

3-31-2008 General Q & A

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Welcome to the "Mondays With Myles".

3 Well, we often ask for our readers and listeners to
4 submit questions for NCAA President Myles Brand. And today we
5 have a few submitted by Todd Lawler (phonetic) who runs the
6 blog Hoopbreaker.com, a blog that looks at Big 10 issues.

7 First question, Dr. Brand, how would you gauge the
8 success of the Academic Progress Rate reform since its
9 inception, when roughly 30 percent of men's football teams and
10 20 percent of men's basketball teams were performing below
11 their required benchmarks to avoid scholarship issues?

12 DR. MYLES BRAND: First of all, the reason we put in
13 place the Academic Progress Rate, the APR, was in order to
14 better measure, on a semester-by semester basis, how well our
15 student-athletes were doing academically. If you can't
16 measure the progress, then it's just anecdotal, and we really
17 can't tell whether what we put in place is working.

18 Well, we had to also give the schools several years,
19 four years, in fact, of data to be able to make sure that we
20 had enough warning for the student-athletes in the athletic
21 programs, although we've been measuring it since then.

22 The fact is we've seen, with every sport, but one --
23 men's basketball -- steady increases in this metric, year
24 after year. And we are seeing coaches, athletic directors,
25 presidents, and student-athletes themselves paying more

1 attention to academic issues since we have started to measure
2 this. And, of course, failure to perform will yield sanctions
3 such as loss of scholarship, and this coming year a potential
4 loss of playing in the Final Four in basketball or other
5 postseason championships. So we are making good progress.

6 We are still in the middle. We are probably about
7 two-thirds through the process, but we are seeing real
8 progress.

9 JOSH CENTOR: Has the reform had the desired effect on
10 raising graduation rates?

11 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yes, it has, particularly at the
12 bottom. Some of our teams and our schools are doing so well,
13 it's very hard to move forward from there. They are already
14 surpassing what they are doing in the general student body on
15 their campuses by a wide margin. But we are managing to lift
16 the floor. And that's important, when you lift the floor, you
17 raise the average.

18 JOSH CENTOR: Another question Todd submitted: Has
19 the NCAA taken a position, or is it considering taking a
20 position, on the recent trend in men's basketball where a
21 handful of high profile coaches are designing their
22 recruitment strategies, where they are offering full athletic
23 scholarships to 9th, 10th graders, maybe even 8th graders?

24 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, they are really not offering
25 them scholarships, because they can't do that. There's a

1 verbal commitment on both sides. And, of course, people break
2 the verbal commitments, and a 9th or 10th grader often breaks
3 the commitment, and the coach understands that as well. Maybe
4 it makes the parents feel a little more secure or the
5 guardians feel more secure that this student-athlete has an
6 opportunity at such a school.

7 We have not yet taken a stand on that. It is, at this
8 point, informal. But I think we have to watch it very
9 carefully. We don't want to disadvantage young people who
10 don't really know enough about the recruiting process that
11 they lock themselves in too early. And also coaches change
12 positions so much, what happens when the coach changes to this
13 informal, verbal commitment? Does that have any standing or
14 not? So there are some very difficult questions here.

15 Right now it's just a recruiting tool that some
16 coaches are using it. It doesn't yet look like it's yet
17 reached the level of abuse, but I think it is something we
18 want to monitor very carefully.

19 JOSH CENTOR: The final question we'll ask from Todd:
20 Is the management of Division I referees handled centrally by
21 the NCAA or by the individual conferences? In either case,
22 does the NCAA have uniform standards for how referees are
23 trained and reviewed for performance?

24 DR. MYLES BRAND: This is an area in transition. Up
25 until recently, refereeing -- choosing the referees, and as

1 well as training the referees, has essentially been a
2 conference job. We do have some national oversight in which
3 each region of the country is looked at so there is some
4 consistency. But really it's been a conference-mandated,
5 conference-controlled process, particularly the hiring of the
6 coaches -- excuse me -- of the referees.

7 We are in the process of changing that. We are
8 starting with football. And, in fact, we do now have a
9 national football organization working, and we will move in
10 that direction in Division I Basketball as well.

11 I think that's a good thing. It will bring some
12 consistency. It will, I think, enable us to identify who are
13 the better referees and who aren't, and to put them not just
14 on the floor, but also have them in the championship games.

15 It will take us a few years to make that transition.
16 But we are moving away from -- we are certainly not there
17 yet -- but we are moving away from the conferences completely
18 controlling it, which has both been good and bad.

19 When the conferences control it, you have a lot of local
20 control, and you know who the referees are, and that's good.
21 But we do have lack of consistency sometimes, particularly
22 when they are across conference games.

23 JOSH CENTOR: All right. Well, we'd like to thank
24 Todd Lawler from Hoopbreaker.com for submitting these great
25 questions for Dr. Brand.

1 And we'd like to encourage all you listeners at home
2 to email us your questions and we'll ask them on an upcoming
3 edition of "Mondays With Myles".

4 Thanks, Dr. Brand.

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's a pleasure.

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