

10-1-2007 Fan Sportsmanship

1 (File: 20071001mwm)

2 JOSH CENTOR: Well, now that we're in the throes of
3 football season, Dr. Brand, I think it's an important time to
4 talk about fan behavior.

5 What are your thoughts on your students, your fans
6 that are in the stands, and how they're supposed to act at
7 football games?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, the avid fans we see at
9 football and other sporting events too -- basketball through
10 the year and so on -- they're an important part of the college
11 environment. We really do want to encourage students in
12 particular, from the colleges, to go to these games and to
13 root and cheer for their home team and wear the colors and
14 shout and scream when their team wins. That's great.

15 But they have to do it within a certain level of
16 sportsmanship. They have to do it to show respect for the
17 game and show respect for the opposing team.

18 JOSH CENTOR: How do we monitor it? Is it realistic
19 to say that our athletics administrators in the stadium of
20 100,000 folks are going to be able to monitor the fans who are
21 maybe making derogatory comments toward their opponent?

22 DR. MYLES BRAND: Absolutely. I think that's an
23 obligation of the university or whoever it is sponsoring the
24 games. The NCAA, for example, has to monitor our
25 championships, just the same as you have to monitor a football

1 game. And the numbers of fans don't matter.

2 Now, we don't want to monitor in a way that's
3 oppressive. Clearly, that's not the case. But sometimes, our
4 fans, including students perhaps oiled by alcohol, carry on a
5 way that is just not appropriate. It is unsportsmanlike,
6 unfair to the opposing players. Sometimes even dangerous to
7 the opposing crowd.

8 For example, I've heard of cases in which, going into
9 the game, the day before the game when an opposing tailgating
10 is taking place, there's real danger to those people. And
11 that's just ridiculous. We should not tolerate that. And the
12 university administrations and the conferences have an
13 absolute obligation to keep that under control.

14 JOSH CENTOR: You mentioned alcohol. How much is that
15 a factor? And does there need to be a crackdown on some of
16 the tailgating that takes place before games?

17 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, first of all, you have to
18 follow the law. We're not in any way encouraging people to
19 break the law in terms of drinking age. I don't think alcohol
20 is the cause. I do think it exacerbates the problem. I think
21 if you add alcohol to an already aroused avid fan base, you
22 can sometimes get bad results, particularly if the people
23 aren't sensible really to start with. So the fact of the
24 matter is I don't think alcohol is the sole problem, but it
25 certainly makes things worse.

1 I think the universities can keep things better under
2 control, if they make sure that when people enter the stadium,
3 you know, they are sober. In our own events, the postseason
4 events, we don't permit alcohol in any of our events. But
5 some universities do. And to the extent that they do, they do
6 have an obligation to control it.

7 JOSH CENTOR: I want to get back to this thought of
8 monitoring the environment. And again, if you have stadiums
9 of 70-, 80-, 90,000 folks, don't we try and create a family
10 environment of sorts? Now, when you're monitoring, when your
11 athletics administrators are out there, as you said, having a
12 responsibility to monitor that game environment, are they
13 looking for curse words? Are they looking for, you know,
14 pointed statements at opponents? What are they on the look
15 for?

16 DR. MYLES BRAND: That's a very hard question. You
17 know, sometimes we'll see groups of fans -- not just students,
18 but other groups of fans -- I think who go over board. And
19 often universities will have people in the stands, not in
20 uniform, necessarily -- sometimes people who work for the
21 universities. They'll sit in amongst the students or amongst
22 the fans, and there's certain sections, frankly, that are
23 worse than others. And I think they have an obligation to
24 keep that under control.

25 We often get letters at the NCAA national office from

1 families who say, You know, I took my young son or young
2 daughter to the game, and unfortunately, what was being said
3 and the acting out that took place was just disgraceful, and
4 I'm never going to go to a game from University X again. And
5 that's really unfortunate. It's a black eye for the school.
6 It's discouraging future fans from coming to the game.

7 And so I think there's a certain level of respect. It
8 may seem like fun at the time, but it does have negative
9 consequences.

10 I think without creating a heavy hand -- and one has
11 to be sensible about this -- I do think the universities have
12 to keep it in control. And when you do find a group of
13 fans -- and we hope it's a small group that are acting out or
14 being drunk or have rehearsed curses in advance -- I think
15 it's the obligation of the school to say you are no longer
16 invited to this game, and we don't want to see you again here.

17 JOSH CENTOR: And obviously, the national office can't
18 monitor every game environment that's out there, and there are
19 suggested sportsmanship practices. For instance, there are
20 sometimes student athletes who will read a sportsmanship
21 statement prior to the beginning of a game, but again, it gets
22 down to that institutional issue. Hopefully our schools are
23 doing everything they can to monitor their environments.

24 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think our schools try and do that
25 to the best of their ability. The national office, of course,

1 only has oversight for the post season games, and we monitor
2 those very closely. And you know, Men's and Women's Final
3 Four are great fun, but they're also family events, and we
4 want to make sure that that's the case.

5 If we don't take the early steps, say, during the
6 season, or when we start to see misbehavior or rowdy behavior,
7 that's really uncomfortable for many of the fans there. What
8 we're really doing is we're giving permission to those people
9 to undertake even more egregious behavior in the future. And
10 that's where you get the riots and that's where you get people
11 hurt. And that's where we have a real problem and arrests
12 take place.

13 So, you know, let's keep it under control. Let's
14 cheer for our home teams. Let's wear the colors and applaud
15 and whistle, but let's keep it in sportsmanlike behavior.

16 JOSH CENTOR: All right. Folks, well, you heard it
17 hear. Let's keep it positive and have some fun out there.

18 Thanks, Dr. Brand.

19 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's my pleasure.
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