

Patricia Monroe

KIN 854

Rick Atkinson

Module 3

Attention School Board members, Parents and Community:

As a coach, active and known member in the community, and colleague, I find it critical that I bring the topic of hazing to your immediate attention. With the recent activity in the news with Texas Tech and other schools, I find this subject matter important to tackle. Hazing is hurting, killing, and ruining players, coaches, schools and families lives and reputations. This, I believe, is something that we can help prevent from hitting us if we take the appropriate actions.

For those of you that are not aware, the definition for hazing for the state of Michigan is: "an intentional, knowing or reckless act by a person who acted alone or with others that was directed against an individual and that person knew or should have known would endanger the physical health or safety of the individual, and that was done for the purpose of affiliation with, participation in, or maintaining membership in any organization." Within our school, we have a modified version of that which states: "Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate."

The problem with this topic is that there is a lot of grey area and there seems to be a lot of confusion to what actually constitutes hazing. Things that are considered hazing and are unacceptable are:

- Any act that is physically abusive or violent (striking, bruising, beating)
- Threatening to physically or mentally harm another

- Be forced to wear embarrassing or humiliating attire in public
- Consumption of vile substances or smearing of such on one's skin
- Verbal abuse: swearing and insulting new members/rookies
- Sleep deprivation and restrictions on personal hygiene or daily needs (food, water)
- Personal servitude
- Brandings
- Binge drinking and drinking games
- Sexual simulation and sexual assault
- Cutting of hair
- Excessive exercise

Hazing is often thought as a way to build team unity and tradition. However, with all of the possible problems, issues and harm that hazing can cause, it is not positive. Some alternative methods/activities for promoting team unity and tradition are:

- Ropes courses or other adventure activities
- Weekend trips as a team
- Game night
- Talent shows
- Team dinners

The key is to promote team unity while acknowledging that it is a powerful experience. Traditions can be built on positive, fun things for everyone. It is important that those positive things are what are instilled in the teams.

We as coaches and administration need to instill rules and punishments for this type of inappropriate behavior. I think it is critical that we make it very clear to not tolerate it. For my team, I have a zero tolerance policy. By having that policy, it should really set the tone. During our pre-season, I will sit down with my team to discuss this issue. I will have an open question and answer discussion so we all know what is and isn't accepted. Once it is clear on both ends, I will have each athlete sign and date the written rule that they have read, discussed and understand what hazing is and abide to not participate in any actions of that sort. They will then know that if they chose to haze, they will know that they are breaking the rules and will be kicked off the team as a result. With the team knowing what the rules are ahead of time and us having an open discussion about it, I plan on this being a successful method for eliminating hazing within my team.

I think that it is important to keep parents, teachers and the community involved. I propose including our hazing definition as a state, school and teams online (schools website) for whoever to see. I also think it would be useful to attach relatable articles that pertain to issues relating to hazing. I also think we should include this hazing information in our first monthly newsletter to the homes of our students so they know our expectations in the beginning of school. This way parents will also be able to have their eyes on the lookout as well.

We could also create an anti-hazing campaign. We could try to promote captains from each team to join. At East Carolina University, student-athletes from various teams were shot in a commercial advertising drinking responsibly. If we could get our athletes to do something like that with regards to anti-hazing, I think it would make a positive mark. If we can get the older kids to support anti-hazing, hopefully the younger kids can jump on board. For this campaign, we can also get speakers to come talk to our athletes about hazing. I will also suggest continuing education for coaching and staff to stay atop this topic.

In conclusion, we all need to keep our eyes and ears out any activities that relate to or are hazing. We need to put a stop to this and make sure it does not happen at our school. We need to keep the communication line open with everyone; teachers, coaches, athletes and parents. Please contact me further if you have any additional suggestions or want to get involved in our campaign.

Thanks for your time,

Patricia Monroe