



Behind the Blue Disk

NCAA Rules Enforcement: For the Good of the Game

Why does the NCAA have a rules enforcement process?

The rules enforcement process is designed to ensure integrity and fair play among NCAA schools. Schools that abide by the rules should not be competitively disadvantaged.

How does the NCAA find out that schools are breaking the rules?

Some of the more common are media stories, credible tips from the public and schools self-reporting violations.

What are secondary violations?

Secondary violations are isolated or inadvertent and provide only minimal recruiting, competitive or other advantages. They do not include significant impermissible benefits. If a school commits several secondary violations, the violations may be collectively considered a major infraction. Secondary violations occur frequently, are usually resolved administratively and are not typically made public.

What is a major violation?

Any violation that is not considered secondary is a major violation. Major infractions usually provide an extensive recruiting or competitive advantage, are investigated by NCAA enforcement staff and can lead to severe penalties against the school and involved individuals.

“Everyone wants – and expects – college sports to be fair. At its core, the purpose of the NCAA rules enforcement program is to ensure fair play.”

DAVID PRICE,
VICE PRESIDENT OF ENFORCEMENT

Investigation Steps

- Possible violation discovered
- Letter of inquiry sent to school
- Investigation
- School notified of alleged violations
- School responds
- Case summary issued
- Committee on infractions hearing
- Findings and penalties, if any, announced
- Infractions appeals committee hearing (if required)

Does the NCAA have subpoena power?

No. The NCAA constitution obligates schools to cooperate fully during investigations, but the lack of subpoena power normally associated with law enforcement agencies can present investigative challenges.

Why does it seem to take so long for the process to work?

It's a complicated process that must be done right. It takes time to conduct interviews, collect supporting documentation, research leads and compile the actual report. If there are multiple violations, each must be thoroughly investigated. The uncovering of additional information can lead to more possible infractions that must be investigated. The involved schools may request additional time to respond to allegations. In the end, a high standard of proof is necessary before alleging a rules violation. There can be no rush to judgment.

How are the penalties decided?

At the conclusion of the investigatory stage, the involved school goes before the infractions committee for a hearing. The infractions committee then writes a report that documents its specific findings, the penalties and supporting rationale for each. The penalties are intended to deter schools from breaking the rules.

What is the difference between the committees on infractions and the infractions appeals committees?

Each NCAA division has its own committee on infractions and infractions appeals committee. The committees on infractions are independent groups that assess penalties against schools and individuals who break NCAA rules. They are composed of conference administrators, law school professors, athletics administrators from member schools and attorneys who serve as representatives from the general public. The infractions appeals committees hear the appeals of penalized schools, and depending on the nature of the appeal, act on the findings of major violations or penalties imposed by the committees on infractions. The infractions appeals committees are made up of representatives from the membership and general public. The public representative is normally a lawyer with no connection to the NCAA. The membership representatives must have experience at a member school or conference.

Check out the NCAA on Facebook and Twitter. For more Behind the Blue Disks, go to www.ncaa.org.