

5-7-2007 Text Messaging

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Good afternoon. And welcome to "Mondays
3 With Myles".

4 Dr. Brand, a few weeks ago, the Division I Management
5 Council made a decision to eliminate text messaging. Most
6 recently the board of directors followed up and approved that
7 decision. Can you weigh in on that?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yeah. I'm happy to do that, Josh.

9 The board was influenced a great deal by what the
10 student athletes said, as communicated to them through the
11 SAAC. A number of student athletes, a good majority of them,
12 were concerned that it had become harassing, the number of
13 phone calls and text messages they were getting, and felt
14 strongly that some limitations needed to be placed on it. In
15 fact, the system had to change dramatically.

16 Is this the place in which we're going to stop? Is
17 this going to be where we're finished, not just in text
18 messaging, but in other electronic communications? I don't
19 think so. But we really didn't have a viable alternative at
20 this point.

21 And I believe over the next year, during the
22 legislative cycle, we'll see some alternatives come in.
23 Perhaps some of the new technologies about how to control when
24 these text messages and other electronic communications take
25 place.

1 JOSH CENTOR: Well, let's swing back a second. It's
2 somewhat refreshing that the Division I Student Athlete
3 Advisory Committee kind of had a seat at the table. The folks
4 were listening to what they had to say.

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: You have to always keep in mind that
6 the presidents, the athletic directors, and others, pay a lot
7 of attention to what the student athletes say. They have a
8 very strong voice and they exercised it on this occasion. But
9 indeed on any occasion in which they weigh in, they do have a
10 voice and people do pay attention.

11 JOSH CENTOR: How does this affect the recruiting
12 landscape? Coaches were getting used to sending text messages
13 to student athletes. How does this change things?

14 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, I think the coaches are split
15 on this. Some of the coaches think we should continue it,
16 particularly some of the assistant coaches, because it's a
17 good way for them to communicate with student athletes. Other
18 of the coaches believe that it's not a very successful means
19 of talking with the student athletes.

20 For the short term, it means they can't text message.
21 There will be other opportunities. You know, there's
22 old-fashioned letter writing, and, of course, there's the
23 telephone and visits and so on. So they will go back to the
24 old-fashioned way of doing it, which was not that old
25 fashioned, actually. It's just a few months.

1 JOSH CENTOR: There have been a lot of articles out
2 there, somewhat critical of the NCAA for being stodgy and
3 uptight with a rule like this. Why are we actually
4 restricting and/or eliminating text messaging?

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, when I look at all the
6 media attention to this, I'd say a majority -- a reasonably
7 good majority of the media actually agreed with us on this.
8 What they were suggesting is that some of the text messages is
9 harassing and was getting in the way of -- for example, when
10 student athletes gets text messages during class, and the
11 coaches interpret it, if you don't answer back very quickly,
12 that you're not interested. So there's -- the students were
13 getting in high school, and late at night at 2 a.m., were
14 getting harassed and felt that they had to answer the message,
15 come what may.

16 I don't think this is the NCAA being stodgy. I think
17 it's being responsive to the needs of our student athletes. I
18 think it's going to, in fact, improve recruiting, and
19 eventually we will need to find a middle ground between no
20 electronic communications other than email and where we are
21 right now.

22 JOSH CENTOR: I think something people have to
23 remember is that this is a costly thing for a lot of kids, if
24 they're getting text messages. Some of them cost a nickel, a
25 dime apiece. If you're getting hundreds of them, that adds up

1 pretty quickly.

2 DR. MYLES BRAND: It does. There are some plans in
3 which it's not very expensive. They're monthly plans. But a
4 lot of the young people were finding that they went over in
5 their plans, and even if they have a good solid plan, a number
6 of them were finding they still had to pay for it. That was
7 one of the concerns. I wouldn't say that was an overwhelming
8 issue, but it was one of the concerns.

9 JOSH CENTOR: Something that you've been quite
10 involved in in the work/life balance of coaches and
11 administrators. But in this case, I want to look at the
12 work/life balance of coaches. Taking this off their plate
13 might actually be a positive, don't you think?

14 DR. MYLES BRAND: Maybe for some. Coaches are very
15 competitive people. And if they're not text messaging student
16 athletes, they'll find some other way to spend their time
17 trying to get in touch with the student athletes. So I don't
18 know if they'll have a big effect.

19 This is really about how we treat our students when
20 they're being recruited. Do we harass them? Do we push them
21 into situations in which they're uncomfortable, on the one
22 hand? And on the other hand, it is a new means of
23 communication, and perhaps we shouldn't be totally ignoring
24 it. So the NCAA will return to it over the next year and see
25 if we can find -- or someone can recommend a better approach.

1 JOSH CENTOR: In closing, I think it's important for
2 our listeners to understand that this is a Division I
3 decision, but that there are similar conversations happening
4 at the Divisions II and III level. These student athletes are
5 recruited as well.

6 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yes, that's true. And perhaps not
7 as hard, in most cases, as they are in Division I. But
8 they're still absolutely recruited. I would expect that the
9 other two divisions will probably follow suit, although they
10 haven't yet voted on it.

11 JOSH CENTOR: Okay. Thank you for the discussion.

12 DR. MYLES BRAND: Good to talk to you, Josh.

13 JOSH CENTOR: We'll see you all next week.

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