

# Social Media/ Sexual Harassment

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## **Books by Ms. Nohr:**

*Managing Risk in Sport and Recreation: The Essential Guide for Loss Prevention* (2009 Human Kinetics)  
*Land Sharks* (2016 Written Dreams)  
*Freewheel* (2017 Written Dreams)  
*VO2 Max* (2018 Written Dreams)

# Social Media

## Three Types of Risk:

1. Reputation Risk
2. Legal and Employment Risks
3. Information Security Risk

## Tips for Social Media Use in Schools

1. Set clear expectations for athletes and parents regarding the use of social media by establishing and communicating a social media policy.
2. Be aware of social media trends, topics and issues in your community. Monitor what is being said about your school so you can address any major issues.
3. Avoid online fight and address issues one by one with traditional communication. Coaches, students athletes and anyone connected with the school should avoid getting into a public debate on social media.
4. Use social media to celebrate your school. Share events within the school on social media.

## Social Media Use in a High School Athletics Program

1. Use social media to communicate with all stakeholders: communicate results and updates during contests; promote upcoming events and congratulate staff and student-athletes for their accomplishments; Alert parents to issues regarding transportation, weather or other time sensitive issues.
2. Coaching staffs address their teams about the responsibility associating with using social media. They need to understand how a post can be taken differently by opponents and peers, or it might pose an embarrassment to their program or school.
3. Create a department policy covering social media use by athletes and coaches. Keep policy vague enough so it covers many possible problems. Fore example: "Participation in activities, groups and teams is a privilege at [Our] school. The use of social media by a student considered to be unbecoming of [school] may result in discipline including suspension or removal from the activity, group, leadership position or team."
4. Coaches should keep personal and professional social media accounts separate. When they communicate with student-athletes, it should be for informational purposes and not

conversational in order to avoid misinterpretations and unintended consequences.

5. Follow higher profile student-athletes on social media in order to correct them or guide them in a way which does not harm their potential for a scholarship.
6. What do you do when you become aware of improper posting?
  - A. Verify the validity of the post. Does the account belong to the student-athlete? Did the student post it or did someone else use his/her device to post?
  - B. Does the violation fall within the areas of drug, alcohol and tobacco policy or violations of school rules? Does the post bring discredit to the school or their program? Consider the severity of the post.
  - C. Should this violation be used as a teaching moment or is suspension or other consequence appropriate?

### Social Media and Sports: The Reality

1. Social media is the 2<sup>nd</sup> screen (1<sup>st</sup> is television) for sports viewership
2. Fewer people watch/follow sports on TV with social media providing information
3. Almost every major sports event has a related hashtag which creates a relationship with the audience and brings a fast response.
4. Athletes use social media to establish their name, communicate with fans, announce their activities and promote their brands. This can start as early as school days---depending on the sport.
5. Social media impacts ticket sales/attendance at games and merchandise sales.

### Social Media and Sports: The Negative

1. It's all about going viral
2. Non-existent athlete vs. athlete beefs may become a reality
3. News is posted real time---no need to wait for newspaper or TV broadcast
4. Overexposure---one can find out everything about the lives of athletes
5. Athletes may be disciplined over exercising their freedom of speech
6. Information might be leaked earlier than planned. Eg., NCAA bracket
7. It can create unwarranted criticism and drama.
8. Results are posted before fans can watch games.

# Sexual Harassment

Power relationships: coaches and athletes  
Focus on athletes' bodies

## What is Sexual Harassment?

According to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, sexual harassment is defined as “a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual’s employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.”

The victim, as well as, the harasser can be male or female and the victim does not have to be of the opposite sex. The harasser’s conduct must be unwelcome. The harasser can be the victim’s supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker or a non-employee. The victim does not have to be the person harassed but can also be anyone affected by the offensive conduct. Unlawful sexual harassment may occur without economic injury to the victim.

## Two General types of Sexual Harassment:

1. The “quid pro quo” or “If you do this, I will give you that” instance where decisions are based on the harassed person’s willingness to grant sexual favors or willingness to submit to unwelcome behavior.

2. A hostile “work” environment. Verbal or nonverbal behavior is unwanted, unwelcome or severe enough to affect the person’s work environment. Examples of this include graphic remarks about an individual’s body, sexually degrading words used to refer to an individual, offensive comments or “dirty jokes” and sexual innuendos or displays or sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

## Steps to Prevent Sexual Harassment in Sport

1. Develop clear policies and procedures for the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse;
2. Define harassment and provide examples of prohibited behaviors;

3. Consistently enforce policies and procedures;
4. Educate coaches, athletes, staff, and volunteers about policies and procedures;
5. Prepare and implement codes of ethics and conduct for coaches;
6. Monitor the implementation of these policies and procedures;
7. Evaluate the impact of these policies in identifying and reducing sexual harassment and abuse;
8. Provide training on how sexual harassment and sexual relationships can negatively influence coach-athlete relationships;
9. Develop complaint procedures that ensure privacy;
10. Allow for those who complain to bypass their coach, immediate supervisor or administrator if such person is the harasser;
11. Provide assurance that a prompt, thorough and confidential investigation will take place;
12. Provide assurance that if a violation is found, there will be prompt corrective action taken;
13. Provide assurance that there will be no retaliation for reporting harassment;
14. Protect legal rights of athletes and coaches, and protect against retaliation;
15. Screen all applicants for coaching staff and volunteer positions;
16. Foster strong partnerships with parents/care givers in the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse;
17. Promote and support research on these issues;
18. Foster a climate of open discussion about the issues of sexual harassment and abuse so that athletes with problems feel confident enough to speak out; and
19. Develop athlete autonomy wherever possible including adopting coaching styles which give optimum autonomy and responsibility to athletes.
20. Appropriate legal counsel should be consulted to provide guidance on the creation or modification of the anti-sexual harassment policy and it should be reviewed with legal counsel on a regular basis.

**The International Olympic Committee issued a Consensus Statement in 2007 which reported that:**

*sexual harassment and abuse happen in all sports and at all levels. Prevalence appears to be higher in elite sport. Members of the athlete's entourage who are in positions of power and authority appear to be the primary perpetrators. Peer athletes have also been identified as perpetrators. Males are more often reported as perpetrators than females...Research demonstrates that sexual harassment and abuse in sport seriously and negatively impact on athletes' physical and psychological health. It can result in impaired performance and lead to athlete drop-*

*out. Clinical data indicate that psychosomatic illnesses, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self harm and suicide are some of the serious health consequences.*

**The UNESCO Code of Sports Ethics states that sports organizations have the responsibility:**

*To ensure that safeguards are in place within the context of an overall framework of support and protection for children, young people and women, both to protect the above groups from sexual harassment and abuse and to prevent the exploitation of children, particularly those who demonstrate precocious ability.*

**Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act signed into law in February of 2018**

This act extends the mandatory reporting requirements of child abuse to national governing bodies, like USA gymnastics, and affiliated amateur sports organizations, to ensure that reports are immediately made to local or federal law enforcement authorities. The bill also allows civil suits by minors against sex abuse perpetrators to be brought by clarifying that once a victim has established a harm occurred, **the court will presume \$150,000 in monetary damages.** The bill also extends the civil statutes of limitations for these cases. Additionally, the bill adds a new entity to the charter for the United States Olympic Committee. The entity, the Center for SafeSport, will be responsible for responding to reports of sexual misconduct within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements and developing and implementing best policies and practices for preventing sexual and physical abuse of amateur athletes.

**U.S. Center for Safe Sports**

- Opened in March of 2017.
- Athletes can now confidentially report sexual abuse to SafeSport.
- There are no statutes of limitation.
- USOC and NGB membership carry expectations of adherence to SafeSport's policies and investigations, similar to the United States Anti-Doping Agency.

- All adults in the USOC and NGBs are required to report child sex abuse to the authorities, whether or not the particular state requires the person to report such an act.
- Investigations can be initiated by third parties. A victim willing to testify against her/his abuser is not required to conduct an investigation; other coaches and teammates may have ample evidence of abuse.
- SafeSport investigations will continue even when the criminal justice system decides not to prosecute or does not have enough evidence to convict.
- The names of all child sex abuse victims or adult sexual harassment and rape victims are protected by a rape shield law.
- The SafeSport Office, the USOC and NGB defense counsel are separated by an ethical firewall when receiving and investigating reports of abuse.