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Athletics

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What Did We Learn?

8 experts reflect on lessons from the Duke case

"Historically, we and campuses all over this country have had a policy ... that if a student is accused of a felony involving violence, the way you typically handle it is an interim suspension. It's complicated because people don't understand why it's being done. They assume it's a penalty. It really has a lot to do with the safety of the campus, and the individual involved. But we're probably going to take a very careful look at that."

John F. Burness, senior vice president for public affairs and government relations, Duke U.

"Social responsibility is a topic no athletics department can afford to overlook when it comes to the education of its student-athletes."

Michael S. Glazier, a lawyer in Overland Park, Kan., who represents athletics departments

"Silence in the immediate aftermath of an accusation is seen to be either an affirmation of guilt or a demonstration of indifference, either of which can seriously damage a university's reputation. ... Duke, I believe, suffered significantly because of the delay in showing appropriate concern. The president did all of the right things; he just did them three weeks too late."

Helio Fred Garcia, executive director, Logos Institute for Crisis Management and Executive Leadership

"We needed a better sense of scope. When three of our students are under indictment for serious crimes, and the mechanism by which the indictments are brought has been decried by a member of our own law faculty, it is not the time to be talking about incidents of urinating on lawns or having parties. It is time to figure out what we can do to determine if indeed the investigation of crimes that could lead to 30-year jail sentences is proceeding in a fair and just way."

Michael Gustafson, assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, Duke U.

"Whether fair or not, student-athletes need to understand that they sometimes are held to a higher standard of conduct than their peers because of their visibility. This case demonstrates the importance of making sound decisions both on and off the court or fields — decisions that keep student-athletes from ending up in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Janet P. Judge, a lawyer in Portland, Me., who advises colleges on athlete misconduct

"I regret that I was part of the initial pack wanting to condemn the players and university. I realized the error of my thinking when the DNA evidence was nonexistent. I do hope that this unfortunate situation opens up dialogue on the issues of media frenzy, race relations, and the discussion of sexual violence and athletic involvement (real or perceived)."

B. David Ridpath, assistant professor of sport administration, Ohio U.

"It's unfortunate that the charges levied and the actions of the district attorney led to people being falsely accused and going through a terrible ordeal. But that doesn't necessarily excuse the fact that there were behaviors on the campus that weren't appropriate — and attitudes toward women that were verbalized and issues around race that are still troubling and shouldn't get swept under the rug because of the controversy about the rape allegations. There's still a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of the culture at Duke and, quite frankly, on almost every other campus in the country."

Peter P. Roby, director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, Northeastern U.

"We're still the instant consumer, and the media still presents information in this instant mode — but we need to be more responsible in how we make judgments about folks. ... This case has caused institutions to think long and hard about policies and procedures, as well as the responsibility of teams to the greater community. But coaches are still recruiting kids with huge problems, looking more at that 40-yard time than their past histories. You need to be careful about who you recruit. I don't believe anyone's a throwaway, but you've got to bring in kids who understand what responsibility is."

Sharon K. Stoll, director of the Center for Ethical Theory and Honor in Competition and Sport, U. of Idaho

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