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A SUMMIT ON THE COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE

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15) Opening remarks by Dan Wetzel, sports journalist, Yahoo.com, and author, *Glory Road*

DAN WETZEL: Well, in terms of college recruiting, no college ever recruited me to do anything. They actually prefer I stay off campus these days.

I wrote, one of the books I wrote was with Jerry Tarkanian who knows a little bit about recruiting rules, and he had a line in the book that said, nine out of ten major college teams break the rules, the other one's in last place.

It's a fairly amusing line but I think it also may be more accurate than you think. There's currently 113 schools on NCAA probation. In major conferences the violations are extensive. Since '99 there's been eight major violation convictions in the Big Ten. Since 2002, five Big Twelve schools have been hit with major violations. One more is under investigation.

In the SEC, since 2002 seven schools have been put on major NCAA violations. Two more are currently under investigations. The rules are not being followed at the college level if they don't have to be and if you're in that extension. And I think part of that is the system that Joe mentioned that's been created.

There's three different groups that will cheat the rules. There's the college coaches and boosters you guys employ. There are the shoe companies that are looking to gain access to future endorsements. Those are corporate partners with you. And there's pro sports agents looking for clients. The NCAA worked very hard to pass laws around the country that make it illegal for sports agents to pay players. It's not illegal though for coaches, boosters or your corporate shoe partners.

What has happened is the summer basketball coach has become increasingly powerful as the point person for those three groups to get at the commodity that is the student-athlete, and that's what Joe was talking about. The heavy recruitment of 13-, 12-, 11-year old kids that can play is extensive because they're very, very valuable.

If you run a prominent traveling basketball team in this country, and we're talking scores of them, you do not have a job other than running that program.

It is extremely lucrative to run a summer basketball team. Almost every summer basketball team has set up a charitable foundation to fund itself and the donations are not from bake sales and car washes, but from coaches, boosters, shoe companies and agents.

You donate as a tax write-off, it goes in on a 501(c)3 and it is impossible for anyone, because of the tax laws, to figure out who is donating to that program. There is a ton of money in this. That's why they fly all over and they do all the things Joe was talking about.

It's also been created, some of these have created these fly-by-night, storefront schools around the country, that are not really high schools but they can get you your transcript, they can get you your SAT score, they can get you your core

requirements. Some of these schools are a joke. There's ten kids in the whole school, they all play basketball.

There's football, kids playing football that can get their transcript together in two weeks if you pay. You pay four or five hundred dollars or you indebt yourself to these coaches who will then determine where you're going to college or what agent you go with, or in some cases you actually have to work for them.

There's a school in Troy, New York, to make up for the tuition the kids have to go and, they have to get up about four in the morning and bake goods, muffins and doughnuts and things, and then they go out on the side of the road and sell them. True story, it's been going on for years. That's how they pay them back. This is what the system has created.

I don't think the NCAA is really interested in tackling this issue, because it isn't new and it's been around a long time. And I think part of the blame here has to go to the NCAA leadership. People in here are familiar with maybe how the NCAA works. There's two main governing bodies that decide everything. One is the Management Council, there's twenty-five Division representatives on the Management Council.

Five of those representatives come from schools currently on NCAA probation. Four others come from conference offices that have had extensive probation, including the SEC which I mentioned has seven convictions in four years. One of those is from the University of Minnesota, that had probably the worst academic scandal of all time in 2000, where the tutors were writing all of the papers for the kids and nobody went to school. The people who are breaking the rules are writing the rules.

The most powerful group is the Board of Directors, that's the university presidents. Twelve university presidents from Division I-A, four of them represent schools convicted of major violations. The cheaters are running the show. My favorite is the University of Georgia, in a twenty-six year period has been nailed six separate times for NCAA violations. That's not just a mistake, that is a corruption to the core at that university. The first three of those violations came from the football coach at the time, Vince Dooley. When Vince Dooley retired he became the athletic director.

The schools don't care about what gets done—they've created a system, they've allowed a system to foster and they've forced their coaches to work in this system that ends up hurting these kids because it places false value on them, it puts the kids out for sale and the kids that aren't as fortunate as these two to have fathers here, and that's a lot of kids.

The ones that are really at risk get in trouble with this system because they have to follow along. They end up at six different high schools. Nobody with good parents goes to six different high schools. Those are the kids at risk here. I think that's what you've got to focus on.

DR. TURNER: All right. I won't respond to some of that and we'll just go to the next speaker, but I'm sure we'll have some questions later.