

**SPORT
CULTURE
SOCIETY**

Vol. 9

The Dark Side of Sports

**Exposing the Sexual Culture
of Collegiate and Professional Athletes**



Nick T. Pappas

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SPORT**

Sport, Culture & Society, Vol. 9
Nick T. Pappas
The Dark Side of Sports

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to athletes who strive for excellence and promote it both on and off the field of competition.

ABOUT THE SERIES – SPORT, CULTURE & SOCIETY

The Sport, Culture and Society series deals with issues intersecting sport, physical activity and cultural concerns. The focus of the book series is interdisciplinary, ground-breaking work that draws on different disciplines and theoretical approaches, such as sociology, philosophy, cultural anthropology, history, cultural studies, feminist studies, postmodernism, or critical theory. The Sport, Culture and Society series seeks to reflect both, the variety of research concerns from a multi-disciplinary perspective and discussions of current topics in sport and physical activity and their relationship to culture.

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Introduction: An Insider Perspective

Pick up a newspaper, sports magazine, or turn on the television or Internet, and it is not uncommon to find athletes appearing in the news headlines because of their involvement in aggression and violence. While some of this negative behavior takes place within sports competition, not all athlete aggression is restricted to sports opponents. The past two decades have witnessed increasing documentation of athlete aggression outside the sports arena that has been directed against both males as well as females in a variety of settings.¹ At the same time, athletes have also appeared in the media for their participation in an array of sexually deviant and/or aggressive practices.² Incidences involving golf superstar Tiger Woods' infidelity, The Minnesota Vikings' Sex Boat Scandal, and Duke University lacrosse players' alleged gang rape all generated national interest because the cliché "sex sells" is particularly true when it involves elite-level athletes. Although such situations raise numerous questions about the extent of these and other sexual behaviors, research investigating the sexual culture of elite-level athletes remains very limited in scope aside from incidences involving reported sexual assaults. In addition, journalistic reporting of athletes' sexual deviancy often reveals little beyond "tip of the iceberg" events the media are fortunate to report. Over the years, a host of deviant sexual practices have remained hidden within impenetrable and diverse athlete cultures that are slow to reveal their secrets to outsiders, including researchers, who are often unaware that such behaviors even exist.

My unique position as an insider, however, has enabled me to gather cutting-edge research that has superseded this glimpse to reveal both shocking and disturbing information highlighting athletes' clandestine sexual practices. While athletes' physical and/or sexual assaults surfacing in the news often coincides with negative publicity and outcomes for the victim and the offender(s), an array of concealed sexual behaviors never receive media attention. This is problematic because seemingly harmless sexual behaviors that are often overlooked when they are not illegal can, in fact, negatively impact lives as well as become stepping stones to more pronounced forms of sexually deviant and/or aggressive practices that are against the law. The fact that certain types of sexual deviancy have thrived without attention for nearly 50 years and have seldom been disclosed in print – much less with a population of elite-level athletes – means the book that you are about to read will shine a large spotlight on collegiate and professional athletes' unique sexual culture.

I became aware of athlete sexual deviancy during my career as a collegiate and professional hockey player and coach. Formal data collection for this research began in the summer of 2001 when I conducted in depth interviews for my

doctoral dissertation on 23 collegiate and professional hockey players' out-of-sport aggression.³ Because the sexual deviancy I uncovered did not always lead to unlawful aggression, I withheld these significant findings for future use. In order to show these practices were widespread within other sports cultures, I interviewed an additional 119 collegiate and/or professional athletes from other athlete cultures including major leaguers, National, and/or Olympic Team members. Wrestlers, hockey, baseball, basketball, and football players comprise the study's main participants; however, various participants revealed awareness throughout this study that male athletes representing virtually every collegiate sport also engaged in a variety of sexually deviant and/or aggressive behavior. Using in-depth interviews with this large and diverse sample also enabled me to gather frequencies related to certain behaviors, processes describing how they occur, motivation for participating, and detrimental outcomes related to a host of negative sexual practices occurring at all levels of athletic competition. While participants often observed such practices among high school athletes, this research will highlight collegiate and professional athletes' involvement in sexually deviant and/or aggressive behaviors that occurred during careers spanning the early 1960s-2010. The findings in this book and the fact that we live in a world where athletes are held in high regard establish that longstanding sexual deviancy and aggression must be exposed because what people do not know can hurt them and countless others.

Out-of-sport athlete aggression, as defined in this study, is illegal behavior that involves physical and/or sexual assaults. Sexual aggression includes sexual assault (i.e., nonconsensual petting, oral/anal sex, sexual intercourse, and penetration with objects through the use of force, argument, pressure, drugs, or alcohol) and/or rape (i.e., nonconsensual penile-vaginal penetration through the use or threat of force).⁴ Athlete sexual deviancy and/or sexually deviant behaviors include an array of perverted and seedy sexual practices that are demeaning and harmful. While deviancy is defined as an abnormality differing from accepted standards, certain sexual behaviors routinely occurring suggest such practices may be considered normal within various athlete cultures.⁵ However, because "normal" in this sense does not make negative practices acceptable, deviancy may not be the most appropriate term; but for lack of a better word it will suffice.

HOW I BECAME AN INSIDER

Like many youngsters, I had aspirations of becoming a professional athlete from an early age growing up in the Chicago/Northern Indiana area. After a successful high school hockey career which included a season of junior hockey my senior year, I played the following season on both Canadian Junior A (tier II) and Junior B hockey teams in Quebec and Ontario. The next year, I attended

Division I Bowling Green State University and made the hockey team as a freshman “walk-on.” My freshman class at BGSU showcased their talent by winning the 1984 Division I National Championship as seniors. I played one year of varsity hockey at BGSU before I was cut, so I spent my sophomore season playing on the university’s club hockey team. The following year I transferred to Penn State University because it enabled me to play immediately on a high-level non-varsity collegiate hockey team that regularly competed against Division I, II, and III varsity teams. During three seasons at PSU, my team won a National Championship and placed runner-up twice while I earned the Most Valuable Player Award and a Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education my senior year. It was an honor to be inducted into the Penn State Hockey Hall of Fame and the Andean High School Sports Hall of Fame in 2004.

After college, I followed my childhood dream by playing five years of minor professional hockey. My first three seasons were spent playing on three minor league championship teams, and I was the team captain during my third season. I gained invaluable experience during my second and third championship seasons when I was coached by John Tortorella, who later went on to coach the NHL’s Tampa Bay Lightning when they won the Stanley Cup in 2004. My final two seasons of professional hockey were spent in Europe playing first in Skovde, Sweden and then in Copenhagen, Denmark as a player-coach. In the end, I was very satisfied with my professional career because I felt I had played to my full potential.

After retiring as a professional athlete, I spent the next three years working first as a high school teacher and hockey coach and then as an adolescent counselor in group homes for troubled teenagers. I left this position to become an assistant coach for the Ohio University Men’s Ice Hockey Team while I attended graduate school. In three years, I helped lead the Bobcats to back-to-back League, Playoff, and National Championships. During this time, I also interned as a high school and substance abuse counselor en route to earning my master’s degree in school, college, and community mental health counseling.

I worked the next two years as a school counselor before returning to complete a doctorate degree in Human Development and Family Science with a minor in Sociology of Sport from The Ohio State University. As a doctoral student, I taught counseling classes to college seniors and was the head coach of the OSU Women’s Club Hockey Team for four years. Upon finishing my degree, I coached a season of professional hockey as an assistant for the Johnstown Chiefs of the East Coast Hockey League, which was the AA affiliate for the NHL’s Calgary Flames, in addition to teaching undergraduate and graduate-level classes as an adjunct professor. Overall, I have 25 years of consecutive coaching experience as an ice hockey camp instructor, and I have been part of six championship teams during my elite-level hockey career – two as a

collegiate coach, three as a minor professional athlete, and one as a collegiate athlete. My present work with athletes includes personal/athletic life coaching and providing presentations on athlete-related issues including out-of-sport deviancy and aggression in order to promote personal and team excellence.

I have presented my athletic, academic, and occupational background because research for this book began during my junior, collegiate, and professional hockey career, and it continued as a coach, teacher, counselor, graduate student, professor, and researcher. The past 30 plus years have provided me with unique experiences and insight into the sexual culture of collegiate and professional athletes. I have found that elite-level athletes and coaches often receive a thorough education to the hidden, darker practices occurring within their own sports culture as well as other athlete cultures that they happen to come into contact with. My insider perspective as a player and coach in combination with over 13 years of formal study and research involving out-of-sport athlete deviancy and aggression that has included interviews with over 142 athletes has thoroughly prepared me to examine this unique and controversial material. While some readers without elite-level athletic experience may question – or dispute – certain findings within these pages, I believe the majority of collegiate and/or professional athletes and coaches, who are not living in denial or a protected, secluded bubble, will support this work and acknowledge its value as a beneficial component for risk management.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Detailed interviews conducted in person and by phone were used to gather information for this book at several different time periods. Preliminary academic research initially began in 1999 when I conducted five interviews for a graduate class project which would later become a published study on collegiate/professional hockey players' out-of-sport aggression.⁶ This work set the stage for the first major wave of interviews which occurred in the summer/fall of 2001 during my doctoral dissertation involving 23 collegiate and/or professional hockey players' out of sport physical and sexual aggression. The interview questions built upon the previous study and included questions about athletes' sexual deviancy. Approximately 85% of the participants in this book were interviewed in the second wave of data collection which began in the fall of 2005 and ended about the same time in 2010. The study's questionnaire originated from my doctoral dissertation although I added additional questions that focused specifically on certain types and frequencies of sexually deviant practices which sometimes emerged as the study progressed.⁷ Percentages related to various motives detailed within the chapters sometimes total more than 100% because participants often identified multiple influences for certain behaviors.

Player interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 3¹/₂ hours with most averaging about 1¹/₂ hours in duration. Athletes were referred to the study by numerous sources which included other athletes, coaches and managers, team staff and/or affiliates, previous participants, and numerous friends and acquaintances. Moreover, participants provided information from multiple perspectives which means the athletes described what they knew and/or observed among teammates or other athletes as well as what they personally engaged in and experienced. Essentially, the player narratives act as a window through which readers can peer into the hidden culture of elite-level athletes so they can observe the prevalence, processes, underlying causes and motivation, and the effects of a host of detailed sexual practices found within this sample of athletes.

Participants ranged in age from 20 to 58 at the time of their interview and averaged 35 years old; the most common ages (mode) were 31 and 35. The overall sample contained 142 collegiate and/or professional athletes; however, 27 athletes from each of the five sports totaling 135 participants were used to calculate the percentages that appeared in the different chapters (and keep the numbers even). Additional data from seven participants that were not used in the percentages included six hockey players from my dissertation data and one collegiate football. Similar numbers of players in their 20s (approximately one third of the participants), 30s (just over one third), and 40s (approximately one third) in addition to 1-2 athletes per sport in their 50s (4%) enabled me to examine, compare, and contrast athletes' experiences from different sports and eras. This means over two thirds of the participants competed and/or coached at the collegiate and/or professional level during 2000-2010 and/or 1990-1999, approximately 50% had similar athletic experiences during careers in the 1980s, 20% in the 1970s, and about 3% during the 1960s. Various participants had playing careers that overlapped two or even three different decades of time and when this included coaching experience, it could reach as high as five decades. Athlete sexual deviancy as well as aggression was discovered during every decade of competition from the early 1960s-2010.

Sixty-two percent of the participants had professional playing experience at the minor and/or major league level, and from this group approximately 40% had major league experience. In addition, over 90% of the participants competed at the collegiate level and approximately one third had elite-level coaching experience at the junior (i.e., hockey-related), collegiate, and/or minor/major league levels. This athletic experience was often quite recent because at the time of their interview, approximately 40% of the participants were currently competing or coaching at the collegiate or professional level. Following their interviews, most coaches continued in their careers with some receiving promotions to head coach or to the major leagues, while other participants who worked with elite-level teams in various capacities made their way into collegiate or professional coaching.

The 32 participants with major league experience were easily the most difficult to find and interview for the study. Many had trust issues from observing that athletes, including themselves, were often misquoted or even burned by journalists during their career. Consequently, big leaguers were often reluctant to participate and discuss their exclusive, hidden culture because they feared their names would be linked to what they had said. Despite such challenges, every sport in this study contained 7-9 confirmed major leaguers that combined for an average of 65 years of major league experience in *each* of the different sports. Consequently, there are high profile athletes and coaches representing every sport in this study. This includes numerous athletes who won championships at the collegiate, minor, and major league levels in addition to major league All-Stars, Hall of Fame Inductees, and National and/or Olympic Team Members. While wrestling contained no professionals because professional wrestling was considered entertainment and not a sport, the sample contained five National and/or Olympic Team Members including four International Medalists, 12 All Americans, two NCAA champions, and nine current collegiate coaches. In the end, the participants' extensive playing and/or coaching experiences at elite-levels were essential to my gathering the array of negative, clandestine behaviors that have thrived for decades with little or no attention.

KEEPING EXPLANATIONS SIMPLE BUT NOT SIMPLISTIC

One of my goals and challenges during this project was to convey my unique findings in such a way that the information remained clear and in a reader-friendly format so that different interest groups could benefit from the material. This means the athletes' descriptions of the different practices were in their own words whenever possible, and this occurred in combination with my insights and other supplemented material to provide information and explanations using understandable language and ideas. I opted against using complicated theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain, but often confuse the understanding of a phenomenon in addition to severely limiting the readability of the material.

I discovered through years of research that athletes' sexual deviancy and aggression are learned within a variety of social environments and particularly bonded male peer groups such as athletic teams. Like all other social behaviors, humans learn deviant and aggressive acts by watching influential people (e.g., parents, peers, and athletes, etc.) model certain behaviors that are perceived as useful or rewarding.⁸ Learning also occurs by observing the consequences of another's behavior, forming ideas about which behaviors are appropriate, trying out or practicing various behaviors, and continuing to use those behaviors if they bring positive or fulfilling results.⁹ People may learn how to perform certain

behaviors but would never do them if they resulted in disastrous consequences for the model and any observer who enacted the behaviors.¹⁰ Failing to punish deviant and/or aggressive behavior through deterring consequences further encourages the likelihood that someone will continue to engage in negative practices.¹¹ Sexual deviancy and aggression, therefore, are not inevitable or biologically based, but social behavior that is learned, shaped by its consequences, and continued if it is reinforced or rewarded in some way.¹²

In addition, sports cultures serve as primary learning centers where athletes become apprentices to the different practices revealed within these chapters. This is because all-male athletic environments are among the few remaining strongholds where young men have the luxury of conducting themselves in ways that enable them to avoid the harsh censorship and scrutiny they would otherwise experience outside the world of sports. In short, sports act as a refuge where athletes can celebrate – with few repercussions – the attributes of masculinity which promote athletic success through the use of physical strength, dominance, and aggression.¹³ At the same time, this uninhibited world of male superiority encourages an array of bizarre and repulsive behaviors that highlight a darker side of sports which is as common and unique as the athletes themselves.¹⁴ The fuel for such behavior centers upon the fact that athletes are rewarded within many sports cultures for demonstrating bravado and the ability to entertain, or ridicule someone or something, whenever a group gets together.¹⁵ This promotes constant seeking for the next target and/or exploitive behavior, which is certain to produce a humorous story, while simultaneously encouraging athletic environments to become breeding grounds for the outrageous.¹⁶ Indeed, there is no shortage of observant, comedic athletes as well as teammates who are more than willing to create entertainment by engaging in a host of bizarre and/or squalid behavior. Such stories live on indefinitely since they are often communicated from one generation of athletes to the next even though certain behaviors can be harmful, demeaning, and have the potential to create an array of problems and consequences for everyone involved. In the end, sports environments house close-knit teams that encourage the unusual because outrageous behaviors provide desirable entertainment while producing unique identities and status that reward those who actively engage in such activities.¹⁷

PLAN OF THE BOOK

The chapters that follow expose an array of sexually deviant and/or aggressive practices that build in intensity and set the stage for more harmful behaviors later on. Chapter 1 reveals various practices occurring within all-male environments such as exhibitionism, deviant masturbation, and bodily discharges that

sometimes make their way into the outside world. Such information is important because if athletes target close teammates with deviant acts, how will this influence the way they treat casual female sexual partners with whom they are not bonded? Chapter 2 discusses athletes' pornography use that can be rampant and act as a "how to" guide for sexual deviancy/aggression, and its negative impact on relationships, personal well-being, and other behaviors, including addiction, is undeniable. Chapter 3 describes athletes' involvement with females in the sex industry which can cause negative repercussions for these women as well as the athletes' families, finances, athletic careers, and personal well-being. Chapter 4 examines the routine practice of picking up women although for some athletes, this can include using a darker version verbal "game," which involves deception, manipulation, coercion, and sexual pressure. Such practices raise questions regarding how far some athletes are willing to go in order to experience and/or force casual sex. Chapter 5 highlights the unending supply of female fans that make themselves sexually available in unimaginable ways even though this unwittingly encourages and enables some athletes' sexually deviant and/or aggressive practices to thrive more easily. Chapter 6 exposes rampant infidelity along with the practice of juggling numerous female sexual partners. This often involves an array of consequences and the majority of players on teams regardless of whether they are in committed relationships or not. Chapter 7 highlights athletes' ultra competitive nature which carries into their social and sexual behavior targeting women through different sexual contests and competitions. Certain collegiate and professional athletes take great pride in tallying their sexual conquests which can be both shocking as well as disturbing and include different consequences. Chapter 8 reveals the different ways in which collegiate athletes, coaches, and other supporters promote sex in the recruiting process in order to insure that high-level high school athletes choose their particular university. Chapter 9 exposes a variety of widespread and related practices that involve live pornography through athletes' participation in voyeurism, recording sexual encounters with and without consent, male-female exhibitionism, and attempting to join in teammates' sexual encounters with and without permission. Because the latter events involve sexual assault and/or rape, this provides an easy transition to chapter 10 which continues to showcase an array of athletes individual and group sexual assaults along with the processes, motives, and outcomes related to these incidences. Throughout this book, the reader will also find "Athletes Corner: Points to Ponder" following each chapter. These points offer practical and thought-provoking information that challenge athletes to examine their own attitudes and behaviors toward issues highlighted in the chapter and then make changes that will improve themselves, their teams, and the athlete culture as a whole.

Chapter 1

Athletes' Exhibitionism, Deviant Masturbation, and Bodily Discharges

Hearing words like male exhibitionism, deviant masturbation and bodily discharges stirs up thoughts of sinister older men with mental health issues who appear in dark alleys wearing long overcoats. Now ask yourself if such reactions would be the same if these behaviors occurred among a highly regarded group of young men who also happened to be elite-level athletes? People may laugh with disbelief or question the source, but it is true: Male athletic environments offer a unique and protective safe haven where young men are relatively free to speak and act in whatever way they please. This enables profanity-filled stories highlighting sexual exploits, bravado, deviancy, and/or aggression to flourish because virtually no one monitors athletes but themselves while they remain within sheltered strongholds including locker rooms.¹ Moreover, the same holds true when it comes to behavior because some athletes choose to differentiate themselves by engaging in bizarre and often repulsive behaviors which reward them with special identities and status while simultaneously revealing a darker, hidden side of sports.² Athletes' desire for entertainment, bragging rights, and one-upmanship often motivate an array of outrageous behaviors which raise both questions and eye-brows even when they remain confined to all-male athletic environments. At the same time, a variety of deviant practices can and do make their way into the public domain, which dramatically increases the potential risks and negative impact for everyone involved. It will become apparent that all-male sports environments encourage bizarre and outrageous behaviors even though some are harmful, demeaning, and have the potential to create all kinds of problems and consequences.

SEXUAL ANTICS OR HOMOEROTICISM?

Athletes spend tremendous amounts of time training, socializing, and living together which results in deep histories and friendships within certain teams. This is particularly true at the collegiate level where players can spend four or five years together on a team. As a result of their bonding, many athletes feel very safe and comfortable with their teammates, and this is reflected in players' language as well as their behaviors.³ Since the locker room is the predominant safe haven where athletes spend extensive time together, it is logical to assume

that some uninhibited displays and clowning will involve sexual behaviors in this secluded environment. For example, a wrestler and a collegiate baseball and hockey player described a variety of sexual antics and nudity among collegiate teammates in this way:

I mean in a shower you did all kinds of stupid things, you know, put hot water in your mouth and hold your dick and put it on like you spit it out, as if you're peeing on him, stupid stuff like that...I mean, you know, when there were a bunch of guys sitting there talking in a room about the girl they laid and some guy's grabbing himself and wanting to expose himself and show him that he's got a hard on, that's about extent of [it] you know, [and] everybody saying you know, "Get the hell out of here, what are you doing?" yea we had a couple of guys that just wanted to show off I think at times.

I remember there was one sick guy [laughs] on the fucking baseball team...he wasn't circumcised and in the shower...as a practical joke... he was always messing with [it], he'd fill up his fucking...dick...the extra skin with water and walk over to him and fucking spray him, which is probably one of the most disgusting things I've ever seen [laughs] in my life. And he'd do it on a regular occasion, but other than that man, nothing crazy.

...in the showers, people are always...making a comment about somebody else's penis or toweling some guy in the ass, or dropping the soap – all just in play...you see that. We had a guy my freshman year who always came in and made a comment about...somebody else's piece (penis) everyday. He'd just walk in, staring, look around. He'd be the first guy in and last guy [out], and...it was just him being weird or whatever. Nothing ever sexual or homosexual about it...

While most sexual antics were described as nothing more than demented practical jokes promoting humor, homoeroticism is another possible interpretation of certain behaviors. Homoeroticism, defined as sexual attraction or desire toward members of the same sex, is thought to occur whenever bonding activities involve genital contact and exposure through events such as group masturbation, sexualized initiations, and same-sex group nudity.⁴ Moreover, the description of the athlete's constant fixation on his teammates' genitals in the third narrative seemed to suggest this possibility. However, researchers, who observed an array of ritualized sexual behaviors including naked male-to-male contact and even genital touching among rugby players, noted that these acts should not be construed as actual homosexual behavior but rather an extension of their masculine competition from the match.⁵ Whether sexual

antics reflect humorous entertainment or homoeroticism is irrelevant in light of the fact that these behaviors did not always stop at the locker room's door as another collegiate hockey player discussed in this way:

Just a lot of nudity...I mean I lived with eight [hockey] guys. There was always naked dudes walking around the house and other times at parties guys would get naked, just with other guys around, just to be stupid. Actually on bus rides a lot of guys – if someone was sleeping, a guy would get a hard on and walk over and stick it in his ear, something like that, you know, just to screw with him. There was a lot of that stuff, mostly just nudity. Sometimes...for some reason we would “gear down” [a teammate] and take pictures of him and there was nothing he could do about it...just take all his clothes off and he'd be fighting and kicking and just...take pictures of him. He'd be fighting for his clothes and fighting for the door [laughing], all that stuff...[it] took about four of us usually...we used to get [one teammate] when he was taking naps [laughing]... and we'd go all around his room, just jump on him...just start taking all his clothes off, and put him in a room and just start taking pictures of him. We'd get some good action photos of him...trying to fight [laughter].

After detailing a “gear down” attack on an unsuspecting teammate, this athlete discussed the motive by saying, “Boredom I'd say, just nothing to do... it seemed like the right thing to do at the time [laughing]...it'd be like picking a mine field.” Obviously, these attacks were somewhat demeaning because the victim was helpless to defend himself against four athletes, and they were photographed. Because no one wants embarrassing pictures appearing unexpectedly in places including The Internet, this is perhaps another reason victims fought so hard during these attacks. Furthermore, the appearance of nude photographs is no laughing matter since it has resulted in severe consequences for athletes, and this was noted when two University of Nebraska wrestlers were dismissed from their team after allegedly posing naked for an Internet pornography site.⁶ However, premeditated attacks on teammates undoubtedly alleviated boredom and proved to be extremely humorous entertainment that was later shared with others. It will be evident that the desire to entertain teammates through humorous story-telling is a powerful catalyst for engaging in these and other deviant behaviors.

NAKED INHIBITIONS AND EXHIBITIONISM

Not all nudity happens within the confines of the team locker room or at athletes' residence because accounts of public exposure also appear in this study. Moreover,

nudity spilling into the public sector can result in legal charges involving indecent exposure in addition to other consequences. Indecent exposure laws in most states make it a crime to purposefully display one's genitals or socially deemed "private parts" in public causing alarm or offense often for the purpose of sexual excitement and satisfaction or social rebellion.⁷ While indecent exposure is a legal term for public nudity, it is used interchangeably with exhibitionism, which is a specific mental health disorder and paraphilia describing uncommon sexual expression.⁸ Exhibitionism occurs when someone intentionally exposes their genitals to an unwilling observer typically for the purpose of sexual gratification, and this can involve masturbation in the moment or at a later time.⁹ Often, exhibitionists are males targeting young adults, adolescents, or children of the opposite sex, and the age of onset for exhibitionism begins in the middle teen years and the mid-20s.¹⁰ In this study, exhibitionism will also include consensual sexual activities performed for others and public nudity without sexual intent, which could include open urination or defecation and behaviors like streaking (i.e., running naked in public).

More than one third of all males arrested for sexual offenses are arrested for exhibitionism, and 40-60% of college and community samples of women have reported being victims of exhibitionism.¹¹ According to two studies involving college men, 2-4% had participated in exhibitionism while 7% expressed the desire to do so.¹² My observations of exhibitionist behaviors outside the locker room area are limited to one event when as a freshman, I was taking pictures of my collegiate teammates outside the dormitory when a number of them decided to expose themselves in a variety of ways to be humorous. Nearly 20% of the participants representing every sport in this study revealed their awareness and/or participation in some type of male exhibitionism often in combination with other behaviors. For example, a minor league baseball player and a collegiate football player described their awareness and/or participation in exhibitionism in this way:

...you know [laughing] one night, teammates were in their apartment drinking and one of the guys got a little bit crazy and took...I think he was a sophomore at the time, drove him across campus, and they stripped naked in the car, and kicked him out of the car, and he had to make his way back naked, which again I think the guy got a rush out of it cause then they just started running around campus naked on occasion, just because he wanted to.

...it seemed like in the off season whenever you were bored it always leads to mischievous things you know. One night we were sitting, it was a tradition that kind of faded...but three years prior to us doing it, there was a tradition that starts from the apartment and [you] streak down

to the middle of the campus and take a picture in front of the student store...that's where everybody had hung out during class time and so one night we were bored and said, "Alright, we're going to streak down" which is about a mile and a half in front of all the apartments and the dorms so we just...got in our baseball caps and our tennis shoes and five of us...ran down you know one night and had cops chasing us and streaked down and back, took a picture, and just something to do.

Boredom, alcohol consumption, tradition, and the desire to be "crazy" fueled these collegiate athletes' decision to "streak" through campus which produced an adrenaline "rush" as well as the desire to repeat this event. While "streaking" is generally considered harmless and humorous, it can still produce legal and team problems when athletes are caught.

Not all athletes who engage in public nudity are college age or have the desire to run away following their public exposure. For example, MLB player, Rick Bosetti, was refused service at one upscale restaurant during his career which perhaps stripped him of his dignity; this prompted Bosetti on his next visit to reveal his displeasure and social rebellion by disrobing in the men's room and walking naked through the dining room and out the door.¹³ Some athletes display even greater boldness by refusing to leave the scene of their exhibitionism as one minor league hockey player discussed in this manner:

...just a couple of years ago...in a pick-up league...some of them were just guys [who never played pro hockey] but...I'd say two thirds of them guys [played professionally] – They came into town...we had a tournament here...and they rented...a private dining room, and they all got sat down and...two waitresses came in and took their orders...when they left, everybody stripped down naked...and they were all sitting there naked and here come the waitress back with their food. I guess it was funny, the way they described it...

The stereotype of the dirty old man engaging in exhibitionism in parks with sneakers and a raincoat is untrue since most offenders are in their 20s and 30s with over half being married or formerly married.¹⁴ Surprisingly, these older athletes matching this profile disregarded logic and reasoning by exposing themselves as a large group even though their exhibitionism was probably not sexually driven. Moreover, the previous participant discussed the motives for this by saying, "It's just...you get 15 guys together, everybody tries to out-do everybody else...just doing something more bizarre [chuckles]." It is evident that some bizarre behaviors, including exhibitionism, happen because athletes' competitive nature creates a desire to "outdo" their teammates. Furthermore, the desire to engage in outrageous acts does not simply end because the

men were older and retired from professional competition. Because one third of the group did not play professionally, it is possible that these players felt peer pressure to conform to the group's antics and expectations. It is also evident that athletes' passion for telling captivating stories at any age occurs because it enhances someone's reputation whenever these stories are retold, and this subsequently raises the bar for other athletes to engage in even more bizarre behaviors. Although outrageous stories circulate to create both entertainment and one-upmanship, engaging in exhibitionism is probably not the best decision since this is disturbing and abusive to many victims and has the potential for legal ramifications that can negatively influence the men's personal reputations, families, and careers.

While athletes' exhibitionism in the previous narratives does not appear to be fueled by their desire for sexual gratification or arousal, this is not always the case. Indeed, some athletes have taken their exhibitionism to extremes by carrying it into social settings on campus, and in the process, intentionally crossed paths with females. For example, a wrestler and a minor league hockey player noted their awareness of exhibitionism during their collegiate careers in this way:

...he was well endowed anyway so he didn't have a problem with just flipping his dick out and walking around the house and kind of flaunting it. We would have parties and he would pull it out of his pants and walk around and talk to girls and wait until one of them would notice and you know that was his way of meeting girls and he actually met quite a few who thought that was an endearment that they needed to seek further and so I think for him...it was, "I got a big dick and I'm going to show everybody" so that's kind of like...how he worked.

...there was one incident...[a hockey] player...I remember there was a party and he was chasing some girls across campus with his pants down and...this guy was hung like a horse you know – so we were at a party and all these girls [you'd have] thought it was like the first time they had ever seen a dick you know, and that was just funny and...everyone knew that [happened] but...everybody kept quiet about that.

Exhibitionists have been portrayed as narcissists deriving pleasure from seeing themselves nude, providing a service or kindness by exposing themselves, and wishing to be envied for possession of a penis.¹⁵ Although one study revealed that all of the exhibitionists in the sample preferred targeting adult women, 79% exposed themselves occasionally to females 15 years of age or younger.¹⁶ Another noteworthy finding revealed exhibitionists are not always passive, inhibited individuals because 20% had a history of violence-related offenses that included rape and sexual assault as exhibitionism was used to entrap, demean,

and incite fear through power and control tactics.¹⁷ Therefore, exhibitionism is not always a humorous, harmless behavior because its association with sexual violence for some offenders is undeniable.

Still, many athletes find exhibitionism entertaining although there is nothing humorous when law enforcement officials identify an offender since this can create serious problems and consequences for coaches, teams, and players. These notions were highlighted in the book, *When All the Laughter Died in Sorrow*, which detailed Lance Rentzel's exhibitionism that targeted female children in Minnesota and Dallas during his NFL career.¹⁸ Although child molestation or pedophilia and exhibitionism are often confused and sometimes overlap because children are victimized, the pedophile seeks bodily contact while the exhibitionist wishes to be seen and sometimes, but not in the Rentzel case, masturbating.¹⁹ Therapy helped Rentzel to realize the pressure he felt to please his family and prove his masculinity repeatedly through football and sexual conquests with women.²⁰ Exhibitionism during times of stress was seen as another way for Rentzel to prove his masculinity.²¹ However, Rentzel's exhibitionism resulted in extreme criticism and negative publicity for him and his family, the demise of his marriage to a leading actress, sitting out a portion of the season while his team played in the 1970 Super Bowl, and the possibility of serving 12-15 years in prison since indecent exposure involving children under 16 years of age in Texas is a potential felony.²² In the end, Rentzel received probation and was court ordered to undergo therapy; however, he was not the only major league athlete charged with exhibitionism.²³ During his Hall of Fame NHL career, Dino Ciccarelli also pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of indecent exposure in 1988 and received probation after a neighbor reported that she had repeatedly seen him exposing himself.²⁴ More recently, former University of Southern California and current Cincinnati Bengals defensive end, Frostee Rucker, lost his first football scholarship at Colorado State University in the spring of 2002 following accusations of his involvement in two sexual assaults and an indecent exposure incident.²⁵ Rucker pleaded guilty to a reduced misdemeanor harassment charge and received a one-year deferred sentence.²⁶ While exhibitionism is alarming and can lead to legal ramifications, perhaps this is a symptom of deeper issues as some athletes go beyond public displays of nudity by engaging in behaviors that are much more sexually explicit and perverse.

EXAMINING MASTURBATION AMONG ELITE-LEVEL ATHLETES

Masturbation, or self stimulation of the genitals for the purpose of sexual pleasure, has evolved from a condemned practice that was thought to be

abnormal and mentally and physically debilitating by physicians and authorities alike to one that has gained acceptance as normal behavior among significant percentages of people of all ages.²⁷ Dr. Alfred Kinsey and colleagues reported that 92% of the men surveyed masturbated by age 20 (most began between ages 13 and 15) while many of the 58% of females who reported masturbating began in early adulthood.²⁸ Masturbation is thought to provide a release from sexual tension and the opportunity to explore sexual functioning although many adolescents overlook these positives by responding only to the negative messages that can produce guilt following these practices.²⁹ However, guilt is not a universal response for all adolescents or young men because some males athletes have turned private masturbation practices into open displays that can include group events sometimes referred to as “circle jerks.”³⁰ While sexualized initiations and rites of passage are not new to certain athlete cultures, the fact that approximately one third of the participants in this study, who competed in careers that spanned the 1970s through 2010, were able to discuss a variety of sexualized behaviors occurring within all-male team settings, not linked to initiations, suggests that such practices abound within certain athletic teams.³¹

My personal encounter with sexualized practices occurring apart from team initiations happened when I was 18-years-old and playing Junior A hockey in Quebec, Canada. Junior hockey or simply “juniors” is considered elite-level hockey because it is among the highest caliber of amateur competition available for players ages 15-20 and less than 5% of all youngsters registered with the Canadian Minor Hockey Association achieve the Junior A or B levels of competition.³² Juniors can act as a stepping-stone to collegiate and/or professional hockey in much the same way that collegiate football and basketball act as the training ground for players to advance to the professional level in these sports.

A group masturbation event occurred when my junior team was on the bus returning from a game and about half of the team were congregating and making quite a bit of noise. I went to investigate what I thought was gambling and realized that two players were masturbating in what seemed to be some type of competition since the cheering encouraged the players to continue. Many junior hockey players live far from their parents and friends, which means that teams act as surrogate families. Team friendships, therefore, become extremely important because few, if any, male friendships develop outside of some teams. Because many players feel bonded as well as uninhibited around each other, open displays of masturbation occurring within certain junior teams were not uncommon as a collegiate hockey player discussed in this way:

...you know the hockey players are usually more open about sexual activity than any other group, sports teams that I've played on...but I

think guys you know talk about masturbation all the time – they don't care...some guys are, you know willing to just sit there and be playing with their dong right in front of you...anybody, they don't really care...I knew guys that used to...jerk off at the same time...in their hotel room and stuff like that...guys are watching a porno in there and three guys jerking off...I didn't hear about that stuff until I'd say I was in high school playing juniors and not too often.

The previous participant experienced the hockey world as one of the most sexually liberal cultures along with lacrosse, although lacrosse players were not interviewed for the study. While masturbation occurred among certain teammates openly as well as sporadically in groups, two minor league hockey players discussed a higher prevalence of these practices in this way:

...I remember in juniors was the first time I ever saw someone spank off (masturbate) right in front of you...a guy on the team bus sitting there with a *Playboy*. I looked over at him and I was like, "Holy hell!" He goes, "Look the other way...you're killing my buzz (erection) here," [laughing] and he's spanking it off [laughing] – Yeah, I remember that kid, I don't know whatever happened to him – probably not much...there was things like that I mean, yeah, [in] college – college, a lot of guys...

All through juniors there was porn on the bus, [and] there were guys sitting around beating off to it. You know, circle jerks, to see who could get off first [laughs], all that stuff, but for the most part it's harmless. Nobody's doing it that doesn't want to do it...[in] juniors it happened a lot. These guys always used to bring their dicks out on the bus, play around with it, get hard first, get off first, and that kind of thing. At the time I could see that an outside observer, someone who's not involved with hockey, how they could be taken back by it – like, "What the hell are you guys doing? Are you all gay?" [laughs]. I'll have to admit, when I was around it, I didn't really think much of it. I didn't personally do it, I didn't care to do it, but I thought it was funny...I'd just have to laugh and go back to sleep or whatever I was doing. It didn't screw me up mentally. I just thought they were goofy guys [laughs] getting stupid. Whatever innate sexual tendencies were there, I don't know either...

The previous participants described open displays of both individual and group masturbation as frequent events during road trips among both American and Canadian junior hockey players as well as among collegiate athletes. Interestingly, the final participant mentioned homoeroticism as a potential motive based on the frequency and nature of these practices which could be construed by outsiders as having homosexual undertones. Despite their

actions, players who masturbated openly were not considered homosexuals by their teammates. Furthermore, the fact that each of the previous participants mentioned masturbation occurring in the presence of pornography, which was readily available in one form or another, highlights another potential danger associated with these practices. Dr. Alex Kwee and his colleagues found through clinical experience that the vast majority of college men who struggled with compulsive masturbation also used pornography to accompany these behaviors.³³ This tendency was further highlighted in another study that showed pornography played a significant role in fueling the addictions of 90% of the male sex addicts who were surveyed.³⁴ Because the world is full of distorted sexuality norms and easy access to pornography, many individuals, including athletes, face the challenge of differentiating between normal, appropriate masturbation practices and those escalating into unhealthy excess and compulsivity that are addictive and not easily overcome.³⁵ Interestingly, one of the previous participants further elaborated on these experiences as well as other underlying motives fueling masturbation practices in this way:

Well circle jerks – I only saw two or three of those [laughs] but the porn and beat off sessions – that was a pretty regular occurrence...it was more like if you want to sit around and beat off, then go ahead, if you don't want to that's cool too...I was at parties where I saw some of that stuff going on, but I wasn't forced to do it. You know circle jerks and that...in most cases it's light-hearted [laughs]. Guys were doing it because it was funny. Whatever makes them feel like a part of the team...that's the way I looked at it. You know, that shit feels good – can't be that bad...I've thought about [motives for] that – some of it is camaraderie. I think that for some guys, too, actually it may be kind of hot for them. They're not gay, but it's still like a sexual thing to be sitting around with your guys talking about your girlfriends and what they do to them...I mean, they're not getting off on the guy next to you because you can see his rod (penis) or anything. It's just more or less like just sitting around watching porn all night. It's just a sexual atmosphere and they're all charged up and the next thing you know – they snap one off (masturbate) [laughs]. I had a little bit harder time figuring that one out than I do some of the issues behind violence. I'm not as in tune with that stuff as much...I have my opinions and ideas about what makes certain guys do it or whatever. I think that you can't be shy. I think that you have to be a relatively open person – a real extrovert to be able to do that kind of stuff – and I'm not on that end of the continuum.

The above participant differentiated group masturbation or “circle jerks” from a teammate individually masturbating while watching pornography in the presence of others. Moreover, group masturbation was described as a

pleasurable, "light-hearted" activity occurring sometimes at parties "because it was funny," and entertaining to peers. Themes of "camaraderie" and "feeling like a part of the team" also highlighted players' desire for group acceptance by participating in masturbation; this also suggests high levels of closeness and bonding among teammates. Although the players who masturbated were not labeled as homosexuals once again, they would become sexually aroused from the combination of viewing pornography, discussing their own heterosexual activities with women, and perhaps the homoeroticism of this event as well. Because some players felt extremely connected and at ease with others on their team, masturbation in the presence of teammates was not considered an unusual event. However, high levels of team bonding, which result in events including group masturbation, have the potential to desensitize males to these and other sexual practices so that in time, this may lead to more perverse sexualized behaviors.

MASTURBATION AMONG COLLEGIATE ATHLETES

College is a time of increasing sexual experiences for many students who are free from parental authority.³⁶ One study of college undergraduates revealed that 64% of females and 98% of the males masturbated in the past with the men masturbating on an average of 36 times in the past three months; the higher frequencies occurred among males who believed their peers masturbated frequently and found it pleasurable.³⁷ Indeed, masturbation is considered normal developmental behavior that can be influenced by its perceived pleasure and acceptance within one's peer group. Moreover, a wrestler discussed camaraderie as a catalyst for certain sexual antics among his collegiate teammates by saying, "We were a pretty close group and so it wasn't nothing new to get a magazine and get an erection and see who had the biggest dick and you know compare them...just, that's what you did." Similarly, a collegiate basketball player revealed, "You're so close, you know to each other, so much... you know smacking somebody on their behind...or you know you be bored at the study table and nobody's looking and you might have an erection and pull it out and everybody start laughing – something like that." Participants from every sport revealed various homoerotic antics although basketball players were the only athletes in this study that did not engage in open or group masturbation for reasons that will be discussed later. In contrast, narratives from a wrestler, a minor league baseball player, and a collegiate hockey player revealed group masturbation among certain collegiate teammates in this way:

I know of a situation one time where [laughs]...two guys were at a hotel and they rented one [a porn] from the TV and one of them said to the other, "Okay let's put a pillow between the two of us so it's not

homosexual” you know something like that. I mean...it was just out in the open as far as that, but...they were masturbating, and...so it wouldn't be homosexual, they put a pillow between them...[it] didn't go on often, it was these two guys were just out there...

Yea [laughing] there was guys that would talk about, you know, they're sitting there you know watching the movie and some guy's you know masturbating underneath his you know blanket or whatever... and the funny part to me is that it didn't seem to phase them. That guy that said that he was doing it, it was just, “You know, okay whatever, you know what else are you going to do when you're watching a porn?” There was never any – to my knowledge – there was never any homosexual activity on any of the teams that I've been on but you know masturbating in bathrooms and masturbating in front of other guys – that was not a rare occurrence...these guys were you know four guys living in their own apartment and they just told stories when they came to practice...it happened for sure [but] it was pretty much the same guys over and over again to be honest with you...

I mean, I wouldn't find it uncommon if I was walking down the bus to see someone masturbating right there...[and] jerking-off. And, I'm not sure what type of mentality we had, hard to say...that wasn't common with a lot of other teams and a lot of guys would be surprised to hear that...one player put it from [another university] that there are a lot of a homosexual undertones with your team. And I was like...“Well no one's gay so what the hell, we don't care having a good time...we think it's funny when we're on the bus for eight hours”...

Together these participants clearly reinforced the notion that masturbation practices were not intended to promote homosexuality with teammates or even an inclination toward this particular orientation. Instead, participants routinely described masturbation as common and occurring in conjunction with pornography within certain close-knit teams for the purpose of alleviating boredom while providing entertainment. The third participant noted that although onlookers viewed certain practices as having “homosexual undertones,” masturbation was readily accepted as normal because teammates found this behavior extremely humorous. Because the prevalence and acceptance of pornography appears to be very influential in promoting masturbation within certain teams, and not all athletes have strong interests in pornography, this may be one feasible explanation for why open displays of masturbation do not occur within all teams.

MASTURBATION AMONG PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

Open masturbation was not limited to amateur athletes because two baseball minor leaguers and a hockey minor leaguer revealed masturbation practices among professional athletes in this way:

...in the pros...with the Latin guys...I mean I don't know if they did it all the time or not, but I heard two stories about it, just them – I wouldn't even say stories – just like the next day when you came into the clubhouse they were like, "Oh yeah," [I] went over and see them sitting on the couch going at it [masturbating] watching the porn...

Some of the guys on the team...two or three I think, went to one of these little sex shops and bought...some anal beads and some other stuff and...you know as a joke...the kid sticks them up his butt and starts, you know that [masturbation] type of thing...you know you have some guys who are very open, you know, walk around naked all over and you have other guys who cover up. But when it comes to homosexual [acts] or as guys are together – other than that instance – that was a one-time deal. I can't think of anything else...that was [in] pro.

...the most unusual thing I've seen in 15 years of pro hockey was a guy jerk off and shooting his load...on the team bus, where there's nothing but guys...we were parked in the parking lot and he was watching some girl in the parking lot and he just started jerking off and...blew his load...I've never seen any homosexuality...things or nothing too goofy. I've never seen...no sick shit between guys...fortunately [chuckles]. I think too many guys would take offense to it and stop it before something ever would happen. I've never even actually heard of anything...just with guys.

Each of the above participants noted open displays of masturbation occurring individually as well as among groups of athletes during their minor league careers. Surprisingly, the third participant thought this situation, along with other sexually deviant group behaviors subsequently revealed, was not considered abnormal because an athlete's reference group determines what is normal from what is not. Homosexuality was clearly unacceptable when teams labeled it as such. Because it appears that certain levels of camaraderie need to exist for open or group masturbation to occur, this may explain why approximately 5% of participants with minor league experience in baseball and hockey exclusively reported these practices compared to nearly 20% of participants representing virtually every sport who noted these behaviors among collegiate athletes. Stronger team bonding appears to be more common at the collegiate level compared to many professional teams because collegiate athletes often play together longer while

spending large amounts of time socializing and living together. In contrast, major league baseball players noted that teammates often did not socialize together in larger groups outside of the locker room because many were married, it drew too much attention, and their friendships were diversified. This did not hold true for many minor leaguers who bond and socialize together in larger groups as a result of the time spent traveling together and living in close proximity. However, team bonding in professional sports and particularly at the minor league level is affected by the significant turnover of players within teams from one year to the next as athletes retire, join new teams and leagues, or get traded. Interestingly, a wrestler noted the importance male bonding as a catalyst for sexually deviant practices by saying, "I don't know if it's just athletes. I think anytime you're in a group of guys, you'll do stupid things. I don't know if it's just because we're athletes. I don't think that. I just think being with people you're more comfortable with you're gonna do more things." This participant's belief that peer bonding as opposed to athletic participation was responsible for sexual deviancy and/or aggression among athletes and non-athletes alike was, in fact, supported by an abundance of research findings.³⁸ This may also help to explain other fundamental differences when comparing an array of sexual practices involving professional and collegiate players.

MASTURBATION AS A BASKETBALL TABOO

The majority of all-male sexual practices discussed throughout this chapter appeared within the sports of hockey, football, baseball, and wrestling but not in basketball. This phenomenon was examined and a collegiate basketball player offered one explanation by saying, "Oh no...we didn't do anything like that...like a group masturbation, uh ah [making a negative sound]...that would get you more [chuckles] more ostracized than anything." This participant revealed group masturbation as a taboo and although homoerotic behaviors were previously mentioned among collegiate basketball players, they did not include open or group masturbation. Furthermore, two minor league basketball players provided additional insights into why open masturbation practices were forbidden acts:

I've never even heard of anything like that from any athletes, I've heard of stuff like that with, you know, just some college guys that would have like some weird video situations going on...I heard one situation where guys would circle jerk around a pizza or something like that and watch porns and stuff like that and...some of the more strange sexual experiences, I heard a lot of wild things like that from like the lacrosse team...I've never seen anything like that or heard anything like that with basketball players no, because anything like that would be looked

at as heavily gay, and not too many guys are willing – at least that I've met through my career – that would be willing to potentially close the thought processes of being possibly gay.

That's a foreign language for my culture as a basketball player when I hear about porn and group masturbation I'm like, "Really?" cause I can't fathom that. I can't even imagine a group of basketball players sitting around when I was playing and a group masturbation occurring. Now porn thrown in with five guys and three women, you've got a different dynamic and there will be sex acts performed, but it won't be group masturbation – guys will try their best to make sure they're not touching each other – that's what's going to happen in our world. When you talked about homosexuality [acts], I know for sure a basketball player wouldn't admit to it – anything pertaining to homosexuality a basketball player is going to shut off – and...I want to say it's because...especially now, it's so dominated by African American males and that's not a subject we're talking about – whether it's happening or not – we're not going there. So...I would almost bet that you're going to get a lot of, "It just wouldn't happen," almost a denial...

Although the previous African American athletes clearly reinforced the notion that open or group masturbation was unacceptable and "looked at as heavily gay," the first participant was aware of college students and members of the lacrosse team engaging in these practices. Similarly, the second participant mentioned that any discussion of group masturbation was "denied" – even if it was occurring – because African Americans racially dominated basketball and these behaviors were considered homosexual acts. Therefore, any behaviors that could label African American basketball players as homosexuals were conversationally off limits. Researchers provided additional insights when they discovered that self-identifying heterosexual men who engaged in sex with other men do so with secrecy, and this was particularly true for African American men who are less likely to disclose their gay identity because the black community is less accepting of homosexuality compared to the white community.³⁹ It also appears that masturbation practices are more rooted in culture than athletics because researchers found that although 67% of Caucasian and Latino-American men and 61% Asian-American men had masturbated within the past year, only 40% of African-American men reported engaging in these behaviors – perhaps because of its perceived stigma.⁴⁰ At the same time, this participant implied that group sex with multiple partners from both sexes was completely acceptable and even expected. Indeed, various sports teams and cultures and even racial groups within a team make it very clear about the kinds of sexual behaviors that are acceptable as well as those that can get someone shunned.