



UA Responds to NCAA Notice of Allegations

University initiated investigation, cooperating fully with NCAA and self-imposing sanctions and corrective measures

Feb. 5, 2010

As a result of an investigation initiated by the University of Arizona and a subsequent investigation by the NCAA, the University has taken a number of corrective actions and self-imposed a series of sanctions on its men's basketball program.

The UA announced it will place its basketball program on probation for the 2010-11 and the 2011-12 seasons, relinquish one scholarship for the 2011-12 academic year, reduce the number of days coaches are allowed to recruit for the next two seasons, reduce the number of official campus visits allowed by prospects and reduce the number of coaches allowed to recruit off campus at one time for summer 2010 recruiting. The NCAA may modify these self-imposed sanctions.

Additionally, the University has disbanded the Rebounders Board of Directors and undertaken a number of administrative and rules education changes.

"The University of Arizona has a long tradition of maintaining the highest standards of integrity in its athletics programs," said Interim Athletics Director Kathleen "Rocky" LaRose.

"The University is deeply and profoundly committed to honoring not just the letter, but the spirit of the NCAA's efforts to foster fair and ethical competition," she said. "As an institution, we expect excellence on the field of play as well as in the conduct of our programs and will work diligently to ensure that these standards always are met."

In April of 2008, the UA reported to the Pac-10 that it was investigating the possibility of rules violations in the men's basketball program, and an NCAA investigation began later that summer.

In September of 2008, the University confirmed that the allegations involved the 2006-2008 Cactus Classic basketball tournaments and the 2007 GOAZCATS.com Showdown, which were organized by a private entrepreneur and held on campus. This was reported in a news release issued by former UA Athletic Director Jim Livengood on Sept. 15, 2008.

The University has cooperated fully in that investigation and continues to do so.

The UA not only made members of its staff available for interviews upon request, but also went to great lengths to assist the NCAA enforcement staff in scheduling interviews with individuals outside the University, and in locating information sought by the enforcement staff.

Overall, the University and NCAA staff conducted nearly 50 interviews with UA coaches, administrators, student-athletes and other individuals outside of the University.

As a result of the investigation the NCAA has issued a formal Notice of Allegations detailing what it believes are violations of NCAA bylaws.

The thrust of the allegations is that former UA basketball coach Lute Olson improperly sent a letter to board members of the Rebounders, a basketball supporter group, urging their support of the 2008 Cactus Classic (the letter was quickly rescinded), and that he provided an opportunity for the organizer of the event to speak at Rebounders board meetings.

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The allegations further assert that two former assistant coaches (Russ Pennell and Mike Dunlap) who attended the 2008 Cactus Classic before they began work for the UA should not have attended because the tournament occurred during a quiet period for recruiting, and they should have technically been considered employees even though they had not yet officially begun to work for the University. Pennell was coaching a team that had entered the tournament (but which subsequently withdrew), and Dunlap has stated that he was still considering whether to accept the job at the time of the tournament.

A third assertion by the NCAA does not relate directly to the University. It alleges that a former assistant coach failed to meet with NCAA investigators after he left his job at the University. The former coach has since been interviewed by the NCAA.

Two other allegations contend that Lute Olson misled the University's NCAA compliance officer regarding the origin of the letter that went to the Rebounders' board members, and that he failed to adequately monitor some activities and promote an atmosphere of compliance. These actions occurred during a time when Coach Olson was dealing with a number of health issues, and it was later revealed by his physician and family that he had suffered a stroke that affected his decision-making abilities.

A final assertion concerns whether or not the institution failed to adequately monitor the basketball program, because an associate athletic director was present during at least one Rebounders board meeting where the presentation on the Cactus Classic was made, and did not immediately recognize the presentation as an NCAA violation and thus report it to the University.

A resolution of the charges is not expected until mid-2010, and until the matter is concluded, the University will not comment further on specific details of the allegations.

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