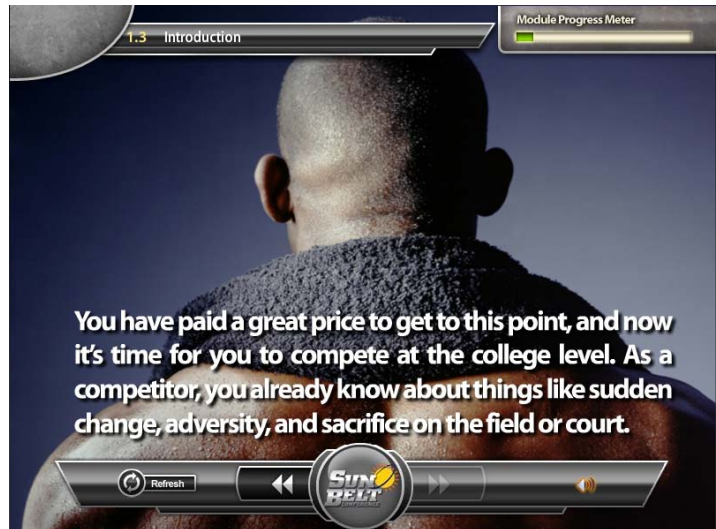


Sportsmanship Program Aimed at Bettering Sun Belt Student-Athletes, Coaches, and Administrators

September 14, 2009 – Entering its 34th year of athletic competition the Sun Belt Conference and its member institutions continue to show a dedication not just to sports, but also to academics and the characteristics that make people an outstanding member of society.

As evidence, the Sun Belt Conference revealed today that it has launched a comprehensive initiative titled “RealSportsmanship.” The initiative, developed in conjunction with Birmingham, Ala.-based Learning Through Sports, Inc., seeks to help the league’s student-athletes and coaches navigate the complex, high-pressure world of college athletics by educating and preparing them to appropriately handle negative situations that arise both inside and outside their arenas of competition.

According to Sun Belt Conference Commissioner Wright Waters, the program allows the conference’s student-athletes and coaches the chance to think about potentially combustible situations with greater care than they ordinarily might when suddenly confronted by them.



“Young adults can certainly benefit from the training this initiative contains because, in many cases, they either haven’t been directly confronted with these scenarios yet or haven’t thought them through from multiple perspectives,” Waters said.

“The same training also benefits older adults, because they may not have dealt with them in some time, or they may simply need to remind themselves of what’s at stake and what things are important.”

Student-athletes and coaches will be required to log in to the web based sportsmanship platform that presents real-world scenarios drawn directly from the experiences of college student-athletes and coaches.

Once logged in participants will be greeted with an introduction to the program and the value of sportsmanship. Good behavior in and out of competition will be the underlying theme as participants respond to questions regarding sports related concerns like taunting, fighting, and cheating. Additionally, some questions will focus on life related issues like social networking websites, substance abuse, and gambling.

Upon completion of the platform, which is customized for each school, participants will be able to compare their responses to those of other users for further assessment and perspective. Institutional liaisons will review logs to ensure that all student-athletes and coaches have completed the survey prior to their respective conference championship. Sun Belt Conference Associate Commissioner Kathy Keene will update institutional liaisons regarding which individuals have not completed the survey prior to the conference championship to ensure compliance.

“There are not wrong and right answers to the questions student-athletes and coaches will be responding to,” explained Keene. “Instead, the end result will give coaches and administrators the ability to gauge what issues need to be addressed.

“Furthermore, it will serve as an aid to participants when faced with real life situations similar to those which are part of the platform. We want to be able to help our student-athletes and coaches make the right decisions.”



“The interactive self-assessment activities allow for personal reflection about realities they can, do, and will face, said Brian M. Shulman, founder and CEO of Learning Through Sports.

“We’ve taken our nine years of experience and research at the youth and high school level and applied it to the collegiate ranks. Our PhD’s, current and former college coaches and development team have created a solution that puts a player or coach in the exact situations they will face. The key is helping each individual understand the issue, think through how they will react and then preparing them to take the right course of action.”

The Sun Belt Conference also sought input on the initiative from Dr. Colby B. Jubenville, an associate professor of sport management and director of the Center for Sport Policy and Research at SBC-member institution Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Jubenville, whose research includes several peer-reviewed journal articles on various aspects of the coaching and college athletic administration professions, said that RealSportsmanship’s curriculum was built upon the necessary sequence of examining values, standards, beliefs, and actions, which would boost participants’ self-confidence when confronted with ethical dilemmas.

“Equipping student-athletes and coaches on the front end with principles for making good ethical decisions goes back to the old ounce-of-prevention adage,” Jubenville said.

“That may sound cliché, but it’s certainly much more effective and efficient than doing damage control, and the Sun Belt Conference should be commended for its forward-thinking philosophy and desire to help its people deal with tense situations well and avoid them whenever possible.”

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