

NCAA Official Promises Revised Recruiting Rules

by Kelly Whiteside - USA Today

March 12, 2004

WASHINGTON -- College football will not go through another recruiting period without significant rule changes in place, NCAA vice president David Berst told a congressional subcommittee Thursday. The hearing was called after allegations that the University of Colorado and other schools used sex and parties to lure star high school athletes.

"Let me be perfectly clear: The use of alcohol, drugs and sex as recruiting inducements cannot and will not be tolerated," said Berst, chairman of the recently formed NCAA Task Force on Recruiting.

The NCAA task force is considering new recruiting standards, including a ban on university-funded visits, which means athletes would have to pay the costs of travel and expense. Though that is the most severe change under consideration, and perhaps the most unlikely, Berst also said the task force, consisting of athletics directors, administrators and student/athletes, also is looking at shortening recruiting visits from 48 hours to 24, prohibiting off-campus entertainment and limiting spending on plane tickets, meals and hotels.

The task force, which hopes to make final recommendations April 20, also will consider some of the changes Colorado recently enacted such as prohibiting recruits from attending private parties, requiring adult supervision of recruits at all times and establishing an earlier curfew.

"Some of the steps (Colorado) took may be the same as those recommended by the NCAA Task Force on Recruiting, which would have the effect of reducing or eliminating the competitive risk to Colorado," Berst said, referring to the disadvantage Colorado might have if its strict rules discourage recruits from visiting.

University of Colorado President Betsy Hoffman also appeared in front of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's consumer protection subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over certain sports-related issues, and defended her school's efforts in the wake of the scandals.

The hearing at times tried to explore reasons why a culture of entitlement in sports, including the abuse or exploitation of women, exists.

"The name of this panel is 'College Recruiting: Are Student Athletes Being Protected?' " said Rep. Jan **Schakowsky**, D-Ill. "But I would like to add, 'Are the female students and other women in contact with athletes being protected?' "

The strongest comments came from **Schakowsky**, who said that if she were president of Colorado, football coach Gary Barnett would have been fired.

Schakowsky has two children who are Colorado graduates; she also represents Evanston, Ill., the site of Northwestern University, where Barnett was once revered after taking the Wildcats to the Rose Bowl after the 1995 season.

Barnett was placed on paid administrative leave in the wake of remarks he made following sexual assault allegations against members of his Colorado football team.

About the future of Barnett, Hoffman said, "I'm reserving judgment until these investigations have taken place and until we see whether there are any criminal prosecution (against the players) at all. I need to make a decision on the basis of all the information."

After the hearing, the National Women's Law Center, which is serving as counsel in one of the Title IX cases against Colorado involving sexual assault allegations, criticized the panel for "asking the wrong question. The real question is how we can stop the exploitation of women in college football recruiting practices and, more broadly, put an end to violence against women in our society."