box was located just down the hall and the president often stopped by (the university declined comment). So too did former players, parents, recruits and coaches, according to Shapiro, corroborating witnesses and photos of the suite.

This was no blend-into-the-scenery-figure around the Miami athletic department. He wasn't some mild mannered alum who quietly doled out hundred dollar handshakes.

He was front and center, profane and begging to be noticed. Nevin Shapiro never does anything quietly. He yearns to be seen, to be heard, to be respected. If there was ever a booster who should've garnered close inspection, it was the 30-something wild man, the guy players dubbed "Lil' Luke", who was burning through millions.

Paul Dee ran the Miami athletic department from 1993-2008. Into 2010 he was the chairman of the NCAA's committee on infractions, where he was known for doling out stern and controversial penalties against USC football and Memphis basketball.

"High-profile players demand high-profile compliance," said Dee, citing USC's failure to monitor all parts of Reggie Bush's life as reason for heavy sanctions.

So what about high-profile boosters?

In March of 2011, four months after he had begun working with Yahoo Sports on this story, Nevin Shapiro sat in his jail cell of the Hudson County (N.J.) Correctional Facility, penned a one-page letter and sent it to the NCAA. In it he laid out a teaser of potential major violations he committed and provided information on how to contact him through the prison system.

Soon enough, Shapiro said, NCAA enforcement director Rich Johanningmeier was in contact via the phone. In early May he and fellow investigator Ameen Najjer spent two days, 18 hours in total, interviewing Shapiro. They each returned separately again, including a two-day visit with a court reporter. He said he has spoken twice, via phone, with NCAA vice president of enforcement Julie Roe Lach.

Meanwhile, as he did with Yahoo! Sports, Shapiro authorized his attorney to hand over boxes of personal and financial records.

"When I tell you they were speechless, they were speechless," Shapiro said. "They sat right across the table from me and their jaws were on the floor. I backed up everything I told them."

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	TAX	TOTAL
BCS AT DOLPHINS STADIUM MIAMI FL			1,679.54
RESTAURANT	1,679.54		
FOOD/BEVERAGE			1,610.51
CAMEO 68430023271 MIAMI BEACH FL			
RESTAURANT	300.00		
TIP			
EXCHANGING			
3064614878			
Description			
GAS/SERVICES			17,097.61

Due in Full Activity for NEVIN SHAPIRO

The NCAA, citing a long-standing policy, declined to discuss the case. Shapiro's attorney, Maria Elena Perez, confirmed Shapiro's work with the NCAA.

Coming on top of a year of intense scandal, this case should rattle college athletics to its core. In coming clean, Shapiro doesn't just shine a light on how Miami operated, but further exposes how schools systematically ignore the NCAA rule book.

The NCAA maintains a strict ideal of amateurism in an effort to avoid having to pay taxes or its players. The rulebook is worth billions to the universities, which don't hesitate to pay major salaries and benefits to administrators and coaches. However, denying players an ability to earn extra money honestly actually makes them more susceptible to people such as Shapiro, who despite the open support of the school was a cutthroat thief and con man.

It's the NCAA's own statutes that provided Shapiro with much of his power, access and influence over the very players the NCAA claims it is protecting. All while the administrators look on and get rich.

Shalala, the school's high-profile president, is like so many college administrators. They talk a big game. She told ESPN the Magazine that she constantly looking out for shady people around the program; "I'm on alert all the time," she said. Last week she was one of 54 hand picked presidents that participated in a NCAA retreat about reforming college sports.

And yet for years, Nevin Shapiro was able to run wild.

While there may not be many boosters with such an over-the-top story, Shapiro knows he wasn't the only fan doling out the under-the-table money. Maybe most damning for the sport is the fact that while he took care of current players, he says Miami coaches never asked him to buy a football recruit. Mainly because they felt it was fruitless.

"Miami is not the school where payouts are made to prospective student athletes," Shapiro said. "Miami is a private institution, it's in a transient city. We didn't have the money to pay recruits. There is so much more money in big public universities. In the SEC, the money is an endless river.

"If Miami relied on cash payoffs for players to come to Miami, they'd be out of business. They'd lose every bidding war.

"Eighty percent of the players came from the area, from Miami-Dade, Overtown, Liberty City, Belle Glade. The other 20 percent fell in love with the city. While the school obviously isn't in Miami Beach, it's considered the hottest scene in the country."

He said he heard all the stories of how other programs recruit from the Miami players who considered going elsewhere. He was also a confidant to various assistant college and high school coaches. And he regularly entertained players from other schools who were friends with Hurricanes.

The reality of college football, he said, is nothing like it's presented on television. The cheating is rampant.

"It's everywhere," he said. "Everywhere that it matters. Most people can't even understand it."

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Shapiro is at times torn and at times gleeful at the idea of the Hurricane program he once was loved might get pummeled by the NCAA.

His anger toward the university and its administrators is strong. When his house of cards collapsed the school immediately cut ties with him, even stripping his name off the student lounge wall.

Shapiro laughs at the duplicity.

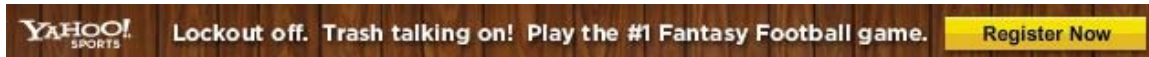
Then when Shapiro threatened to the local media to tell his stories and come clean about major violations, he said the university reached out to his attorney just once. The school, in a statement, said Shapiro and his attorney "refused to provide any facts to the University of Miami." They never tried to visit him in prison and ask what he knew.

"They didn't want to know," he said. "They just hoped I'd shut up and rot. Well, I won't shut up."

Instead he looks back at that last night in the Orange Bowl and his inebriated, would-be attack on the compliance director. It should have been the final straw that caused the school to disassociate from him, a move that was already years over due. Instead it empowered him.

Months behind bars have allowed Nevin Shapiro to acknowledge some of his own mistakes and find some new perspective.

“[Reed] was an (expletive),” Shapiro said. “But the truth is ... he was absolutely right. I shouldn’t have been around the players.”



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