

RECRUITING – NEGATIVE RECRUITING/SLANDER BASED ON SEXUALITY

A January 24, 2003 Washington Post article titled, “Going Behind the Back” exposes negative recruiting tactics that are increasingly being used as an unethical recruitment strategy within women’s collegiate sports, essentially attempting to give their own programs an un-fair advantage based on perpetuating stereotypes, myths, and misconceptions. By implying to a recruit, that a rival college or university’s coach is gay, or that an opposing team is “full of lesbians,” school recruiters use this tactic to prey on unsubstantiated fears, one of which is that a gay coach or gay players might negatively influence the sexual orientation of potential recruits.

“This is homophobia at its worst. Schools and athletic teams would be better served if coaches and athletic personnel recruiting players focus on the positive aspects of their own programs as they relate to the sport and the recruit’s educational aspirations. As the public becomes more educated about the unethical practice of negative recruiting, recruits and their parents who are subjected to negative recruiting should and will question the recruiter about the relevancy of such tactics and how that reflects the policies and practices of institutions that use negative recruiting tactics. As recruits become more aware of an institution’s negative recruiting tactics they will reconsider whether or not they want to attend a school that acts so unethically,” said Dawn Riley, President of the Women’s Sports Foundation.

POSITION:

- No athletic department or sport organization employee or volunteer, athlete, parent, or fan should harass, threaten, slander (anti-gay slurs, pushing or shoving, property damage, graffiti directed at a particular person or group) a coach, athlete (or any person for that matter) on the basis of sexual orientation.

- A coach or athlete's sexual orientation should not be a factor in determining their eligibility for teams, coaching positions, or athletic or academic honors or awards.
- Coaches, athletes, other athletic department personnel, or students who participate in the harassment of lesbian or bisexual athletes or who contribute to a hostile environment for these athletes and coaches should be appropriately disciplined.
- Lesbian and bisexual coaches and athletes should be able to participate on a team or in an athletic department or sport setting that is free of hostility.
- The provisions of all policies prohibiting sexual harassment and sexual relations between coaches and athletes should be applicable to all coaches and athletes without regard to the sexual orientation of athletic department/sport organization personnel.
- Lesbian and bisexual athletes and coaches should be able to identify themselves if they choose to without fear of negative consequences (loss of job, scholarship, starting position; negative performance evaluation; dropped from team).
- Administrators should support coaches and athletes in addressing anti-gay incidents.

ELIMINATION OF NEGATIVE RECRUITING BEGINS WITH EDUCATION. Staff development programs for athletes, coaches and other support staff should include identifying and addressing homophobia in athletics and include departmental policies addressing anti-gay discrimination. Educational and/or recruitment materials, programs and department policies addressing homophobia should be given to prospective athletes, coaches, parents or guardians of athletes.

Together, Astrea, Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Ms. Foundation, National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Uncommon Legacy Foundation and the Women's Sports Foundation have developed an educational campaign to eliminate homophobia in sports:

The Project to Eliminate Homophobia in Sport. The Project has published an educational kit, *It Takes A Team: Making Sports Safe For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Athletes and Coaches*, that is intended to help coaches and school administrators educate student-athletes about the harmful effects of homophobia. To effectively eliminate homophobia in sport, we are challenged to ask the question, "How can we make sure that people in athletics are evaluated, not based on their sexual orientation or gender expression, but on their individual character and accomplishments?"

The *It Takes A Team* educational kit includes a 15-minute video, discussion and action guides, “Safe Space” stickers, posters and a list of resources addressing LGBT issues in sport. The kit establishes five basic rights of all athletes and coaches:

- Safety from physical or verbal harassment or violence
- Fair treatment in all aspects of programming
- Equal access to all aspects of programming
- Support for developing positive self-esteem and acceptance of others
- Education about social diversity, prejudice and discrimination

For more information on this program please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org or call 800-227-3988 to order the Education Kit with video and accompanying materials.