



Canadian Association
for the Advancement
of Women and Sport
and Physical Activity

COACHES CHALK TALKS

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1. Chalk Talk: *Same-Sex Teammate Romantic and Sexual Relationships*

(Pat Griffin)

When people spend a lot of time together relationships develop. Friendships and sexual or romantic relationships are possible. This is true of mixed-sex settings and same-sex settings. It is only recently, as lesbian, gay and bisexual people have become more visible in athletics that coaches and administrators have begun to identify ways to address this occurrence that respect the rights of individuals on the team and acknowledge the priorities of building and maintaining team cohesiveness and performance.

At first, forbidding romantic or sexual relationships among teammates might seem like a simple solution. However, this policy assumes that an open romantic relationship on an athletic team will have an inevitable negative effect on the team's unity, performance or public image. We take the position that it is indeed easier if teammates do not become romantically or sexually involved with each other. However, lesbian and gay teammates have always found each other and developed romantic relationships, just as heterosexual athletes have. This is nothing new.

Lesbian or gay romantic relationships on teams have usually been secret or at least not publicly acknowledged outside the team. Forbidding such relationships or insisting on secrecy encourages dishonesty and unfair treatment. Sometimes coaches and teammates tolerate the relationship as long as the participants are discreet and do not call attention to their relationship. If they are found out, coaches often dismiss the players from the team or admonish them to end their romantic involvement. Secret or forbidden romantic relationships among teammates can be a distraction from team goals. However, we believe that it is possible for athletic teams to accommodate romantic relationships between teammates if they occur without compromising team goals or cohesion. This requires maturity and responsibility on the part of the athletes in the relationship and their willingness to abide by appropriate behavioral expectations within the team setting: In short, this means that they should conduct themselves as team members first in the team setting.

If coaches or teammates perceive a romantic relationship between teammates to be a problem, it is important to determine the source of the problem before taking action. Are team members concerned because of their own feelings of discomfort or because of the actions of the partnered teammates? Often the source of teammates' discomfort is rooted in homophobia or fear that the relationship will lead people to assume that everyone on the team is lesbian or gay. Sometimes teammates are uncomfortable with the idea of a lesbian or gay relationship and project this discomfort into the situation. If team disruption is caused by homophobia and not the conduct of players in a relationship, then it is the team homophobia that is causing a problem, not the romantic relationship between teammates. Education and discussion with the team can address fears, stereotypes and concerns.

If the romantic relationship is having a negative effect on team performance or cohesion because of inappropriate behavior by the players in the relationship, then their behavior must be addressed. They need to know the specific expectations for them as team members in a relationship. The goal is to create policy that both respects individual choices and makes clear fair expectations for relationship behavior when in the team setting.

Several policy options are possible in response to romantic and sexual relationships on teams, whether they are between men and women on coed teams or between same-sex couples on same-sex teams:

- Forbid romantic and sexual relationships among teammates. This policy encourages secrecy and dishonesty and is difficult to enforce and we do not recommend it.

- Ignore romantic and sexual relationships among teammates. This non-policy also encourages dishonesty, secrecy and can lead to problems that might fester if the team members in the relationship act inappropriately or other teammates are uncomfortable.
- Discourage romantic relationships among teammates, AND be prepared to deal with them openly; emphasizing fairness, reasonable accommodation, honesty, and responsibility to the team.

This last policy option acknowledges that romantic relationships on a team can complicate team dynamics and require responsible behavior by the teammates in the relationship. It is important for the coach to set appropriate boundaries and expectations for all team members, especially teammates in a relationship. It is an added responsibility for teammates in a relationship to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully. This means being team members first in the team context. Coaches have a responsibility to the team to make these expectations clear to the athletes involved.

Recommendations for Addressing Teammate Romantic and Sexual Relationships:

- Be proactive, set broad policy that applies fairly to all romantic and sexual relationships among the team and between team members and non-team members regardless of their sexual orientation.
- Be straight forward and open about addressing the possibility of a same-sex relationship. This is not something to be secret about, it happens.
- Encourage team members to find romantic relationships outside the team because of potential complications – the same as workplace relationships between co-workers in a business setting.
- Do not require secrecy, let athletes set their own comfort level in revealing the relationship to others.
- The coach should talk to the teammates in a relationship about their responsibilities to the team:
- Team performance and unity take priority over the relationship in team settings (Do not pair off or exclude other team members on the team bus, meals, practice, hotels).
- No public displays of affection in the team context are appropriate (holding hands, kissing). Compare to appropriate professional behavior in the workplace.
- They should deal with relationship issues or conflict on their own time, leave them outside the locker room door.
- Talk with them about how to handle knowledge of the relationship with the team: Tell teammates in team meeting, tell them individually, let teammates find out.
- Make sure that teammates in a relationship understand that the consequences of not abiding by the expectations are that one or both team members will have to leave the team.
- The coach should make sure the rest of the team understands their responsibilities to be fair and address their own prejudices and fears about the relationship as well as speaking up in the same way they would about any other team issue if they think behavior by the romantic partners is affecting team performance or cohesion.

2. Chalk Talk: *Coach-Athlete Sexual Relationships*

(Pat Griffin)

The coach-athlete relationship has the potential to be rewarding and even life changing in many positive ways for both the coach and the athletes. Most athletes can easily identify a revered coach whose ability to lead them to their best athletic performances and call forth the best in them as human

beings earned that coach a special place in their life. Most coaches are trustworthy and ethical professionals who know how to work with young athletes in respectful and appropriate ways that do not take advantage of the trust athletes and their parents place in them. Because of the intensity of competition and the time coaches and athletes spend together, the potential for inappropriate relationships exists, especially if coaches are unethical or immature. Coaches must understand and honor appropriate boundaries in their relationships with athletes if they expect to earn the respect of their team and parents of the athletes they coach.

Parents are entitled to assurance that the adults who coach their children are ethical professionals who respect appropriate interaction boundaries between coaches and athletes. Some parents and athletes cite fears about sexual predation as the reason they are concerned about their son or daughter playing on a team coached by a gay man or lesbian. The sexual predator myth is a damaging stereotype that can ruin the careers of ethical and knowledgeable lesbian and gay coaches and teachers. Coaches should be judged on their ethical behavior, professional standards, and coaching abilities not their sexual orientation or gender.

No evidence supports the claim that lesbian and gay coaches pose a greater sexual threat to young athletes than coaches who are heterosexual. In fact, police statistics support the contention that adult males sexually abusing young girls is more common. This is not to suggest that males should be prohibited from coaching young girls, but that all coaches should be vetted to assure that they are trustworthy and ethical leaders as well as knowledgeable about their sport.

Coaches need to set appropriate boundaries in their relationships with athletes regardless of the athlete's age. Even when athletes are college age or older and a consensual sexual relationship between a coach and an athlete occurs, these relationships are never acceptable regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the people involved.

Many reasons support setting and maintaining this relationship boundary between coaches and athletes. Inherent power inequities between coaches and athletes make it unlikely that these relationships are truly equal or consensual. Coaches are older, more experienced, and have power over an athlete's career. The coach determines who starts, who gets playing time, and can even influence future coaching career or competitive opportunities for some athletes. These factors create the potential for the abuse of power and coercion in a sexual relationship. Moreover, the potential for long-lasting psychological harm for the athlete is also present in these unequal relationships.

A coach-athlete sexual relationship can also be a disruption and distraction for the coach, the athlete involved and for the rest of the team. Either the relationship is secret which means the coach and athlete are deceiving other members of the team, parents and athletic administrators or, if the relationship is common knowledge among the team, it creates awkwardness and concerns about favoritism, jealousy, and resentment. The coach's ability to make fair decisions comes into question and other athletes might lose respect for the coach and their teammate for violating this relationship boundary.

Policy Recommendations to Address Coach-Athlete Sexual Relationships:

- Develop a zero tolerance policy for coach-athlete sexual relationships and make sure all coaches know about it in a coaches' handbook or as part of a coaching ethics statement. Make the consequences of a relationship clear in the policy: The coach will lose her or his job.
- Include the policy in coach and other staff orientation programs and material. This is particularly important in schools where part-time coaches and other athletic staff are not full-time employees of the school or where there is a high turnover rate for coaches.

- If a possible coach-athlete relationship comes to the attention of the athletic director, S/he should talk to the coach about it to determine if it is true. Caution the coach about the rumors, if it is not. If there is a relationship between a coach and athlete, ask for the coach's resignation.
- Educate athletes and parents about coach-athlete relationship policies.
- Coaches should be aware of the possibility of athletes developing a "crush" on them and maintain a respectful and appropriate boundary in interacting with athletes.
- Coaches should avoid situations with athletes that could be misinterpreted as sexual or romantic.

3. Chalk Talk: *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Athletes Coming Out to Coaches*

(Pat Griffin)

In the past, all lesbian, gay, bisexual athletes and coaches were expected to keep their sexual orientation to themselves. If an athlete or coach's sexuality came into question, either by rumor, suspicion or confirmation, their athletic career could be in jeopardy. Unfortunately, these hostile climates still exist today in some athletic programs. It would probably be fair to describe most athletic programs today as conditionally tolerant: lesbian, gay, bisexual athletes are tolerated only on the condition that they keep their identity hidden. They are not free to talk about their personal lives among teammates or in public. If an athlete violates this code of silence, he or she may jeopardize his or her career.

However, as social perceptions of lesbian, gay and bisexual people have become more positive, lesbian, gay, bisexual people are identifying themselves to family, friends, teammates and coaches who are increasingly supportive and accepting. As a result, it is less acceptable to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual athletes and coaches who choose to be open and honest about their sexual orientation. The shifts in cultural acceptance of LGBT people is also signaled by a decreasing tolerance for anti-gay comments or use of anti-gay slurs by professional athletes like John Rocker, Jeromy Shockey, and Mike Timlin. In contrast, other professional athletes or coaches like Mike Messina, Ken Griffey, Jr. Johnny Damon, Ken Griffey, Jr. and Joe Valentine express their openness to having a gay teammate. Members of the 2004 World Champion Boston Red Sox appeared on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

Consistent with these social changes, more schools have included sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in their non-discrimination policies and more states have adopted civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For example, the NCAA includes sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policy.

According to the [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#), the following ten states have enacted non-discrimination laws that address sexual orientation: Wisconsin (1982), Massachusetts (1989), Connecticut and Hawaii (1991), New Jersey and Vermont (1992), New Hampshire (1997), Nevada (1999), Maryland (2001), and New York (2002). Seven states ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity: Minnesota (1993), Rhode Island (2001), New Mexico (2003), California (2003), Hawaii (2005), Illinois (2005), and Maine (2005). No federal non-discrimination laws include sexual orientation or gender identity, though there are constitutional protections that can be interpreted to address these issues.

Until the mid-1990s only a small handful of professional or Olympic LGBT athletes had publicly identified themselves. Among these athletes are Dave Kopay, professional football; Billie Jean King, professional tennis; and Greg Louganis, Olympic diving. Most waited until after they had retired from

active competition before coming out and Billie Jean King did not come out by her own choice. Martina Navratilova is the exception in this group of early pioneers in that she is still competing and winning doubles competitions in professional tennis as an openly identified lesbian.

Since the mid-1990's the number and pace of LGBT athletes coming out at all levels of sport has quickened. Notable among the athletes who have come out are Esera Tualo, pro football; Rosie Jones and Patty Sheehan pro golf; Amelie Mauresmo, pro tennis, Rudy Galindo and Brian Orser, pro figure skating; Billy Bean, pro baseball; Mark Tewksbury, Olympic swimming, and Michele Van Dorp and Sue Wicks, pro basketball. Many lesser known high school and college athletes and coaches are also coming out in greater numbers. A long list of LGB athletes who are publicly open about their sexual orientation is posted at OutSports.com

Several research studies document the negative effects of hiding or feeling shame about one's lesbian, gay or bisexual identity, especially among young people. Low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, social isolation, drug or alcohol abuse, extreme homophobia and risky sexual behavior are some of the effects of such secrecy. Pretending to be heterosexual to avoid being ostracized or targeted by teammates makes closeted lesbian, gay and bisexual athletes feel dishonest and inauthentic in their relationships and isolated from teammates and coaches.

Fear of discrimination from coaches is a primary motivation for closeted lesbian, gay and bisexual college or high school athletes. Coaches control playing time and even a player's place on the team. If a coach is uncomfortable with or hostile toward lesbian, gay or bisexual team members, the potential for discrimination is real.

Some coaches and athletes believe that having openly lesbian, gay or bisexual team members will negatively affect team unity or performance. It is our belief that the most important factor determining how an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual athlete is received depends on the leadership provided by coaches. The head coach sets the tone, either positive or negative. When the coach takes a stand for respect and openness, the team is more likely to follow this lead. When the coach reacts with prejudice, fear or discomfort, the team will probably react similarly. Contrary to conventional wisdom, when a bisexual, gay or lesbian team member is open about their identity and is accepted and respected, this can have a positive effect on both team unity and performance. This experience often helps heterosexual team members overcome stereotypes they have about lesbian, gay and bisexual people and encourages honesty and respect among everyone on the team.

Accepting an openly bisexual, lesbian or gay team member does not require acceptance of homosexuality. What is required is respect for difference and a belief that everyone on the team should be safe and treated with dignity and fairness.

Whether or not a lesbian, gay or bisexual athlete comes out should be his or her choice. She or he should not be pressured one way or the other by the coach or teammates. When coaches forbid athletes to come out publicly or participate in campus or community lesbian, gay, bisexual groups or events, this places unhealthy pressure on athletes and demands that they choose between their psychological health and their membership on the team. It also requires them to keep secrets, behave dishonestly, and isolate themselves from teammates; none of which supports team unity and performance or individual achievement, health and safety.

Teammates sometimes pressure lesbian, gay or bisexual athletes to keep their identities secret in an effort to avoid associating the team or themselves with homosexuality or bisexuality. This is a particular problem in women's sports where the lesbian label has been used to intimidate or malign all women athletes. The coach's leadership in helping athletes to understand their own discomfort with lesbian, gay or bisexual teammates is an important part of making a team safe.

Recommendations for Coaches - Setting A Positive Climate for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Athletes to Come Out:

- Use inclusive language: Don't assume that everyone on the team is heterosexual.
- Avoid anti-gay slurs and don't allow team members to use them.
- Put up a Safe Zone sticker on your office door or locker room wall.
- Make it clear to team members that you expect everyone to be treated respectfully regardless of differences in race, religion, sexuality, etc.
- Schedule a team training on lesbian, gay, bisexual issues in sport.

Recommendations for Responding to an Athlete Who Comes Out to You:

- Thank the athlete for placing trust in you by sharing this information (and pat yourself on the back for being a trustworthy, approachable and respected person in the athlete's eyes).
- Assure the athlete that their sexual orientation makes no difference to you in how the athlete is treated on the team.
- Ask the athlete if there is anything she or he wants you to do.
- Ask the athlete if she or he wants to tell the team, and if so, ask how you can help.
- Respect the athlete's right to privacy: Do not share information about the athlete's sexual orientation with anyone unless the athlete gives you permission to do so (exception: mandated reporter laws – if the athlete is in danger from others or him or herself, report this to a school counselor or counseling center or other appropriate authority and tell the athlete what you are doing).
- Identify gay-respectful support and counseling services in case the athlete wants to talk to someone and help the athlete make contact.
- Identify web-based support or educational site for the athletes (see the resources section of the It Takes A Team Education Kit)

Recommendations for Working with Teammates of a Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual Athlete Who Comes Out:

- Enlist the team captains' assistance in monitoring team reactions and helping to set a positive tone of acceptance and respect for all.
- If individual athletes are uncomfortable with an openly lesbian, gay or bisexual teammate, talk with them about their concerns.
- Provide information and resources for athletes who are interested in learning more about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in sports (books, web sites, organizations).
- Recommend counseling for athletes who would like to address their discomfort or fear about having a lesbian, gay, bisexual teammate.
- Reinforce your commitment to making sure everyone is respected on the team.
- Reinforce the belief that being respectful does not necessarily mean approving of homosexuality or bisexuality: Every team member has a right to their personal beliefs, but each member is responsible for treating everyone on the team with respect.
- Talk about specific things that heterosexual teammates can do to make the team a safer, more respectful place for everyone, including lesbian, gay and bisexual people.
- Schedule a team training on lesbian, gay, bisexual issues.

4. Chalk Talk: *Addressing Concerns about LGBT Athletes and Coaches in the Locker Room*

(Pat Griffin)

The locker room can be a vulnerable and intimate place. Teammates are showering and changing clothes. Whatever insecurities athletes have about their own body's size or shape are likely to arise because people do notice other bodies in the locker room and are aware of their own bodies. This awareness is not necessarily sexual, but the team locker room before or after a game or practice is a place where many people of the same sex spend lots of time together in various stages of undress.

For some athletes, especially men who are not as free to physically express platonic love for other men, cultural conventions dictate that the feelings of love, friendship and intimacy they have for same-sex teammates must be carefully monitored to avoid assumptions of homosexuality. Being in the locker room with teammates sometimes requires men who are uncomfortable with these feelings to declare or reaffirm their heterosexuality by using anti-gay language or talking about their sexual interests and activities with women. The same can be true in a women's locker room, though, in general, women are freer to express affection for other women without assumptions of homosexuality arising. However, in athletics, where lesbian stereotypes abound, some women are just as concerned about asserting their heterosexuality as men are.

Athletes and coaches sometimes express fear or discomfort about sharing a locker room or hotel room with openly gay, lesbian or bisexual team members. This fear or discomfort is often based on the stereotype that lesbians and gay men pose a sexual threat to their heterosexual teammates or that they are looking at their teammates in a sexualized manner. Some coaches and athletes believe that "if men can't be in the women's locker room, why can lesbians be there." This reasoning is based on the assumption potential sexual interest is the only basis for segregating locker rooms by sex. Following this reasoning, gay men and heterosexual women should share one locker room and lesbians and gay men should share another!

In reality, lesbian and gay athletes and coaches in the locker room are probably thinking about the same things that their heterosexual teammates are: Whether or not they had a good practice or game, a nagging injury, disappointment about a tough loss, elation about a big win. Lesbian and gay athletes and coaches sometimes also worry about how others perceive them and might be more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to avoid looking at others' bodies or making jokes in the locker room. For example, some lesbian coaches are so concerned about how others might perceive them that they flick the lights off and on to announce their presence in the locker room. Gay or lesbian coaches also place posters over glass windows separating the locker room from their offices or stay out of the locker room altogether as ways to avoid even the suspicion that they are looking at athletes changing clothes or showering.

It is important to differentiate personal discomfort with the presence of LGBT athletes or coaches in the locker room from the occurrence of inappropriate actions by LGBT athletes or coaches (or anyone else) in the locker room. This difference is important in determining how to address this issue. If heterosexual athletes (or coaches) are uncomfortable with the presence of LGBT athletes or coaches in the locker room and this discomfort stems from their own fears or prejudices rather than any inappropriate behavior by LGBT teammates or coaches, then the situation should be addressed as an education or counseling issue for the heterosexual athletes involved.

Knowing a teammate is gay or lesbian can surface homophobia in some athletes. Sometimes athletes become uncomfortable in the locker room only after a gay teammate has come out. The source of their discomfort in this case can be easily attributed to their own assumptions rather than the actions

of their gay or lesbian teammate: If they were comfortable in the locker room before they knew a teammate was gay or lesbian, what makes them uncomfortable now that they know? Most athletes have spent time in locker rooms with LGBT people. They just did not know it because their teammates did not choose to identify themselves.

Everyone affiliated with an athletic team has the right to feel safe and to be free of unwanted sexual attention and sexually explicit taunting or teasing. If athletes are uncomfortable in the locker room because of inappropriate or unwanted sexual attention or actions on the part of any teammate or coach, including LGBT athletes and coaches, then this is a sexual harassment issue and should be addressed as such. Most schools have policies governing sexual harassment that should be applied regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the people involved. Check with your school administration to get a copy of the sexual harassment policy.

All locker rooms should have some accommodations for athletes who want privacy for any reason. Individual athletes might have many reasons for wanting a private area in the locker room to change clothes or shower that are unrelated to fear of sexual attention. These reasons include religious prohibitions, personal modesty, inferiority about body image, or just plain shyness.

Recommendations for Addressing Concerns about LGBT Athletes or Coaches in the Locker Room:

- When developing policy governing locker room behavior, the key issue is to be sure that policy is based on broad principles of fairness and commitment to safety for all and not on fear or stereotypes about LGBT people.
- Develop and enforce sexual harassment policy that applies to all regardless of sexual orientation or gender.
- Educate athletes and coaches and other athletic staff about sexual harassment policy so that they know their rights and responsibilities.
- Educate athletes about LGBT issues – address fears about the presence of LGBT people in the locker room.
- Make a privacy area for changing clothes and showering for any athlete to use.
- Make parents who express concerns about LGBT people in the locker room aware of sexual harassment policies and expectations of respectful treatment for all including non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity.

5. Chalk Talk: *Athletic Team Hazing and Sexual or Gender Humiliation*

(Pat Griffin)

Hazing as a form of team initiation is a persistent problem in men's and women's athletics all levels. Justified as a rite of passage for new team members, hazing is often defended as a team bonding activity. Hazing can subject initiates to dangerous, degrading or embarrassing situations involving alcohol abuse, sexual humiliation, bondage, cross-dressing, nudity, illegal activities or tolerance of pain or discomfort. Peer pressure and the desire to become part of a team plus the promise of being able to mete out similar treatment to the next group of initiates make it difficult for new players to refuse to participate in hazing activities. To do so places the initiate at risk of being perceived as not a "good sport," not a loyal team member, or, in the case of men's teams, not "man" enough to endure hazing.

Questionable at best, dangerous at worst, hazing in athletics is often ignored by school staff even when school policy prohibits it. Unfortunately team hazing has long been a part of athletic culture and tradition from professional to school sports and coaches have often participated in hazing as athletes. Coaches may not be physically present when hazing occurs, but they are usually aware that hazing occurs. Coaches often claim not to know about or be responsible for the specifics of hazing activities on their team because hazing activities are organized and carried out by team leaders. School officials in general and coaches in particular must take greater responsibility for educating athletes about hazing policies and enforcing them.

In addition to the danger and humiliation inherent in many team hazing rituals, activities that are based on gender stereotypes, demeaning women, homophobia, racism, sexual humiliation or simulations of sexual activities teach athletes that this is acceptable school sanctioned behavior. High school boys and college men's teams have participated in hazing activities that call for simulated sex acts (inserting carrots in the anus, for example), touching or being touched by teammates' genitals (elephant walk and tea-bagging), enduring homophobic or anti-woman name-calling or dressing as women. These activities are meant to humiliate initiates and test their team loyalty by submitting to "forbidden" or "unmanly" activities.

Hazing is also becoming more common on college and high school women's teams. Initiates have been expected to strip to bra and panties in front of the team, blindfolded and their bodies painted by teammates, and commanded to perform simulated sex acts. Team members have also been directed to perform lap dances on members of male sports teams as a part of hazing.

Not only is this kind of hazing questionable as a team building activity, the subtext of these activities is demeaning to women, gay men, people of color and transgender people. Other hazing activities call on initiates to endure pain or cold, drink large quantities of alcohol and perform dangerous or humiliating activities in front of teammates.

With the advent of the internet and web sites such as Facebook or Myspace, these activities are documented by team members themselves with photos taken during hazing and posted on the internet. This practice has led to an increasing awareness of the extremes to which team hazing activities can go and to team punishments meted out by embarrassed school officials. Web sites like badjocks.com have called attention to many questionable athletic team hazing activities by displaying photos and calling for an end to them.

Coaches and athletic administrators need to take responsibility for educating athletes about hazing and making sure that team initiation activities are safe and within the bounds of school-sponsored activities. Claims of ignorance or policies that are not enforced lead athletes to believe that hazing will be tolerated as long as these activities do not become public and cause embarrassment to the school.

There are better ways to develop team unity and initiate new members than to place them in dangerous or humiliating situations as a requirement for joining a team. It is the coach's responsibility to make sure that, if her or his team plans initiation activities, they are within the boundaries of safety and dignity expected of a school-sponsored activity.

Recommendations:

- Athletic administrators and coaches need to take responsibility for setting proactive boundaries around team initiation activities to prevent the team from engaging in dangerous practices or humiliating activities that are based in sexism, racism or homophobia: Develop an anti-hazing policy and make it known to all.

- Athletic administrators need to educate coaches and athletes about appropriate and inappropriate team initiation activities with clear lists of what is not appropriate.
- Coaches and administrators should develop and make public guidelines about team initiation activities.
- Coaches should talk to team captains and hold them accountable for safe and appropriate team initiation activities before they are planned and after they happen.
- If inappropriate team initiation activities occur, administrators should hold coaches and team captains accountable.
- Coaches, with team captains, can identify acceptable activities that can successfully serve the purposes of team initiation and bonding without humiliation, danger and stereotyping.

6. Chalk Talk: *Inclusion of Transgender Athletes on Sports Teams*

(Pat Griffin)

The inclusion of transgender athletes is one of the latest equality challenges for sport governing organizations worldwide. No sport organization prior to 2003 had any policy at all governing the participation of transgender athletes. Historically, the International Olympic Committee's sex verification policy was focused on preventing male competitors from participating in female events. As a reaction to this concern, sex verification tests for female (but not male) athletes began in 1968. The tests were discontinued in 1999 as sports authorities struggled unsuccessfully to develop reasonable and medically sound tests that were fairly administered and interpreted in the face of mounting social, medical and legal objections to the tests.

The International Olympic Committee became the first mainstream sport governing body to develop a policy governing the participation of transgender athletes in the Olympic Games. This policy, known as the Stockholm Consensus, became effective at the 2004 Games in Athens, Greece. Based on a report and recommendations from a committee of medical doctors, the IOC policy includes a list of three criteria for approval of transsexual athlete participation.

Since the IOC policy went into effect, the Ladies Golf Union (Great Britain), the Ladies European Golf Tour, Women's Golf Australia, the United States Golf Association, USA Track and Field, and the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association have created policies governing transgender athlete participation in events sponsored by their organizations. In addition, the Women's Sports Foundation, United Kingdom and the United States-based Women's Sports Foundation issued policy statements supporting the inclusion of transgender athletes in sport.

Most of these organizations have used the IOC standards as a guide for the development of their policies. In contrast, the National Collegiate Athletic Association requires that athletes compete in the gender designated on their official government documents, for example, driver's license, birth certificate or passport (This policy is currently under review). To date, no high school governing bodies have announced policies addressing the participation of transgender athletes. However, it is clear that the issue of transgender athlete eligibility to participate in school-based sports will need to be addressed in the near future. Each of these early attempts at developing policy governing the participation of transgender athletes is problematic in different ways. As sports governing organizations continue to better understand and address issues of transgender discrimination and competitive equity for all competitors, we can expect better and more consistent policies to emerge.

The goals for all sport organizations developing policies governing transgender athlete participation should be to identify ways to ensure fair competition for all participants and avoid discrimination against transgender athletes without invading the privacy of athletes who transition to a new gender.

To achieve this end, sport governing bodies need to examine legal and medical information related to transgender participation in sport. Separating this information from the confusion, prejudice and misinformation about transgender identity in general and athletic participation by transgender people in particular is essential in developing fair policy.

Education: An important step

One of the most important first steps for a sport organization or school athletic department to take is to educate athletic staff and athletes about transgender issues in sport. This step is the most effective way to provide information and answer questions about transgender athletic participation and lays the groundwork for developing and following fair policy governing the participation of transgender athletes. The NCAA has established a committee to begin to develop educational materials for athletic administrators, coaches and others on this topic. It Takes A Team! Education Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sport is a participant on this committee and is developing educational materials and programs for athletic administrators, coaches, athletes, and parents on transgender issues in sport.

The purposes of this article are:

1. To provide some clarifying information about basic gender terminology.
2. To summarize legal and medical information related to transgender athlete participation in sport.
3. To make some recommendations for policy related to the inclusion of transgender athletes in school-based athletic programs.
4. To identify resources on transgender athletic participation for sports administrators, coaches, and parents.

Clarification of Gender Terminology

Before we can explore policy recommendations related to transgender athlete participation in sport, it is important to provide some clarifying information about gender terminology and to address some common misconception about transgender identity. To that end, we offer the following definitions:

Birth/Assigned Sex refers to sex assigned at birth based on the anatomical, physiological and chromosomal characteristics associated with males, females, or intersex people.

Intersex refers to people who are born with both male and female anatomical, physiological or chromosomal characteristics.

Gender Identity refers to a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being a man or a woman. A person's gender identity can be different from their gender assigned at birth.

Gender Expression refers to socially constructed sets of behaviors, appearance, mannerisms, speech patterns, and dress associated with men (masculine), women (feminine) or a mixture of masculine and feminine (often called androgynous), or any other less traditional expressions.

Transgender is an umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or expression does not conform to prevailing social expectations and can be used to describe people whose gender identity or expression is different from their gender assigned at birth.

Transsexual is a term commonly used to refer to someone who transitions from one gender to another. It includes people who were identified as male at birth but whose gender identity is woman or girl (MTF) and people who were identified as female at birth, but whose gender identity is man or boy (FTM), and people whose gender identity is neither man nor woman. Transition often consists of a change in gender expression, name, and pronoun preference. Transition often also includes hormone therapy, counseling, and surgery.

Transitioned is a descriptor preferred by some people who have completed their gender transition and no longer want to be referred to as either transgender or transsexual. Instead they want to be referred as the new gender to which they have transitioned (woman or man, without the qualifiers, “transgender” or “transsexual”).

Gender Non-Conforming or Gender Variant refers to people who are perceived to have gender characteristics or gender expression that do not conform to traditional social expectations. Gender Variant or gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as transgender.

Sexual Orientation refers to a person’s emotional and sexual attraction to other people based on the gender of the other person. A person may identify their sexual orientation as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. Sexual orientation and gender identity are two different aspects of a person’s identity. Not all lesbian, gay, bisexual people are gender non-conforming and not all transgender people identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Assumptions about the relationship among a person’s sex assigned at birth, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation are often made. Misunderstanding the differences among these terms can lead to misconceptions about people. For example, transgender/transitioned people or people who display gender variant behavior or appearance are often assumed to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. Similarly, gay men are often stereotyped as having a feminine gender expression and lesbians are often stereotyped as having a masculine gender expression. However, a person’s gender identity or expression is unrelated to their sexual orientation. We each have a sexual orientation and a gender identity. Knowing a person’s gender identity provides little information about that person’s sexual orientation and vice versa.

Summary of Legal Information

Though no federal legislation explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or expression, the United States Constitution’s equal protection clause, Title VII, and Title IX may be interpreted to address discrimination against transgender people or gender non-conforming people. Moreover, the First Amendment and Due Process Clause of the U.S. Constitution may prohibit school officials from censoring student speech, dress, or expression without a compelling reason.

Legal protection from discrimination based on gender identity or expression is currently available in a limited number of states and localities and more states are adding gender identity and expression to their general non-discrimination laws and to laws and policies that apply specifically to students in schools. States that have non-discrimination laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, but not gender identity include Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Wisconsin (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2006).

States that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity include California, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Washington. The District of Columbia also provides legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2006).

Only eight states (Washington, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia currently have statewide legal protections for students based on sexual orientation. Only California, Minnesota and New Jersey include protections based on gender identity or expression (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, 2006).

Regardless of whether there are explicit legal protections for students based on gender identity in a particular state, discrimination against transgender and gender-variant athletes may still result in liability for coaches or schools under other federal or state laws that prohibit gender or sex discrimination.

The most prominent legal case to date involving a transsexual athlete in the United States was Renee Richards v. United States Tennis Association. Richards, a male to female transsexual, sued to participate in the U.S. Open's Women's Division in 1977 without submitting to a sex verification test. The New York court ruled that the USTA was in violation of the state Human Rights Law and was discriminating against Richards. She played in the U.S. Open that year where she lost her first round singles match, but reached the finals in doubles before losing. Athletes identifying as transsexual, transgender or transitioned currently compete in many women's sports including mountain biking, ice hockey, track and field and golf.

Addressing Competitive Athletic Performance Concerns

Ensuring that transgender/transitioned athletes are treated fairly in sport presents a unique challenge because, for the most part, competitive athletics is a sex-segregated activity. Most athletic teams are separated into those for boys and men and those for girls and women. Men and women compete against or with each other in far fewer sports (archery, equestrian, shooting, for example). Moreover, there are well documented physical and physiological differences between males and females that lead to the conventional wisdom that most sports are best conducted as sex segregated activities in order to ensure that women and men have equitable opportunities to compete against others of similar physical and physiological capabilities. The actual overlap in male and female athletic performance, however, is quite large, rather than clearly separated into two distinct groups. The range of physiological characteristics and athletic performance within each of the categories of female and male is also quite wide. Nonetheless, transgender athletes, particularly transsexual or transitioned athletes, challenge accepted boundaries of eligibility and raise concerns about fair competition in sex segregated sport.

A broad spectrum of identities is included under the umbrella of transgender identity. Transsexual or transitioned athletes may pose the greatest challenge to equity in sex segregated sport competition. Athletes who have completed a transition from male to female are most likely to be seen as having an unfair competitive advantage in contests against women who are female at birth. Athletes who have completed a transition from female to male also pose challenges if they are taking testosterone as part of their hormone therapy because of concerns about athletes' use of performance enhancing drugs.

Other transgender athletes; whose gender identity does not match their birth sex, but do not undergo surgery or take hormones; pose less of a competitive equity challenge. Instead, they present a challenge to traditional gender expectations and might be subjected to discrimination or harassment because of stereotypes or prejudice. Athletes whose gender expression is non-conforming, but whose birth sex and gender identity match (i.e. masculine women or feminine men) pose the least challenge to competitive equity. However, these athletes might be subjected to discrimination or harassment based on their gender expression.

Athletic Performance Parity and Transsexual Athletes

Many medical doctors who specialize in treating people who transition make the case that these athletes should be allowed to compete in their new gender. The International Olympic Committee policy on the participation of transsexual athletes in the Olympic Games reflects this perspective. In 2003 the Executive Committee of the IOC approved a set of criteria to determine the eligibility of transsexual/transitioned athletes recommended by the IOC Medical Commission. The IOC policy is as follows:

Sex reassignment before puberty: Individuals undergoing sex reassignment surgery of male to female before puberty should be regarded as girls and women (female). This also applies to individuals undergoing female to male reassignment, who should be regarded as boys and men (male).

Sex reassignment after puberty: Individuals undergoing sex reassignment from male to female after puberty (and vice versa) are eligible for participation in female or male competitions, respectively, under the following conditions:

- Surgical anatomical changes have been completed, including external genitalia changes and gonadectomy
- Legal recognition of their reassigned sex has been conferred by the appropriate official authorities
- Hormonal therapy appropriate for the assigned sex has been administered in a verifiable manner and for a sufficient length of time to minimize gender-related advantages in sports competition
- Eligibility should begin no sooner than two years after gonadectomy
- It is understood that a confidential case by case evaluation will occur. In the event that the gender of a competing athlete is questioned, the medical delegate (or equivalent) of the relevant sporting body shall have the authority to take all appropriate measures for the determination of the gender of the competitor.

This policy is based on the medical opinion that, under these conditions, any residual competitive advantage for an athlete who transitions from male to female will be neutralized and she can compete fairly with athletes who are female at birth. Many women athletes and coaches are skeptical of this opinion and believe that transitioned women continue to have a competitive advantage over other women. This assumption ignores the already existing wide range of size, height, skill, strength, ability, speed and other components of athletic ability among females at birth.

The IOC policy, although it expressly includes FTM people, does not address issues that FTMs would encounter, specifically steroid test problems. It is our position that FTM athletes should be allowed to compete as men if their testosterone levels are in the normal range for athletes who are male at birth.

Recommendations for Interactions: Pronouns, Name Changes and Name Calling

Many transgender people adopt new names as one aspect of expressing their gender identity. Not all transgender people choose to change their names, but when they do, it is important to respect these requests. For coaches and teammates who know an athlete while they are in the midst of this change, it can be a challenge to get used to using a new name or different pronouns. Slipping up and using the “old” name is probably inevitable as everyone adjusts to these changes.

Most transgender people also want to be referred to with the pronoun that best corresponds to their gender identity. Some transgender people prefer neutral pronouns such as “hir” (for her or his) or “ze” (for he or she). Regardless of whether an athlete is on a men’s or women’s team, it is important to

abide by a transgender athlete's preferences because names and pronouns are an essential part of validating and respecting a transgender athlete's gender identity and expression.

Gender non-conforming people who do not identify as transgender are often teased or harassed about their non-conformity. For example, a male athlete named Patrick who enjoys dancing might be called "Patricia" as a means to disparage his masculinity. This kind of teasing or harassment makes athletes feel that they must conform to gender expectations or risk the friendship of their peers.

An unfortunate practice on some boy's and men's athletic teams is deriding an athlete's performance by calling him a "girl" or referring to him with a girl's name. The message is that not only is he not performing up to the standards expected of him as a male athlete, but also that the athletic performances of girls and women are inferior. This practice should never be tolerated because it creates an unsafe environment for all athletes and is a discriminatory strategy for motivating better athletic performance.

Similarly, when strong athletic girls or women are called "masculine," referred to by men's names, or compared to boys and men, the message is that high performing female athletes are exhibiting athletic skills that only men have. Sometimes male and female athletes or coaches taunt opponents by using inappropriate pronouns or names as a way to distract them or taunt them during competition. This practice is also unacceptable and creates a hostile and unsafe climate for all athletes, especially those whose gender identity or expression is non-conforming.

A related problem occurs when a male athlete loses a sport contest with a female athlete. When male athletes are teased or ridiculed because they "lost to a girl" or the winning girl is teased because of her victory, the message sent is that female athletes are inferior and that all athletes must conform to stereotypical gender roles and athletic performance expectations or have their gender identity (or sexuality) questioned.

Recommendations for Policy Governing the Participation of Transgender Athletes

As noted earlier, some sport governing bodies are beginning to address the need to develop policy about the participation of transgender and transsexual athletes. These efforts can be divided into several categories:

- a) Non-discrimination policy
- b) Transgender participation policy
- c) Policies addressing access to locker rooms and bathrooms
- d) Policies addressing team hotel accommodations
- e) Dress code policies.

Non-Discrimination Policy: Sport organizations should include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in their existing non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies. The National Center for Lesbian Rights defines harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity as follows:

- **Sexual Orientation Harassment:** Harassment on the basis of sexual orientation is unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at the characteristics of a person's real or perceived sexual orientation, such as negative name calling and imitating mannerisms.
- **Gender Identity Harassment:** Harassment on the basis of gender identity is unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at the characteristics of a person's real or perceived gender identity, such as negative name calling and imitating mannerisms.

Transgender Athlete Participation Policies: Schools and sport governing organizations will need to develop policy addressing the participation of athletes who have completed or are in the process of transitioning to a new gender through surgery and/or hormone treatments. The IOC policy described earlier, with all of its limitations, is a first attempt to develop a medically-based policy that identifies the conditions under which transgender athletes can participate in their new gender while ensuring that competitive fairness is maintained for all competitors. However, eligibility limits on high school and college athletes complicate the utility of policies like the IOC policy for school-based sports. Policies that are more refined and inclusive for school-age athletes transitioning during their competitive eligibility need to be developed.

Athletes whose gender identity or expression do not match their birth sex must be allowed to participate on teams on the basis of their birth sex as long as they are not taking hormones or undergoing sex assignment surgery. If these athletes choose to compete in their preferred gender though, fair competition issues may arise and must be addressed. For example, an athlete whose birth sex is male, but who identifies as a woman and is not taking hormones or planning to undergo sex reassignment surgery, may have an unfair competitive advantage if competing against women who were female at birth. This may not be the case for athletes transitioning from female to male. Currently, there is no policy that would enable these athletes to compete in their preferred gender.

Policies Addressing Access to Locker Rooms and Bathrooms: Locker rooms and toilet facilities are, by tradition, sex-segregated and pose challenges to administrators who are working to accommodate transgender athletes and coaches. The issue of where to change clothes, shower, and use the toilet when locker rooms are designed for men only or for women only requires some creative thinking to ensure that every athlete has access to these facilities in a safe, comfortable and convenient environment.

Many schools make accommodations for transgender students by designating selected single toilet facilities in the school “gender neutral.” When gender neutral toilets are not available, it is generally accepted that students should be allowed access to the bathroom that corresponds to the gender with which they identify: Transgender/transitioned women should have access to the women’s bathroom and transgender/transitioned men should have access to the men’s bathroom.

Some schools may have a unisex toilet/changing room in the locker room area for the purpose of wheelchair accessibility. This room can also serve transgender students needs. Other schools create private changing and showering areas inside the men’s and women’s locker room to which everyone has access. Providing such private areas can benefit everyone not only transgender athletes since other athletes, for reasons of personal modesty or religious beliefs, might also prefer private changing and showering areas. In locker rooms that have private changing and showering areas, transgender students should be allowed to access the locker room that corresponds to the gender with which they identify. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to allow the transgender athlete to use the locker room at a different time than other athletes in order to provide the transgender athlete with sufficient privacy.

Policies Addressing Team Hotel Accommodations: When teams travel and overnight accommodations are made, coaches have a variety of ways they determine which teammates will share a room or if any team members will stay in a single room. Some coaches assign roommates, while other coaches leave these decisions up to team members. Coaches sometimes make these decisions based on sport strategies. For example, some softball or baseball coaches assign starting pitchers to a single room or place athletes who have a special rapport together to maximize the possibility that they will relax and get a good night’s sleep. Other coaches rotate room assignments so that everyone shares a room with everyone else during a season. However these decisions are made, everyone’s comfort level and privacy must be considered. If the best way to address comfort and

privacy issues is to make single room accommodations for transgender athletes, coaches should consider this option.

Dress Code Policies. Some coaches institute dress codes for their teams when they travel or during the school day before home games. Whether or not there is a transgender athlete on the team, gender-neutral dress codes can set a standard for the team and express team unity and identity without requiring athletes to wear gendered clothing. For example, rather than requiring a women's team to wear skirts and heels, the dress code could include dressy pants and shirt with low-heeled shoes that are dressier than casual styles typically worn to school.

7. Chalk Talk: *Negative Recruiting and Homophobia in Women's Sport*

(Pat Griffin)

All college coaches engage in efforts to attract promising high school athletes to their school. Coaches using ethical recruiting practices try to “sell” their own program and school by describing its outstanding qualities, excellent opportunities and convincing an athlete that she will have the best chance to achieve her athletic and academic goals at their school.

Negative recruiting, on the other hand, is an unethical coaching practice. When coaches use negative recruiting tactics, they not only positively describe their own program to potential recruits and their families, they also make negative comments about other schools and athletic programs they know the athlete is considering. Negative recruiting is a serious problem, especially in Division I where competition for top athletes is most fierce and the career consequences for losing coaches are most severe.

Negative recruiting can include criticisms or innuendo about any aspect of a rival school: The coach's experience, particular academic programs the athlete is interested in, or the conference of which the school is a part, for example. However, negative recruiting in women's team sports often is intended to play on the fears and concerns a high school athlete and her family might have about playing on a team with lesbian or bisexual coaches or teammates. Unfortunately, lingering stereotypes among athletes and their parents about lesbians as a sexual threat or religious concerns about the “moral” climate of a team that includes lesbians or bisexual women make homophobic negative recruiting an effective tool for unethical coaches.

This kind of negative recruiting can be direct or subtle. Coaches sometimes tell a recruit and her family that a rival coach is a lesbian or that there are lesbian players on her team. Coaches use this tactic even if they do not know the sexual orientation of the coaches and athletes at the other school. Other coaches can be more subtle. They might allude to rumors or make innuendos about problems on another school's team caused by “lifestyle” or “moral” issues that the coach believes the recruit and her family might find offensive or threatening. Though college coaches are more likely to engage in negative recruiting, high school coaches do also. High school coaches are often influential in helping their athletes make decisions about what college to attend and can use negative recruiting to steer an athlete and her family away from a particular college program.

Negative recruiting creates a hostile environment for lesbian athletes and coaches as well as heterosexual women coaches. Heterosexual coaches are not exempt from being targeted by homophobic negative recruiting even though they are not lesbians. Innuendo about the presence of “predatory” or “immoral” lesbians on a team have damaged the reputations of coaches and tarnished the image of college teams. Both of these effects can take a toll on a coach's ability to recruit as rumors spread. Many women coaches go to great lengths to present a heterosexual image to avoid

having their programs tagged with the lesbian label. Many lesbian coaches hide their identities and their families in an effort to avoid being targeted by negative recruiting. Lesbian coaches (and coaches perceived to be lesbians) compete under the shadow of stereotypes that place them at a disadvantage in recruiting efforts with high school athletes and parents who believe lesbian stereotypes are true.

In October 2006, the National Center for Lesbian Rights sponsored a “Think Tank” on negative recruiting in men’s and women’s athletics. In conjunction with the NCAA, this think tank marked the first national effort to address negative recruiting. Think tank participants included NCLR and NCAA staff, athletic directors, coaches, CEOs of coaching organizations, athletic conference executives and other expert educators and researchers. Participants identified education and research action plans designed to eliminate negative recruiting in collegiate athletics. These plans are the first organized effort to address negative recruiting. As these efforts move forward, It Takes A Team will provide resources and information on our web site.

As general attitudes about lesbians, gay men and bisexual people become more positive, homophobic negative recruiting in athletics will lose its effectiveness. This change is beginning to happen now as more high school recruits and their families are either offended by a coach’s assumption that they share his or her negative beliefs about lesbians and bisexual women or by the coach’s use of unethical recruiting tactics. More high school athletes attend schools with Gay-Straight student clubs and more families know and care about lesbian and gay relatives, friends and co-workers. As these changes occur in the larger culture, homophobic negative recruiting will backfire more often as high school athletes and their families decline to attend a school because of a coach’s unethical tactics. In the meantime here are some suggestions for addressing negative recruiting tactics.

Recommendations:

- The NCAA, NAIA, NFHS and other school-sport governing organizations should provide more information to member schools about their policies prohibiting negative recruiting with specific reporting procedures and appropriate penalties for violations.
- Athletic departments, coaches associations and athletic conferences should develop specific policies prohibiting negative recruiting and identifying procedure to follow to report negative recruiting by another coach.
- Ethics codes for coaches should identify negative recruiting as an unacceptable practice.
- Coaches’ handbooks, orientation programs, or professional development sessions should address negative recruiting and develop policies against it.
- High school recruits and their parents should be informed about negative recruiting policies and encouraged to report violations to the school, athletic conference, and national governing organization.
- Coaches education programs can address LGBT issues and their connections to negative recruiting practices.

8. Chalk Talk: *LGBT Athletes of Color: Intersections of Racism, Sexism and Heterosexism*

(Pat Griffin)

Alpha Alexander, Professor Lane College; Dora Dome, National Center for Lesbian Rights; Pat Griffin, Director of ITAT; Yolanda Jackson, Women’s Sports Foundation; Camille O’Bryant, Associate

Professor at California Polytechnical Institute, Jillian Ross, Graduate Student at University of Tennessee Knoxville

Addressing discrimination and prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) athletes and coaches requires an understanding of how other identities besides sexual orientation or gender identity affect LGBT experience. Every athlete and coach is more than their sexual orientation or gender identity. Race, economic class and religion are among the many other aspects of social identity that add to the complexities of addressing discrimination and prejudice in athletics. The interactions of these identities complicate the experiences of LGBT people in athletics and make the experiences of individual LGBT athletes and coaches different from each other.

Because of the intersections of these different identities, it is important not to assume that all LGBT athletes and coaches experience their sexual orientation in the same way. A lesbian athlete whose family cannot afford to pay for college costs is dependent on her athletic scholarship for her college education and will be less likely to be open about being gay if she believes that openness would jeopardize her scholarship. Likewise, a gay athlete whose family religious beliefs condemn homosexuality might feel more conflict or fear about openly identifying himself.

LGBT athletes and coaches of color must negotiate both racism and heterosexism in athletics. Furthermore, LGBT women of color must negotiate sexism. For LGBT athletes of color, the decision to come out or not is a balancing act of identities affected by the combined effects of racism, heterosexism and sexism (for women of color). This intersection of racism and heterosexism creates conflicts and complications that white LGBT athletes and coaches do not face.

For example, LGBT athletes and coaches of color often feel a separation from heterosexual teammates of color. If heterosexual teammates of color express anti-gay feelings, LGBT athletes of color are often reluctant to reveal themselves. This reluctance is based on the fear of isolating themselves from friends and teammates. They often fear religious judgment from faith-based communities of color and are concerned about losing their support network among community, family and friends of color.

This conflict is particularly pressing for athletes of color on teams in schools that are predominantly white. LGBT athletes of color get caught between pressure to be representatives of their race since there are so few students of color and the pressure to pick one identity over another. This possibility of alienating other students of color has consequences that white LGBT students do not face in predominantly white schools. In schools where there are more athletes of color than there are students of color in the general student population, LGBT athletes of color often can develop support and friendship networks with other athletes of color. This support, however, is sometimes contingent on their willingness to hide their sexual orientation. In many communities of color, LGBT people are tolerated as long as they are not open about their sexual orientation. However, the psychological costs of keeping one's sexual orientation secret are high and require enormous energy that affects friendships, family relationships, athletic and academic performance and self-esteem.

Heterosexual people of color sometimes perceive LGBT athletes and coaches of color who are open about their sexuality as choosing their sexuality over their race. As a result, they perceive LGBT athletes of color as "race traitors." This is particularly so among heterosexual people of color who believe that identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual is primarily a white issue. In this instance, heterosexism and homophobia isolate LGBT athletes and coaches of color from other communities of people of color in sport and athletic settings.

LGBT athletes of color are also at risk of feeling alienated from white LGBT teammates or LGBT school organizations. Some LGBT athletes of color prefer to refer to themselves as "same-gender

loving” (Blacks) or “two-spirit” (Native American) as a way to differentiate their experiences from white LGBT people. LGBT athletes of color are faced with the racism often present in predominantly white LGBT school-based organizations and among white LGBT athletes. White LGBT students, whether consciously or not, exercise and received advantages because they are white that can soften some of the prejudice related to being LGBT. They often do not understand how the experiences of LGBT people of color are affected by racism or how their own white identity provides them with advantages that can make it easier to openly claim their LGBT identity.

The decision to make one’s sexual orientation known publicly is difficult enough for many white LGBT athletes and coaches. However, many reasons related to racism and concerns about isolation from communities of color and family make many LGBT athletes and coaches of color less likely to come out publicly. For example, religion often is an important and lifelong part of the lives of students of color as a personal and spiritual buffer to racism. If their religious community and family teach that homosexuality is a sin, the potential judgment and isolation from this source of comfort and support can be devastating. Though religion also plays an important part in the lives of white LGBT athletes and coaches, the added complexities of racism are not a part of their experience.

Many of the gender and sexuality expectations placed on LGBT athletes and coaches of color are based on racial stereotypes. At the same time they are caught in the dominant culture’s expectations for masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality.

Cultural differences about perceptions of sexuality and gender affect how LGBT athletes of color see themselves and how their families and friends see them. Differences among African-American, Asian-American, Latino-American and Native American cultures’ perceptions, language and expectations with regard to gender and sexual expression are not necessarily the same as those of the dominant white North American culture. Just as it is important not to assume that LGBT athletes of color have the same experience of their sexual orientation as white LGBT athletes, it is also important to understand that the experiences of LGBT athletes of color are also different from each other because of these cultural differences.

Lesbians and bisexual women of color face the combined effects of racism, sexism and heterosexism. Lesbian and bisexual women of color also must negotiate between society’s expectations of (white) femininity and their specific racial and/or ethnic community’s expectations of femininity. For example, Black women are not held to the same standards of staying home with children as white women. Historically, it was just not feasible to do so; thus, Black women are provided with the opportunity, and sometimes the necessity, to work outside the home. Stereotypes of women athletes of color, especially Black women, can lead to perceptions that they are “naturally” more animalistic or athletic, masculine or sexual than their white teammates. These stereotypes are particularly demeaning for lesbian or bisexual Black women athletes who are also subjected to stereotypes based on their sexual orientation.

Likewise, gay and bisexual men of color may aspire to different standards of masculinity than white LGBT men do or have different expectations of gender and sexuality placed on them. Closeted gay or bisexual male athletes of color often feel pressure to conform to more rigid stereotypes of masculinity to deflect suspicions about their sexuality among white teammates and teammates of color.

All of these complexities call for coaches and athletic administrators to anticipate how race and other aspects of identity may differentiate the experiences of LGBT athletes and coaches of color from those of white LGBT athletes and coaches.

Recommendations:

- Sponsor education programs for athletic department staff and athletes on racism, sexism, heterosexism and make sure their intersections are addressed so that the experiences of LGBT athletes and coaches of color are specifically addressed
- Invite a panel of LGBT athletes of color to talk about their experiences and describe how coaches and teammates can better address their needs
- When athletes or coaches of color are isolated, depressed or having problems in classes, consider the possibility that questioning one's sexuality or dealing with the anti-gay actions or attitudes among others might be among the issues athletes of color might be wrestling with. Be open to depressed or isolated athletes no matter what the issue might be.
- Make sure school-based LGBT support and social groups address the needs of LGBT people of color and are aware of how racism and white privilege impact their programming.
- Ensure that school-based support and social groups for students of color address the needs of LGBT people of color and are aware of potential heterosexism in their programming
- Athletic department staff should establish "safe" resources within the department and within campus counseling services so that athletes of color can get help that is supportive of their individual needs, whatever they may be, and that they do not need to fear of repercussions in the athletic department.

9. Chalk Talk: Sexual Harassment among Athletes and LGBT Issues in Sport

(Pat Griffin)

Sexual harassment is often defined as repeated and unwanted words, acts or gestures with a sexual connotation which by nature attack the dignity of the physical or psychological integrity of the person or lead to hostile or uncomfortable working and learning conditions. Such behavior may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to:

- Persistent manifestations of sexual interest on the part of someone who knows or can reasonably know that such interest is not wanted;
- Verbal advances already refused and nevertheless repeated without the consent of the person who is the object of those advances;
- Insistent and unwanted propositions of a sexual nature;
- Repeated sexual remarks or comments made in front of several persons when this is done to intimidate others in that group;
- Nonconsensual physical advances such as touching, caressing, brushing against, pinching or kissing;
- Remarks, comments, allusions, jokes or insults of a sexual nature which are repeated or continual and which disturb the atmosphere of work or study;
- An explicit or implicit promise of reward or favorable treatment in return for complying with requests of a sexual nature;
- An implicit or explicit threat of retribution or unfavorable, hostile, unjust or discriminatory treatment, upon refusal to submit to a request of a sexual nature, or the reprisals which effectively follow such a refusal;
- Voyeurism or exhibitionism;
- Attitudes or acts of physical aggression or assault with the intention of imposing an undesired sexual intimacy;
- Persistent, unwanted contact or attention after the end of a consensual relationship;
- Sexually degrading language or actions used to describe or intimidate a person.

Sexual Harassment is against the law and applies to everyone in a school-based athletic setting: coaches, athletes, athletic trainers, academic counselors and administrators regardless of gender or sexual orientation. All participants in an athletic program should be taught what constitutes sexual harassment and the procedures for reporting it. Athletic administrators and coaches are particularly responsible for addressing sexual harassment and maintaining a safe and respectful climate for all participants.

Sexual harassment can take many forms:

- Heterosexual athletes harassing other heterosexual athletes with unwanted sexual attention, innuendo, or creating a hostile climate.
- Lesbian or gay athletes harassing other lesbian or gay athletes unwanted sexual attention, innuendo or creating a hostile climate.
- Heterosexual athletes harassing gay or lesbian athletes with sexually explicit actions, innuendo or creating a hostile climate.
- Heterosexual athletes harassing other heterosexual athletes with sexually explicit actions, innuendo or creating a hostile climate.
- Lesbian or gay athletes harassing heterosexual athletes with unwanted sexual attention, innuendo or creating a hostile climate.
- Coaches harassing other coaches or athletes with unwanted sexual attention, innuendo or creating hostile climate. (Any sexual relationship, consensual or not, between coaches and athletes is a violation of coaching ethics).

All manifestations of sexual harassment should be addressed equally, regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the people involved. Everyone in athletics has a right to participate in a safe and respectful climate and the same standards of conduct should be applied to all.

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment and Homophobia

Stereotypes and fears about lesbian and gay people can predispose some athletes and coaches to believe that lesbian and gay athletes and coaches, merely by their presence, are a sexual threat to others on the team. The stereotype that lesbian and gay people are sexual predators who either force their sexual attentions on or exert sexual pressure on younger people is perhaps one of the most destructive myths underlying discrimination against lesbian and gay people in athletics. This stereotype can lead athletes to fear sharing a locker room, shower, or hotel room with a lesbian or gay teammate or coach. When athletes or coaches make these assumptions about lesbian or gay team members, the potential for misinterpretation and accusation can create serious misunderstandings that jeopardize careers and damage relationships.

The fear of sexual harassment or even sexual interest from lesbian or gay team members that other athletes may harbor can create a climate of distrust and lack of safety for all. To separate homophobia from sexual harassment it is essential to differentiate between *presence and behavior*. When athletes base their discomfort with lesbian or gay team members or make accusations of sexual harassment on the presence of lesbian or gay people on a team, the problem is homophobia among the athletes who are afraid or uncomfortable. In contrast, when athletes are uncomfortable, fearful or make accusations based on unwanted sexual *behavior* (words or actions) by other athletes, the problem is sexual harassment and should be addressed as such. By differentiating between *presence and behavior*, coaches and administrators can better address the problem appropriately.

Lesbian and gay participants in athletics should not be restricted or penalized because others fear or are uncomfortable with their presence on teams, in locker rooms or hotel rooms. Lesbian and gay

participants in athletics are, however, responsible for observing the same standards of conduct with regard to sexual harassment as all others on the team.

Differentiating *Invitation from Harassment and Friendship from Romantic Interest*

Homophobia can also complicate how a heterosexual athlete might respond to an invitation to participate in an outside social event from a lesbian or gay teammate. For a team member who harbors sexual stereotypes about lesbians and gay men, any invitation from a lesbian or gay teammate, even one based on an interest in friendship, may be interpreted as a sexual advance or expression of romantic interest. If the invitation is based on a romantic interest and the invitee is not interested, a respectful turn down is appropriate as in the case of an unwanted heterosexual invitation. When romantic or sexual interest is persistent despite repeated turn downs, this can be construed as sexual harassment and should be reported as such.

Recommendations

- On an annual basis, provide all members of the athletic department with information about sexual harassment laws pertaining to your school: Coach, other athletic staff and athlete seminars, student-athlete handbook, new coaches' orientation, parent orientation.
- Make sure sexual harassment education addresses all forms of harassment regardless of gender and sexual orientation.
- Develop clear procedures for reporting sexual harassment and make sure that all members of the athletic program know what they are.
- Provide education to staff, athletes and parents about LGBT issues in athletics, include a discussion of the connections between homophobia and sexual harassment.
- Coaches, team captains should understand their leadership roles in establishing a team climate free of sexual harassment within the team or outside the team activities.
- Emphasize the importance of and expectation that all members of the athletic program are responsible for maintaining a safe and professional climate in which sexual harassment of any kind has no place.

10. Chalk Talk: *Religion and Homosexuality in Athletics*

(Pat Griffin)

In accordance with constitutional protections for freedom of religion and traditional conventions of separation of religion and state, athletic programs in public schools or secular private schools have a responsibility to ensure a neutral religious climate in which no particular religious faith or practice is promoted over any others. This neutrality enables individual athletes and coaches to express their faith and, at the same time, protects the rights of athletes and coaches who do not share that faith or who choose not to participate in any religious activity.

Athletic programs in religious schools are a different case. For example, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, or Protestant Christian schools may expect adherence to their faith as a condition of admission or at least assume that students and staff have an awareness of faith-based expectations and practices at the school. Most religious schools are governed by a commitment to respect, safety, and fairness to members of the community who do not share the institutional religious perspective. However, athletes and coaches who choose to enroll or work in religious schools must do so with the understanding that particular religious activities and assumptions about religious belief may be part of the school culture.

This discussion focuses on religious expression in public and secular private school athletic programs. The challenge in these schools is to find common ground where athletes and coaches of all spiritual and non-spiritual persuasions can compete together in a religious-neutral, respectful, safe, and fair climate despite differences in religious perspectives. Freedom of religion also means freedom from having the religions of others imposed on participants in activities that are not in and of themselves faith-based. Athletic programs in public schools or secular private schools are examples of such activities.

Coaches are responsible for ensuring that the climate for all team activities is neutral with regard to religion. According to U.S. Government guidelines for religious expression in public schools, coaches or other school staff are prohibited from encouraging or discouraging prayer or actively participating in religious activities with students when acting in their official capacity as “representatives of the state.” Coaches are acting as “representatives of the state” in their professional capacity as employees of schools. The activities in which athletes participate under a coach’s leadership, such as practice sessions, games, travel, team activities outside of competition, team written communications and any other required team activities should all be religion-neutral.

Even when religious oriented team activities are not required, but suggested or offered as voluntary options by coaches or team captains, players often feel pressure to participate. If religious activities are led by a coach, team captain, or other team leader, these practices constitute a particular problem for other athletes and coaches. Many athletes (or assistant coaches) will not speak up to object to team prayers or other team religious activities even if they do not want to participate in them. This reluctance reflects fear of negative consequences that might affect their opportunity to compete, a fear of creating dissension within the team or concerns about alienating themselves from coaches, team captains or teammates. Even non-denominational prayers assume all participants believe in a Higher Power and are an imposition on participants’ rights to be free of religious activities in the athletic setting.

Team captains also have leadership responsibility among their peers to make sure all teammates are treated with respect and fairness, and that no one is singled out, made to feel uncomfortable or ostracized because of their identity or personal religious beliefs.

Religious belief about homosexuality is an area of potential conflict in athletics that can affect individual athletes and coaches as well as the entire team. Religious perspectives on homosexuality are varied. Some religions believe that homosexuality is a sin, while others believe lesbian, gay and bisexual people are simply part of a broad spectrum of sexuality welcomed into the faith community. Many religious groups have adopted anti-discrimination policies even if they believe that homosexuality is a sin. Others believe homosexuality is a sin and engage in efforts to “save” lesbians and gay men from their “lifestyle.” Some faiths take a “live and let live” stance toward homosexuality and preach tolerance, if not acceptance.

For coaches, team captains and other team members who believe homosexuality is a sin, the challenge in a public or secular private school is to separate their personal beliefs from their responsibility to find a common ground of respect for differences among coaches and teammates in a religious neutral climate. Coaches and other athletic staff in particular have a professional responsibility to ensure that ALL athletes are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their personal beliefs about homosexuality or their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What is Unacceptable in an Athletic Setting (required or voluntary):

- Team prayers led by coaches or athletes.

- Team prayers led by athletes, while within governmental guidelines, place pressure on athletes to participate.
- Team attendance at Bible Study, required or urged by coaches or captains.
- Team attendance at prayer breakfasts, religious services or other religious events.
- Team attendance at religious club meetings.
- Teammates proselytizing other team members who are not interested in discussing religion.
- Passing out written religious information to teammates unless an individual teammate expresses an interest in such information.
- Teammates condemning other teammates for not subscribing to their faith's beliefs about homosexuality or other faith-based beliefs.
- Coaches or captains including verses from particular religious texts on team materials or in team communications (verbal, emails or letters).
- Coaches or athletes discriminating against a player or coach who does not share their religious beliefs or who violates their religious beliefs (homosexuality).
- Coaches or athletes trying to convert or "save" coaches or athletes who are gay or do not share their religious beliefs (homosexuality, for example).
- Coaches promising recruits and their parents that the team has a religious-based ethos or values.

What is Acceptable:

- A team moment of silence before practice or games.
- Coaches reading a non-religious poem or quote, playing non-religious music, giving a non-religious inspirational talk.
- Individual athletes participating in faith-based groups or activities of their choosing outside of required team activities.
- Individual athletes talking about their faith, but not trying to proselytize others who are not interested.
- Individual athletes reading the Bible or other religious text to themselves on the team bus.
- Individual athletes praying on their own during practice, games or at any time in the athletic setting.
- A group of athletes voluntarily praying together in the locker room or attending Bible study or a religious service together as long as it is not assumed that these are team activities in which everyone must or should participate.
- Individual players wearing jewelry or other symbols of their faith (as is consistent with uniform requirements for practice or games).
- Individual players talking about their faith to media or others outside the team.

11. Chalk Talk: *What to Do If You Think You Have Been Discriminated Against*

(Pat Griffin)

1. If you are an employee, do not resign. If you are a team member do not quit the team. Challenging discrimination is much more difficult if you resign or quit.
2. If you are being fired from your job or dismissed from a team and you believe the reason for this action is your perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, ask for the reasons for your dismissal and ask that the reasons be put in writing.

3. Consult with legal resources, school office, LGBT resource center or other resource that can provide informed advice on your legal options.
4. If you are a staff member, obtain a written copy of the grievance/appeal process from your school or, if you are a student, the procedure in the student handbook (or student athlete handbook) for reporting discrimination. This is the first step initiating action. Guidance for completing these forms is available from the [National Center for Lesbian Rights](#). Be aware that often there is a time limit for the filing of complaints so take action as soon as you feel other avenues of discussion are not effective.
5. Identify colleagues, friends or teammates you can count on and who will provide emotional support to you.
6. If meetings are scheduled with you and the coach or administrator who you believe is discriminating against you, bring a teammate, colleague or legal advisor to the meetings to serve as support and witness. Avoid attending such a meeting alone.
7. If you are a student-athlete and you are out to your parents, tell them what is happening. Parents can be essential advocates and supports for you. Ask your parents to attend meetings with athletic department personnel with you.
8. Keep a diary of everything that someone has said or done that you think is discriminatory. Include dates and times.
9. If others were present when the incident(s) occurred, ask them to support you if you challenge the discrimination or harassment.
10. Find out what kind of protections are in place in your state that address discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. If your state has no legal protections, consider the federal laws that might apply (See [Chalk Talk on Laws and Legal Resources](#)).
11. Consult with one of the national legal advocacy groups listed in the [Chalk Talk on Laws and Legal Resources](#).
12. Look for ways to resolve the situation informally: meet with coaches or administrators. If this fails, consider more formal steps to resolve the situation like talking to the school principal, school board, or university president.
13. If these actions fail to resolve the situation, consider filing a lawsuit in consultation with legal representation.
14. Remember you have a right to be treated with respect and fairness. When you stand up and demand to be treated fairly, you will help to make athletics a safe, respectful and fair place for others too.