



Excerpt from *Successful Coaching, Fourth Edition*

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BULLYING AND HAZING

Bullying is an act of aggression by someone or a group with the intent of harming a person either physically or psychologically. Bullying may occur by hitting, threatening, intimidating, teasing and taunting, and name-calling, or by more subtle attacks such as spreading rumors or encouraging others to reject the person. Bullies target individuals whom they perceive are weaker or more vulnerable.

Hazing is any action or situation created by a group to intentionally produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule among those wishing to join the group. Hazing is a form of bullying, but the two differ in the following ways:

1. Bullying excludes the victim from a group whereas hazing is a ritual imposed on a person who wants to join a group.
2. Bullies often act alone or in small groups, but hazing commonly involves an entire group or team.

Hazing can take many forms, including the following:

- To make victims act in embarrassing or humiliating ways
- To swear and yell insults at victims
- To deprive individuals of sleep or restrict personal hygiene
- To force victims to eat vile substances
- To physically beat individuals
- To force binge drinking
- To sexually assault victims

You've likely heard a lot about bullying and hazing in the media of late. In one survey, 42 percent of 6th graders reported being bullied, with 14 percent being injured from bullying. Today the Internet is frequently used to embarrass, humiliate, or harass individuals through messages or video—what's called **cyberbullying**. Hazing is no less frequent: 48 percent of high school students report some form of hazing. Many experts suspect that the occurrence of bullying and hazing is far more pervasive than reported because victims are embarrassed to report what occurred or are fearful of retaliation should they do so.

Some coaches tolerate bullying by older or more prominent athletes on the team. "Boys will be boys" is their attitude, and we should add that "girls will be girls" because hazing is common among girls, although less so than with boys. But even mild bullying may result in unseen but substantial harm to the victim. Bullying often leads to depression when a victim can't see a way out, and depression can lead to suicide in extreme cases. As a coach of character

you must have zero tolerance for any bullying on your team.

You should also have no tolerance for hazing. After decades of darkness, hazing of athletes by athletes is being recognized as serious misbehavior. In the past, coaches often saw hazing as part of a ritual to build team cohesiveness, and condoned or even encouraged such practices. But **hazing is contrary to the moral values of the Athletes' Character Code** we have considered in this chapter. As a coach you should recognize subtle and outrageous hazing practices for what they are—the mistreatment of fellow human beings. Incidents such as the following are demanding that coaches take an active role in preventing hazing:



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- New York—Four members of a high school football team sodomized members of the junior varsity. The players were charged with a crime, and the coaches were fired.
- California—The senior girls of a high school soccer team forced four freshman girls to drink alcohol until the girls vomited or collapsed.
- New Jersey—Freshman soccer players were abused physically and thrown in the mud as part of an annual hazing event. The head coach and two assistants were dismissed because they allowed it to happen.



The Internet is frequently used to embarrass, humiliate, or harass individuals.

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So what can you do to prevent bullying and hazing among your team members?

1. Learn more about the problem of bullying and hazing by consulting these websites:
www.stopbullying.gov
www.stophazing.org
www.espelageagainstbullying.com
2. Determine if your school or sponsoring organization has a policy on bullying and hazing. If it does, incorporate that policy into your team policy. If it does not have a policy, then develop one for your team.
3. Share the policy with your fellow coaches and all other personnel involved with your team. Review the policy with your athletes to be certain they understand how bullying and hazing are harmful and the consequences of engaging in such behaviors.
4. Include your bullying and hazing policy in your Athlete Code of Conduct to which you will ask your athletes to agree.
5. Describe alternative experiences that the team can do to welcome new members and build cohesiveness.
6. **Encourage mentoring** as a more constructive way for older athletes to introduce newer athletes to the team.
7. Don't ignore bullying or hazing when you see it or signs of it. Investigate, and then take appropriate action to implement the consequences described in your policy.

About the Authors

Look into Mentoring Program!

Review Athlete Code of Conduct at practice

Rainer Martens, PhD, has coached at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels and has studied sport as a research scientist. The founder and president of Human Kinetics, he also started the American Sport Education Program, the largest coaching education program in the United States. An internationally recognized sport psychologist, Martens is the author of more than 80 scholarly articles and 17 books. He has also been a featured speaker at more than 100 conferences around the world and has conducted more than 150 workshops and clinics for coaches and athletes at all levels.

After receiving his PhD in physical education from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in 1968, Martens was a member of its faculty for 16 years. A past president of the National Academy of Kinesiology, he has been recognized for his contribution to sport by the National Recreation and Park Association and by his induction into the National Association for Sport and Physical Education Hall of Fame. He has received Distinguished Alumni awards from Hutchinson High School, Emporia State University in Kansas (where he earned a bachelor's degree), the University of Montana (where he earned a master's degree), and the University of Illinois.

Martens continues to enjoy sport today, especially senior softball. He has been playing slowpitch softball for 45 years and currently plays for and coaches the most successful senior slowpitch team in the United States, the Florida Legends. In 2009, he was inducted into the National Senior Softball Hall of Fame. Martens and his wife, Julie, live in Ormond Beach, Florida.

Successful Coaching is the primary text for the Coaching Principles online or classroom course offered by the American Sport Education Program (ASEP). Coaching Principles is a part of ASEP's Bronze Level coaching certification, a three-step certification involving coursework essential for coaching any sport, teaching sport first aid, and conveying advanced sport-specific knowledge.

To order a copy of the book [*Successful Coaching, Fourth Edition*](#), or to register for the [Coaching Principles online course](#), visit the ASEP website at www.ASEP.com or call toll-free at 800-747-5698.



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