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Collegiate Sport Chaplaincy: Problems and Promise

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Sport chaplaincy has been evolving since the latter half of the twentieth century, and many professional teams and professional organizations utilize the services of chaplains. Several licensing and credentialing organizations do train chaplains, counselors and mentors, but they are not necessarily aimed at sport chaplains. Chaplains have become more prominent in collegiate athletics as well and as such several training programs have developed for collegiate sport chaplains. Collegiate institutions, parachurch organizations and nonprofit faith-based organizations offer the programs that do exist. However, in collegiate athletics there is no governing body that oversees the training requirements or qualifications of chaplains. This has led to some chaplains providing counseling, therapy, and suicide intervention, which may go beyond their qualifications and thus require additional extensive training and/or licensure. The work of chaplains with student-athletes at public institutions also raises the issue of the separation of church and state. The promise of sport chaplains is that they provide holistic care, support, and education beyond wins and losses. Problems arise because there are no established qualifications or training criteria. The issue at hand is trying to balance the benefits of having chaplains while addressing the concerns that have arisen as a result in the growth of sport chaplains.

Sport chaplaincy as a professional and volunteer endeavor has evolved over the past half century in the United States. Currently, a number of athletic departments utilize the services of team chaplains across sports. Generally, in collegiate athletic departments, the individual(s) responsible for the spiritual care of a team is referred to as the chaplain or “sport chaplain.”

Sports chaplaincy is typically an unpaid, appointed position that allows the chaplain to remain neutral while serving administrators, coaches, and players (Fellowship of Christian Athletes, 2007).

Definition and Titles

The term chaplain itself goes back to the fourth century legend of St. Martin of Tours and the Latin *cappellani* for those who guard the remaining section of the cape (*capella*) that he halved to share with a cold beggar. Over time, the roles of chaplains evolved from guarding relics to advising monarchs. The modern use of the word chaplain is not limited to a particular faith or religion (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008). In military settings, chaplains have been building morale and providing moral guidance for more than 1,600 years (Bergen, 2004). In America, chaplains have served in the Continental Army as early as 1775. Today, the United States Armed Forces refer to any of their officially assigned religious leaders as chaplains, regardless of which faith group they serve (Bokhari, 1999).

In the modern era the term is used to identify a member of the clergy who conducts religious services for an institution, such as a prison, hospital, or corporation. The term “sport chaplain” is commonly utilized to define the role and function of a lay or ordained member of the clergy that provides spiritual care for athletes. Lipe (2006) argued the term “sport chaplain” is losing its usefulness in light of the many different approaches used to serving athletes. A more definitive series of titles for the sport chaplain along with their associated responsibilities is offered by Lipe which includes the following:

Evangelistic Chaplains - Their goal is conversion to Christ of people in sport and the proclamation of the Gospel through people of influence in the world of sport. They typically work with a team or club, and also at major sporting events. They hold chapel services and their ministry is primarily program, event and message driven.

Pastoral Chaplains - Their goal is personal piety (Christ-like behavior) and spiritual growth in the people of sport. Their approach is more relational and they employ methods like Bible studies and personal discipleship to further the spiritual lives of those whom they serve. They will usually not concern themselves with sport issues, but will emphasize the spiritual dimension of life with those they serve.

Sport Mentors - Their goal is more comprehensive. Sport mentors seek both a wholehearted, “Christ-honoring” life within sport (relationships with the sport, with teammates, coaches, support staff, and officials) and outside of sport (relationships with spouse, family, friends, and their church). This approach is evangelism and discipleship based on the individual’s journey with Biblical application in the sport experience for faith and life. These people will approach spiritual matters with a long-term focus, committed to the whole-life development process of each person. While evangelist chaplains and pastoral chaplains may simply tolerate sport as a way to minister to people involved in it, the sport mentor must fully engage the sport, its culture, and all those who participate in it to be an effective and transformational force in their lives.

Additionally, the National Institute of Sports, an organization which advocates for sports counseling utilizes the term “sports pastoral counselor” to describe individuals that counsel and

provide spiritual care for athletes. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), a broad-based, parachurch organization labels those who serve players and coaches in a spiritual capacity as character coaches/chaplains. There is no firm agreement on the title, but the moniker “sport chaplain” appears to be the most commonly used title.

Training

The role of sports chaplains is to care for the sports person and broader sports community they serve including coaches, administrators, and their families. While the core motivator for Christian chaplains may be the Gospel, the sports chaplains’ foremost competency is pastoral care. The chaplain’s role is sometimes construed as a “spiritual and pastoral safety net” (SCORE, n.d., para. 2). The sport chaplain can meet many of the needs that cannot be met by others involved in the collegiate athletic program. Chaplains may be used in an informal situation, as a listening ear, a friend, or a counselor because of the underlying spiritual dimension they can bring. Confidentiality, trustworthiness, and neutrality are important qualities offered. They may also be called upon for religious reasons, such as to pray with or for people, or to officiate at more formal occasions like weddings or funerals. Training and credentialing are necessary to facilitate professionalism in the performance of duties and to execute an acceptable standard of care in the discharge of said duties.

Commenting on the need for meaningful training in sport ministry including sport chaplaincy, Conner (2003) stated, “... the quality of training will have a direct bearing on the quality of ministry” (p. 23). Currently, there is no single organization serving as a clearinghouse for training and credentialing sport chaplains in the United States. Collegiate institutions, parachurch organizations and nonprofit faith-based organizations offer the programs that exist. The following sections provide four examples of training initiatives for collegiate sport chaplains being implemented across the nation. Neumann College and Baylor University are examples of programs training chaplains in-house to serve athletes on their own campuses. FCA is a major provider of collegiate sport chaplains particularly in the southern United States, and Auburn University has functioned as a home for FCA’s chaplain training program.

Neumann College

Neumann College, a Catholic institution located in Aston, Pennsylvania, sponsors a one-day training program specifically designed for individuals interested in working as a volunteer-sport chaplain. The training initiative is jointly sponsored by the *Center for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development* and the *Department of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. The key elements of the training include prayer, listening skills, sport and spirituality, boundary issues, and personal reflection. Upon completion of the program volunteers are eligible to engage with one of the college affiliated sport teams as a volunteer sport chaplain.

Baylor University

Baylor University, the world's largest Baptist university located in Waco, Texas, is unique in the sense that oversight of the sports chaplaincy program, an outgrowth of the vision plan Baylor 2012, has returned to the control of the athletic department. The primary aim of the sport chaplaincy program is to provide players an opportunity to grow spiritually and individually.

Volunteer chaplains are generally selected by coaches and serve the baseball, men's basketball, golf, softball, track and field, football, and volleyball teams. The chaplains emanate from a range of experiences including an associate pastor, a minister of education, a Fellowship of Christian Athletes area director, a Baylor employee and a few individuals associated with university ministries (Healy, 2007). Baylor chaplains encourage athletes to participate in weekly Bible studies, locate guest speakers for their Night of Champions, collaborate with head coaches to coordinate chapel services and develop opportunities for student athletes to serve and speak.

The sports chaplaincy program fulfills Imperatives VI and X of Baylor 2012, and is called the "6-10 Sports Ministry Initiative." Imperative VI emphasizes understanding life as a stewardship and work as a vocation, and imperative X encourages coaches, student-athletes and staff to "compete with excellence, as designed by God" (Healy, 2007, para.7).

Fellowship of Christian Athletes

A non-profit, interdenominational ministry founded in 1954, FCA reportedly reached more than 340,000 participants on 6,803 junior high, high school, and college campuses through clubs, Bible studies, and special events in 2007 (Fellowship of Christian Athletes, 2008). FCA outlines its training program for "Sport Character Coach/Chaplains" on its Web site (<http://www.teamchaplains.org/Training/>). Examples of the training requirements candidates must meet include the following:

1. Completion of the on-line FCA Character Coaches/Chaplains Training that includes an application process called the Ministry Leader Application.
2. Communication with the FCA staff prior to the season for planning, prayer, resources, etc.
3. Communication at the end of the season for evaluation, reporting of results, etc.
4. Connection with the FCA Character Coaches/Chaplains Network for ongoing training, encouragement, resources, information on regional training opportunities and more from those who are actively engaged as Sport Chaplains (Fellowship of Christian Athletes, *Getting Started*, n.d., para. 4).

The training program is segmented into the following units or sessions: Relationships, Attitudes, Presence and Strategies, and Methods and Tools.

In 2007, FCA published its Chaplain Training Manual which comprehensively outlines the duties and responsibilities of FCA chaplains. The manual outlines the structure of FCA and elaborates upon the reporting relationship between chaplains and athletic departments. The manual contains chapters on: 1) strategic methods for fostering relationships on campuses; 2) a thoroughly written "how to" section which addresses applied methods for interacting with teams;

3) the role and function of prayer in the work of the sport chaplain; and 4) the administrative work of the chaplain including steps to avoid violation of NCAA rules and regulations (FCA Training Manual, 2007). The FCA intends to use the new training manual to establish a standard for training sport chaplains affiliated with the organization.

Auburn University

Under the direction of Wes Yeary, FCA director of chaplaincy training and development, Auburn University, a public institution in Auburn, Alabama, coordinates a chaplain training and internship program. Auburn has developed a structured training guide for use in its program. This program is one the first in the nation. The nine-month training program includes familiarity with the Christian Bible, observation of campus ministries, applied ministry experience working with student-athletes, and then a final internship working as a chaplain in a sport. There is no certification after the completion of the program.

Credentialing

There is no organization that establishes criteria and competencies for certification as a collegiate sport chaplain in the United States. The majority of persons practicing sport chaplaincy may be ordained within a religious denomination, may have some level of theological training, even a seminary degree, but perform their duties without the benefit of credentialing.

National Institute of Sports Professionals

The National Institute of Sports Professionals (NISP) advocates for the credentialing of professionals working with collegiate athletes. Toward that end, NISP issues a “Certified Sports Professional” Certificate. The Sports Professional Certificate addresses the need for a national standard of training and education for this area of specialization, including those certified as “Sport Pastoral Counselors.” NISP notes “Certification requires a state license or employment by an accredited institution and experience in a related field. Certification is renewable every two years. A *diplomate*, the certification issued based on the highest level of demonstrated professional competency, requires advance training and experience in working with athletes. Diplomate status is renewable every two years. Six continuing-education units are required for re-certification” (National Institute of Sports Professionals, Membership, n.d., para. 3-4).

Association of Professional Chaplains

Chaplains generally receive structured training and requirements vary depending on the type of chaplaincy and the particular organization. Board-Certified Chaplains, through a recognized certification program such the one managed by the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) are most sought after. Examples of the qualifications for APC certification as a Board Certified Chaplain include the following:

1. Theological education at the graduate professional level involving a minimum of three years (72 credit hours) from an institution accredited by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation.
2. Ordination and endorsement for ministry as a chaplain by an appropriate religious authority.
3. Four units (1600 hours) of clinical education accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE).
4. A minimum of one year's full-time experience as a chaplain apart from clinical training or residency (Association of Professional Chaplains, Membership Categories, n.d., para. 1-4).

American Association of Pastoral Counselors

The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) is one of the premier organizations in the country for credentialing lay persons and ordained clergy functioning as chaplains in a variety of institutional and community based settings. AAPC offers a credential to chaplains as a pastoral care specialist as long as the following minimum requirements are met: a) active and relationship to a local religious community and b) completion of 50 hours of specialized training in a variety of supportive pastoral care topics such as brief term, supportive counseling methods, crisis intervention, divorce recovery, etc. (AAPC, General Membership Categories, n.d., para. 1-2).

Counseling and Spiritual Care

One of the common duties of the sport chaplain is the provision of counseling and/or spiritual care for athletes, coaches and sometimes their families. Counseling and spiritual care are often required in a crisis situation or to enable and empower the spiritual growth and development of athletes. Wicks, Parsons, and Capps (1995) suggest that at the spur of the moment the chaplain may be summoned to provide counsel and care for troubled persons in a crisis situation. Moreover, chaplains in the discharge of their duties must be flexible enough to be available as a part of their pastoral initiative. The general caution is the majority of states in the nation require professional certification and licensure as a counselor. Despite the laudable intent of providing counseling and spiritual care services, practicing without the appropriate credentials is ill-advised and ultimately may lead to legal complications. It is imperative the sport chaplain who engages in counseling or spiritual care be fully aware of state regulations and plausible equivalencies governing practice. State sanctioned certifications and licenses commonly held by those who provide pastoral counseling and spiritual care include Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Pastoral Counselor (LPasC) or Certified Professional Counselor (CPC).

According to the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), pastoral counselors are able to work with a state license in most states today. Only six states actually license the title pastoral counselor. They are: Arkansas, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In many other states pastoral counselors may qualify for licensure as marriage and family therapists or as professional counselors. They may have to take

supplemental courses to match a model curriculum, or take a certified post-graduate program (AAPC, Certified Pastoral Counselor Membership Category, n.d., para. 1-2).

The National Institute of Sports Professionals offers a certification to those who provide spiritual care to athletes using the title sport pastoral counselor. Recipients of the certification are expected to comply with the licensure and certification requirements of their state of residence. To function as a Certified Pastoral Counselor, by the membership standards of the AAPC the following time-limited requirements for certification must be met:

1. Bachelor's degree and a master's of divinity or a master's or doctoral level degree in theological/spiritual or biblical studies, or a masters or doctoral level degree in pastoral counseling, from schools accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
2. Religious body endorsement to ministry.
3. Three years in ministry.
4. 375 hours of pastoral counseling together with 125 hours of supervision of that counseling with one-third of such supervision to have been with an AAPC Diplomate, an AAPC Fellow (who is under supervision of supervision), or in an AAPC approved Training Program in Pastoral Counseling (American Association of Pastoral Counseling, Certified Pastoral Counselor Membership Category, n.d., para. 1-2).

Counseling and spiritual care of athletes is a serious endeavor that should only be undertaken by those with appropriate training and credentials. The provision of encouragement, a listening ear, and referrals to trained professionals offer viable options for the sport chaplain to avert potential legal problems.

Future Directions for Training and Certification

Due to the short supply of existing training and certification efforts for collegiate sport chaplains, exploring the programs of professional chaplaincy and related sport organizations represents a reasonable point of departure. The Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), the International Police and Fire Chaplains Association (IPFCA) and Corporate Chaplains of America (CCA) all have longstanding and highly regarded training and certification programs that can be modified to fit the needs of sport chaplains. Organizations such as the National Fellowship of Raceway Ministries, which is affiliated with the National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing (NASCAR) and Race Track Chaplaincy of America (RTCA), which sanctions and oversees 77 chaplains who serve at 117 tracks and training/breeding centers throughout North America and around the world offer suitable models for training and certifying chaplains in their respective sports (Race Track Chaplaincy of America, History, n.d., para. 1-2).

Additionally, international models of sport chaplaincy training and certification should be closely examined and considered for adaptation. Sport Chaplaincy Australia (SCA, see http://www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/chaplaincy_training.htm) and SCORE (see http://www.scorechaplaincy.org.uk/Chaplaincy_in_Sport/chaplaincy_in_sport.html), a United Kingdom-based, non-profit organization that trains and credentials sport chaplains offer training programs. Collegiate sport chaplains in the United States are currently studying the programs of

both organizations. Each of the aforementioned initiatives offers elements for training that could be utilized to construct a standardized training and certification for collegiate sport chaplains.

Organizational Role

Where does a team chaplain fit into the organizational structure of a team or organization? The unquestioned leader of a collegiate team is the head coach. An athletic director or institution president may appear above the head coach in an organizational structure but the head coach is free to manage and operate the team as he or she sees fit. The leader of a church is a minister, priest, reverend or other religious leader. So, this brings up the issue of where a chaplain fits into a collegiate team's structure.

The *FCA Chaplain Training Manual* (FCA, 2007) highlights the gatekeeper function of the coach in providing access to chaplains and their ministries. According to the manual:

There are different scenarios in partnerships. In one situation, a coach brings in a team chaplain and wants all team-directed ministry to funnel through him. In another situation, multiple ministries are available to serve a team, though one minister is seen as a point person for that team. In still another situation, the ministries work together, dividing up sports while helping each other, with one as the point person. (p. 22)

An example of the importance of the coach-chaplain relationship can be found at Auburn University, where head football coach Tommy Tuberville was instrumental in bringing former player Chette Williams back to his alma mater as the team's chaplain in 1999. Tuberville had worked with Wes Yeary, another FCA chaplain, during his tenures at the University of Miami and University of Mississippi. The coach reportedly helped FCA in raising the necessary funds for Williams' service at Auburn (Auburn University, 2007; Stroud, 2003). Tuberville reportedly said about Williams, "He's the best hire I've ever made other than the FCA rep at Ole Miss who did there what Chette has done here—changed peoples' lives" (as quoted in Stroud, 2003, p. 16).

In discussing strategies for developing a campus ministry, the *FCA's Chaplain Training Manual* stresses the importance of building relationships with God, the coaches, administration, doctors and trainers, student-athletes, and donors and supporters—in that order (FCA, 2007, p. 6-7). Another *Manual* passage states chaplains "...must work with integrity and honor, being loyal first to Christ and then to the Head Coach who has provided you with the opportunity to serve" (p. 19). The *FCA Manual* not only stresses the key function of the coach for the ministry but also makes an effort to clarify the organizational structure between coach and chaplain. For example, giving advice on team prayers, the *Manual* mentions, "As always, let the Head Coach set the parameters of how and when to do the prayer and stick closely to his/her wishes" (p. 16).

A chaplain can have many roles on a team but the roles do not seem to be clearly defined. A chaplain can be a counselor, a mentor, or a spiritual leader or any combination of the three. The chaplain's relationship with the head coach and players most likely determines the chaplain's role on the team. There are few if any job descriptions available for exactly what a chaplain does. Chaplains may enter a team environment with certain expectations only to realize the situation is not what they expected.

As noted previously, the relationship with the head coach is crucial in determining exactly what the chaplain should or should not be doing. The relationship with the players also differs on a case-by-case basis. Each player may have a different need the chaplain must meet, much like members of a church congregation. A team chaplain may not be trained or prepared to deal with all the situations that may arise. This leads to the notion of a governing body to ensure sport chaplains are equipped with the training and knowledge to be a counselor, mentor or spiritual leader. There does not seem to be any clear place where a chaplain fits in the organizational structure of a team, especially in collegiate athletics. Required standards and training requirements could help establish exactly where a chaplain fits in the organizational structure.

Professional organizations do add legitimacy to professions and is a way to exchange ideas and best practices. Sport chaplains currently do not have such an organization but the establishment of one can make sure chaplains are properly trained to deal with all types of situations.

The worst-case scenario for establishing sport chaplaincy as a legitimate profession is to have chaplains who are merely fans or friends with the head coach filling the position of chaplain. This distracts from what a team chaplain should really be doing - caring for all team members - from coaches to players to support personnel. There is certainly nothing wrong with a chaplain being a fan but that should not be a requirement to hold the position.

This leads to the issue of how accountability for chaplains' actions. They are de facto representatives of the team and their actions are reflective of the team. Many perks come with being part of the support staff of a team including travel, meals, and clothing. For the profession as a whole, there are no guidelines in place for what a chaplain should or not should be taking or requesting which again supports the notion for a governing body. This organization can establish limits on what a chaplain should be doing in association with the team. This also supports the idea of a chaplain being a chaplain first and not a fan or friend of the coach.

The *FCA Chaplain Training Manual* provides some guidance for "being a wise chaplain" pointing out that the chaplain's "access to the team is a privilege that a coach or administrator could end immediately" (FCA, 2007, p. 19). The source discusses a few hands-on tips for steering clear of ethical issues. The importance of confidentiality is among the aspects chaplains need to consider. For example, the *Manual* cautions, "Don't ever talk about personal or team issues with anyone outside the team. Don't even give detailed information to concerned alumni who just want to know 'if we're ready this week!'" (p. 19). Other suggestions include not asking for favors like clothing and memorabilia, not doing favors for friends, boosters, and alumni like asking players for autographs, and a stern warning to "Do your best to stay out of the ticket business" (p. 19). While these are indeed "things chaplains need to know" (p. 19), such recommendations are no substitute for a fully developed Code of Professional Ethics as those developed by such organizations as the ACPE.

ACPE members are held accountable "to a standard of conduct consistent with the code of ethics established in ACPE standards" and "required to sign the *Accountability for Ethical Conduct Policy Form*" (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, 2007, p. 1). ACPE's Code for Professional Ethics provides procedures for complaints as well as ethics, accreditation, and certification reviews:

when a member's conduct, inside or outside their professional work involves an alleged abuse of power or authority, involves an alleged felony, or is the subject of civil action or discipline in another forum when any of these impinge on the ability of a member to function effectively and credibly as a ... chaplain or spiritual care provider. (p. 1)

Amongst others, ACPE's (2007) standards require its members to "not discriminate against anyone because of race, gender, age, faith group, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability;" to "respect the integrity and welfare of those served or supervised, refraining from disparagement and avoiding emotional exploitation, sexual exploitation, or any other kind of exploitation;" and to "approach the religious convictions of a person, group and or [clinical pastoral education] student with respect and sensitivity; avoid the imposition of their theological or cultural values on those served or supervised" (p. 1).

ACPE further addresses the need for a curriculum on professional ethics and provides a sample outline including such issues as boundaries, confidentiality and the duty to warn, exploitation, power, and sexual ethics (ACPE, 2006, n.d., para. 1). Organizations providing training for collegiate sports chaplains would be well advised to adopt similar standards and joining larger umbrella organizations for professional chaplaincy, pastoral care, and pastoral counseling. Such actions would go a long way in addressing some of the potential legal, ethical, and social issues of collegiate sport chaplaincy discussed in the next sections.

Professionalization of Chaplaincy

General chaplaincy certainly has the characteristics of being a profession. Van der Smissen (2005) suggests for a discipline to be classified as a profession, it must meet specific criteria commonly known as *marks of a profession*. The marks of a profession are 1) a unique body of knowledge, 2) applied and basic research, 3) professional literature, 4) accreditation, and 5) professional organization. While chaplaincy in general fits into these standards, sport chaplaincy in the United States lacks a body of basic scholarly research, has no accreditation, and no overarching professional organizations equivalent to those in other professions.

Chaplaincy as a profession has developed a variety of specialized forms in its various settings. Military, hospital, and business chaplaincies are generally viewed as distinct forms of specialized ministry with corresponding career tracks. In these settings the chaplain is generally recognized as a member of an *institutional team* functioning with specialized skills. Many chaplains, however, also consider it important to keep non-specialized care and concern for all persons related to the organization as the primary feature of their identity and work.

The identity of the chaplain is grounded in four key elements, *attitude*, *ability*, *authority*, and *accountability*. *Attitude* is the perspective from which caring activities are formed using the image of the Shepherd, with particular emphasis placed on those who are lost or separated from the community. *Ability*, relates to the capacity of the chaplain to perform the attitude of care through the execution of assigned duties and responsibilities. *Authority* is concerned with carrying out the duties and responsibilities as a representative of the institution and religious body that endorses the ministry, theological mandate for the duties, and conveyance of authority by legitimacy of the position through ordination and certification to practice. Finally,

accountability addresses the issue of conduct and reporting requirements to the institution and/or ecclesial body, peers, and one's self (Patton, 1993, pp. 77-81).

Their ministries emphasize caring relationships with staff, institutional authorities, and family members as well as the organization's primary or majority population. Since 1920 many chaplains have been clinically trained to function in their particular sub-discipline. Chaplaincy organizations have been certifying chaplains for competency to function in specialized ministries since 1940 (Hunter, 1990, p. 136).

While chaplaincy in general fulfills the criteria of an established profession, sport chaplaincy and particularly collegiate sport chaplaincy have not yet developed into professions or fully established sub-disciplines. The lack of professional organization limits the authority and accountability of collegiate sport chaplains, which also relates to legal, ethical, and social concerns.

Legal, Ethical, and Social Issues

This paper brings to light many of the issues associated with sport chaplains in the United States. Is there a place for chaplains in collegiate athletics? What training or skills must sport chaplains have? While sport chaplains may provide holistic care, support, and education beyond the win-loss record, problems arise because there are no commonly established criteria for the selection and training of these individuals.

Ensuring that sport chaplains, particularly those who engage in any form of spiritual care or counseling are qualified is a vitally important issue. Pressure from competition, substance abuse, unmanaged life circumstances, and undiagnosed and untreated mental health problems can adversely impact the collegiate student-athlete. Invariably sport chaplains may be exposed to any of the above. The physical, mental, and psycho-spiritual well-being of the athlete should be protected at all times. For example, athletes suffering from depression related disorders require care by a licensed mental health practitioner or physician. There is a difference in being trained to facilitate scripture reading and to provide spiritual encouragement and being trained to recognize potentially serious problems, which require direct referral to a mental health professional. For licensed chaplains, there is a well-defined line between spiritual encouragement and counseling. The former requires a working understanding of a holy scripture (e.g., the Christian Bible, Qur'an, Torah) and a compassionate heart, while the latter requires a license. Counseling without training can result in misfeasance, malfeasance and harm to the athlete.

Putukian and Wilfert (2004) chronicle the tragic case of Nathan Eisert, a former NCAA Division I basketball player who died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in June 2002. Eisert, after struggling with a long-standing ankle injury, saw his playing time diminish and began to slowly sink into a state of depression. He subsequently was released from the team and his undiagnosed and untreated depression began to escalate. After his death, Eisert's parents divulged he seldom spoke about his depression, but had observed what he thought to be depression in several of his teammates. Shortly after Eisert's death, another student-athlete at the same university, grieving over Eisert's death and struggling with a series of personal problems attempted suicide. A well-trained team chaplain may have played a crucial role in catalyzing an intervention to prevent this tragedy.

The professionalization of collegiate sport chaplaincy is another issue that must be addressed. Secular and non-secular organizations and seminary schools across the nation provide a systematic method for training professional chaplains. If recognized organizations such as APC and AAPC have set the standards for training and credentialing institutional chaplains, why should collegiate sport chaplains deviate from the sanctioned and proven path? Credibility, legitimacy, and acceptance among professional chaplains are at stake. Moreover, withstanding the inroads the FCA has made in taking a prescriptive approach to training sport chaplains, the looming question is how many coaches and chaplains will adopt the training program? In lieu of a standardized training protocol FCA's program may potentially be an acceptable surrogate for traditional seminary-based chaplaincy training.

For athletes and coaches, collegiate sports chaplaincy provides an integrated approach to caring for and supporting the athlete in a highly competitive environment. However, a number of potential legal, ethical, and social issues should be considered. Several of these were discussed in a recent case of faculty resistance against the appointment of a sports chaplain at a public university. In May 2007, 96 faculty members, including six distinguished professors, at Iowa State University (ISU) signed a petition saying: "We ... strongly oppose any effort to introduce chaplains or any other form of religious counseling, whether publicly or privately funded, into any part of our athletic programs" ("Petition submitted," 2007, p. 1).

The faculty members were reacting to reports in the local press according to which ISU football coach Gene Chizik had expressed his desire for a full-time team chaplain at a regional FCA banquet (Heggen, 2007). As a former defensive coordinator at Auburn from 2002–4, Chizik was undoubtedly familiar with the work of FCA chaplain Williams wanted to bring the Auburn model to his new team (Iowa State University, 2006). Chizik had apparently earmarked the position for Kevin Lykins, a former strength and conditioning coach for Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Masters in Divinity), and a pastor of a Baptist Church in Texas (Iowa Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "About us," n.d.). The faculty petition against the new position of a team chaplain voiced the following concerns:

We believe that such religious positions violate the establishment clause of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution, as Iowa State is a publicly funded land grant institution. Such religious positions also have many other negative consequences for non-Christian students, and even for Christian students who may not believe in the particular religious form of Christianity that such a chaplain might endorse....

Chaplains, by definition, serve a religious purpose, and so pose a potential violation. Given public statements that the proposed chaplaincy is there to encourage a Christian viewpoint, we feel that it also violates the idea that government cannot prefer one religion over another. ("Petition submitted," 2007, p. 1)

The petition concluded by stating, "Students are best served by their own clergy, and students should be free not to espouse any religious practice or belief to participate in athletics at Iowa State University" (p. 2).

The petition was subsequently discussed by ISU's Athletics Council, which reported to President Gregory Geoffroy. On June 28, in a letter to Jamie Pollard, Director of Athletics, Geoffroy gave his approval for the position—which was now termed *Volunteer Life Skills Assistant*—subject to guidelines and recommendations made by the Athletics Council and some points of clarification. These included the new position would be a “strictly volunteer role and not be funded with any State, University, Athletic, or ISU Foundation funds” (Geoffroy, 2007, p. 1). The president further stipulated:

The person holding this position is explicitly prohibited from acting as an agent to promote a particular religion or religious viewpoint, pressuring in any way student-athletes to choose religion over non-religion, or coercing, directly or indirectly, student-athletes to participate in any type of religious activity...

The person selected for this position must be prepared for and committed to assisting with the full range of diverse belief systems that he or she may reasonably encounter among student-athletes.
(p. 1)

The effectiveness and value of the work of the Volunteer Life Skills Assistant was to be evaluated through “existing annual confidential student-athlete evaluation and exit interview survey questions intended to assess the effectiveness and value of the Volunteer Life Skills Assistant position” (Geoffroy, 2007, p. 1). In light of the considerable press coverage surrounding the controversy, Geoffroy closed in stating, “Many interested parties will be watching and carefully examining the activities of the person filling this position. It is thus incumbent upon you and your staff to ensure that the conditions of this approval are fully met without compromise” (p. 2).

A job description for the Volunteer Life Skills Assistant posted by Mid-Iowa News gives further insights in how ISU wants to negotiate the promises and problem of sport chaplaincy. According to the source, “the Volunteer Life Skills Assistant serves those student-athletes who voluntarily seek counsel on a variety of practical, moral, spiritual and personal issues” and “will be aware of and strictly adhere to all NCAA and University rules; will respect the confidentiality needs of student-athletes; and will be available, as time permits, to all student-athletes at Iowa State University” (“Volunteer Life Skills,” 2007, para. 1).

Seemingly aware of the legal ramifications of such a position the job description stressed the Life Skills Assistant is “required to respect and to preserve the confidentiality of communications to him or her in a counseling relationship and will not be required to reveal confidences except as provided by law” (“Volunteer Life Skills,” 2007, para. 2). Further, the Life Skills Assistant may “not pressure, coerce or proselytize team members and will only be made available as a resource for student-athletes who choose on their own to receive counsel or support” (“Volunteer Life Skills,” 2007, para. 3).

The fact the life skills assistant will have to walk a legal and ethical tightrope is evident in that the volunteer is called to counsel the athletes on “a multitude of social issues” and be “available for spiritual or religious counseling” but “will avoid initiation of such discussion” (“Volunteer Life Skills,” 2007, para. 6–7). Despite the change in title from team chaplain to life skills assistant, the religious aspect of the position is clear based on the fact that “the Life Skills

Assistant may provide or conduct religious activities consistent with his or her faith and training; however, participation of all persons in such activities must be voluntary, and the Life Skills Assistant must be ready to assist student athletes in finding suitable ministries in the faith of their choice” (“Volunteer Life Skills,” 2007, para. 8).

ISU required the following qualifications for the new position:

1. Prior experience working with student-athletes in a coaching or administrative capacity at the Division I level;
2. Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of what it takes both mentally and physically to be a Division I student-athlete;
3. Professional training and prior work experience with crisis management counseling for college students;
4. Certification in, or demonstrated knowledge of, as well as commitment to the principles of Clinical Pastoral Education, and specifically Standard 101 of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.; and
5. Ability to administer to persons of all faiths or no faith. (“Volunteer Life Skills,” 2007, para. 10-14)

Given the above discussion on the need for credentialing, the included reference to the APCE’s Code of Professional Ethics is especially noteworthy.

By the end of July 2007, ISU chose Kevin Lykins to fill the new Life Skills Assistant position (Aldritt, 2007). The same month FCA hired Lykins as the “Iowa State University Area Representative” (Iowa Fellowship of Christian Athletes, “About us,” n.d.). According to news reports, some ISU faculty members continued to express concerns related to Lykins appointment, possible “one-size-fits-all” religious counseling, and the openness of the search to members of all faiths (Aldritt, 2007).

The ISU case exemplifies both the promises and the problems associated with collegiate sport chaplaincy. Almost a year into his service, press reports depicted Lykins as “part psychologist, part friend and part problem-solver.” One player describes him as “almost a father figure for our team.” The same player reportedly praised Lykins by saying, “A lot of guys have gone in and talked about stuff, not even anything to do with football. If we don’t want to talk to one of the coaches or an academic person I can go to him. He’s really knowledgeable and really helpful.” (quoted in Petersen, 2008, para. 5, 17, 18) Given these promises, it may not surprise ISU’s neighbor, the University of Iowa, is considering offering a similar service to its athletes (Petersen, 2008). While a full discussion of the separation of church and state in relation to intercollegiate sport chaplaincy was outside the scope of this paper (see Brown Foster, 2003), the ISU case illustrates the range of legal, ethical, and social issues public colleges and universities will have to address if they provide or plan to provide team chaplains for their athletes.

Recommendations

The preceding discussion highlights many of the advantages and issues associated with collegiate sport chaplaincy. Many organizations offer training programs for sport chaplains but some only consist of limited training, which may put people in situations they are not equipped to handle. Other professional organizations do offer training, but there are inconsistencies among them in regards to training requirements. The bottom line is many people are given the title and duties of a sport chaplain when in reality they may have little or no training in counseling or spiritual leadership. There is certainly a need for someone to provide holistic support to student-athletes but there should also be a training program in place to ensure such professionals are properly equipped to deal with the position's requirements. Future research will benefit from drawing on institutional theories including issues of legitimacy and credibility. Such research will also add to our understanding of the professionalization of fields.

This investigation revealed a number of interdependent problems related to training/credentialing, ethical, and social issues. The ISU case shows the very practice of providing sports chaplains in collegiate sports at public institutions is contested. This research should encourage universities, colleges, and athletic departments to further evaluate the roles and responsibilities of sports chaplains in their organizations. It is also recommended current and future training programs for sports chaplains develop a relationship with established credentialing bodies such as the AAPC. Future research should also address the need to gain additional insights into the current practice of collegiate sport chaplaincy by determining exactly who these people are, what training do they have, and clarify their roles and responsibilities. Currently, there was little or no research found involving collegiate sport chaplaincy, but certainly may be an area of emphasis for future investigations.

Future research needs to explore several areas with collegiate sport chaplaincy. An examination of the relationship between the chaplains and students-athletes needs to be conducted. This should include student-athletes' attitudes toward having a team chaplain as well as the role student-athletes believe chaplains should have with the team. The same issues should be examined in regards to coaches and support staff as well. A longitudinal study regarding the relationship between student-athletes and chaplains is also a promising area of research. It would be interesting to determine if student-athletes' perceptions of the role of the chaplain changes during the course of their playing career at a university or college. Another topic in this area is determining the actual need by student-athletes to have a team chaplain and determining the benefits of having a team chaplain. Given the separation of church and state, there is further need for an investigation and clarification of the legality of having a chaplain as part of the staff of a public school. A host of ethical issues regarding the role chaplains in athletic departments need to be discussed at a practical level as well as theorized within the discipline of ethics. This includes how chaplains balance the confidentiality of their conversations with athletes and need to inform coaches or administrators of potentially serious problems.

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