

Social Media Madness - How the NCAA Handles It

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It's March and the madness is here - not the college basketball championship, the new National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) rules about social media networking. It is driving people mad. Here is a page from the NCAA social networking guidelines that was written last year:

“Divisions I and II rules allow for coaches to contact prospects through the direct-message function on Twitter, subject to the same rules applicable to email communication with recruits. However, publicly mentioning a recruit's name or sending an “@reply” message via Twitter are both considered NCAA rules violations. Coaches can “follow” recruits on Twitter – and vice versa – so long as the @reply function is not used. Any direct messages sent through Twitter must conform to the contact-period legislation for each NCAA sport.”

“While the NCAA does not regulate the interaction between coaches and fans, communication between the two groups should comply with legislation prohibiting the discussion of recruits. The NCAA membership services staff encourages institutions to monitor social networking sites with current rules in mind.”

The NCAA also has rules for [Facebook](#) and blogging – and they all center around the recruitment of players. Recruiting regulations for new prospects are very strict and they can result in fines, penalties and probation. But how is anyone going to monitor Twitter tweets from a recruiter to a prospect? Maybe these rules are good in theory but a college or university can't be expected to see who is following who on Twitter and who can or can't have a fan page on Facebook.

University of Oklahoma Sports Information Director Kenny Mossman says this: “...Future regulatory efforts should include people from the technical community otherwise we are going to be writing rules for technology that is a year old and almost forgotten. I hope that if and when that day comes, we will be wise enough to involve the technology community to help us figure out the best way for us (to regulate it), if it's even possible to have regulation.”

Christopher Byrne – in an article called “NCAA Social Media Rules for Recruitment Defy Logic, Common Sense” - says this: “This is where the NCAA, and other organizations, are missing the mark. They want the wrong people to guide them, i.e. letting the technology drive the policies. This is an approach that consistently leads to a poor governance structure. What they should be doing is identifying and evaluating their risk factors, setting up their controls and policies, and then looking to see what, if any, technology is available to support the implementation of the policies.”

I say this - Fan pages? Direct message function? Public messages? @ reply? Follow? Don't follow? This drives me mad and I'm in this business! Maybe the NCAA should ban [social media networking](#) when it comes to player recruitment altogether. Then we can all sit back and enjoy the real March Madness that begins next week.