

# 1961 Gambling Scandal: The Failure of Four Year Institutions and the Legal System in Preventing Social Corruption in College Athletics

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This paper examined the “1961 Basketball Scandal” to demonstrate from a historical perspective the inability of four year institutions and the judicial system in preventing the fixing of games from infecting collegiate basketball.

By today’s standards the 1961 scandal was hardly unique. There had been a scandal in 1945 and a massive exposure of corruption in 1951. Most of the fixes prior to 1951 had gone undetected.

In 1954, three months after he had been reinstated as Head Coach at City College of New York, (a team integrally involved in the 1951 scandals), Nat Holman before a meeting of the New Jersey Sports Writers Association asserted: “that gambling on collegiate basketball was more widespread than ever and some gambler somewhere is going to approach a player one of these days and we’ll have a dirty mess on our hands.” As it turned out his words were prophetic.

The 1961 scandal broke ten years and one month to the very day after the 1951 scandal. In reality, the fixing had never stopped. The scandal was more than twice the size of the first

1951 scandal. Furthermore, it was virtually impossible to calculate the number of games fixed or tampered with, or to determine the number of attempted fixes.

The 1961 scandal was examined from a historical perspective with the knowledge that additional scandals would surface in 1971 and 1981. Ultimately, we are faced with the inescapable conclusion that this problem may be endemic in collegiate basketball. If the above assumption is accepted, the questions which need to be formulated in order to ultimately fashion a remedy to the problem derive through analyzing two crucial elements: (1) the institutional responses to gambling in collegiate athletics and similar athletic problems; and (2) the judicial system's treatment of gambling in collegiate athletics.

The central thrust of this paper was not to examine the reasons institutions have traditionally ignored the results of investigations which have cited the crucial relationship between athletic abuses, institutional ignorance and collegiate gambling scandals. Gambling scandals have been viewed with less than mild interest and concern among four-year institutions and the gambling problem in collegiate basketball has been largely ignored.

The inability of the judicial system to successfully treat illegal gambling in sport and fashion a remedy to the problem is due in part to:

1. Constraints placed on the courts.
2. The nature of the traditional lawsuit which fails to address the gambling problem in collegiate sport.
3. Lack of judicial authors' familiarity with social problems in collegiate athletics.