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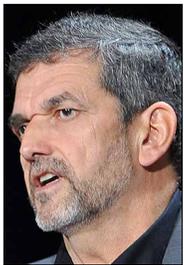
Notre Dame's NCAA compliance program worked and they get hammered

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Snell

The University of Notre Dame (ND) discovered misconduct by a student trainer who helped several football players with coursework. They did an investigation and then, "The University immediately suspended the involved student-athletes from all athletic activities. At the conclusion of its honor code process, the University dismissed four student-athletes and imposed retroactive grade changes in the affected courses." ND then self-reported to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The NCAA vacated (took off the books) all the ND football team games for the two seasons that the affected players played, including a 12 – 1 season. I sat down to write a scathing post about how the NCAA failed to recognize that the system worked just the way they wanted. ND found, fixed, disciplined, and self-reported, and they still got hammered. I was planning on some outrage. However, after researching it, I found (as is often the case), it's not that easy.

Here is the problem. The infraction occurred during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 seasons. The problem was found in 2014 after the students played in the games that the

NCCA vacated. Although ND found, fixed, and reported the problem, the NCCA's point was they played in games after they cheated and before they were discovered. Oh, I wish this were easier to opine about.

On the one hand, I want ND to get credit for doing exactly what the NCAA wanted. On the other hand...well, maybe a comparison might help. Let's say the students stole money. Any reasonable person would say, "Give the money back." ND played two seasons with players who "stole their way into academic eligibility." The NCAA says, "Give the seasons back." ND feels they are being unfairly punished because they did the right thing. I am as close to 50-50 as one could be. I keep typing in that the NCAA should give ND their seasons back to send a message they support compliance programs and self-reporting, but I keep deleting it because ND "stole the seasons" and needs to give them back. This is not about compliance programs or self-reporting; it's about retuning stolen things to their rightful owner. As I reread the facts, I also noted that ND changed the student's grades. Why? "Because they stole them." The only difference between stealing games, grades, or money is the difference in the perceived value. It's all stealing, and it all should be given back. *