

Just as Aggressive Off-Field?:

A Look at Football Player's Aggression in Relation to Sexual Assault

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Abstract

Over the past several years, many athletes, football players in particular, have been accused of sexually violent acts. This article explores various aspects of an athlete's life that could influence their decisions and potentially play a role in their choice to commit sexually violent acts. The four areas of research include biological makeup of an athlete, an athlete's sense of entitlement, environmental factors and whether athletes are actually punished according to their crime. Research was conducted using previously published areas from a variety of fields including psychology, health, and racial and ethnic studies journals, as well as law reviews. Examples of such sexually violent acts are used from the past several years and include names such as Ray Rice and Jerry Sandusky. Ultimately, it was concluded that there is not one sole area of an athlete's life that influences their decision to commit sexually violent acts, but rather several factors that could all potentially play a role. The article will also look at the behavior change model to present a proposed way at teaching athletes how to act off the field without using the aggression that they use on the field.

Keywords: sexual violence, rape, aggression, athletes

Introduction

In the year 2014, five National Football League players were arrested on the charges of domestic violence (NFL arrest-database). Perhaps the most-covered domestic violence case of these five players was that of Ray Rice who was caught on an elevator video hitting his then-fiancée, knocking her unconscious. In the days, weeks and months that followed controversy surrounded the NFL and the way the league handled the investigation. Ultimately, Rice was dismissed from his team, the Baltimore Ravens, and suspended from playing in the NFL. However, the suspension came several months after the video tape was released, and people accused the NFL and its commissioner Roger Goodell of not acting in a quick or harsh enough manner. Since the incident, the NFL has found itself in a public relations campaign, attempting to demonstrate to its publics that it truly cares about the well-being of both men and women involved in domestic abuse cases. In the two years between January 1, 2013 and January 31, 2015, 22 NFL players were arrested on charges of domestic violence, assault, child abuse and rape (NFL arrest-database). The number of arrests begs the question: Why is domestic abuse such a problem among professional football players?

However, the NFL is not the only football organization that has dealt with players involved in either domestic violence or sexual assault cases. According to the National Coalition Against Violent Athletes, “one in three college sexual assaults are committed by athletes” (Statistics). And of course, one of the most documented, high-profile sexual violence cases involving football personnel in recent years came in 2012 when former Penn State coach Jerry Sandusky was found guilty of 45 charges of molestation against young boys. Although this sexual violence was not committed against women, it does highlight the alarming problem of sexual violence among football personnel.

High schools also find themselves in the midst of such cases, the most note-worthy case in the past several years coming from the tiny town of Steubenville, Ohio. In 2012, 17-year-old Trent Mays and 16-year-old Ma'lik Richmond raped an intoxicated female classmate at a party. They were found guilty of rape on March 17, 2013 and have been registered as sex offenders. Richmond was allowed to return to the football field after serving nine of his 12-month sentence (Almasy, 2013).

There have been enough sexual violence and rape charges against athletes of all skill levels and ages that it has started a conversation amongst sports analysts, fans and sexual assault prevention groups, all of whom demand that these football organizations get involved in the fight against domestic abuse and sexual assault. The NCAA is one of many organizations who have partnered with President Barack Obama's "It's On Us" campaign. The NFL partnered with the "No More" campaign by launching a series of television commercials where a group of football players, past and present, dismiss excuses used by sexual predators such as "She was drunk," "What was she wearing?," and "She never said no." Yet despite these attempts to end sexual and domestic violence accusations surrounding football players, there seems to be little change. Even after the fallout of the 2014 NFL season in which Ray Rice and Ray Donald, among others, were charged with domestic violence-related charges, Indianapolis Colts linebacker Josh McNary was accused with domestic violence and rape. Perhaps this is proof the punishment handed down by the NFL for acting in such a manner is not harsh enough. Although all of these football players were not ultimately found guilty of sexual violence, they acted in such a way that led them to be charged in the first place, which is just as problematic as being accused of the crime. Whether a football player is found guilty or not guilty of a sexually violent crime, they obviously had to act in such a manner to get accused of the crime, which means that they were

more than likely acting aggressively toward a woman. Although they were not found guilty of the crime, who is to say that they will not act aggressively toward a woman again in the future, and be found guilty in that instance?

There are several unknown reasons for this sexually and domestically violent trend in football. What factors play a role? Is it the violence of the football field that simply carries off the field? Perhaps the game of football has become more violent over the years. Or perhaps a factor could be that society has turned a blind eye to sexual violence for so long and victims are finally getting the courage to speak up.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

This paper aims to find connections between the violence of football as a sport and the violent actions of its players off the field. It will also address the manner in which these players are punished and how their behavior affects their football career. In order to do so, research will look at both the genetic makeup of athletes versus non-athletes as well as the ways in which they communicate. Research will also be used to investigate how much of a factor peer pressure plays a role in a football player's actions as well as look at the psychology behind aggressive sports. All of this research will be used to determine if there is one specific and direct correlation between aggression on and off the field or if it is rather a combination of influences.

Hypothesis: Although various aspects of a person's personality could play a role in their violent actions, the violence expected of football players on the field plays a large part in their off-field actions. This hypothesis will be investigated by looking at the biology of athletes, the entitlement athletes think they deserve, environmental factors in which sexual assaults occur and

finally, how often athletes are “exempt” from punishment they rightfully deserve for their actions.

Research question 1: Is there a biological difference that wires athletes to act out with more aggression? Is there a particular genetic makeup that is “more athletic” than another? Is there a particular genetic makeup that makes someone more aggressive or violent?

A quick glance at the history of the NFL will show several dynamic father-son duos who have played professionally. Among these pairs are Greenbay Packers linebacker Clay Matthews III and his father, Clay Matthews Jr., former New Orleans Saints quarterback Archie Manning and his sons Payton and Eli, and former Chicago Bears running back Walter Payton and his son Jarrett (Celebrating Father’s Day—The fathers and sons of the NFL). There is a clear and obvious difference in ability between an athlete that plays at a collegiate or professional level and a person that plays for leisure. Does that exceptional ability come solely from extra hours on the practice field, or are some people more athletically inclined because of genetics? If the latter is true, does that extra athletic edge cause an athlete to act more aggressively?

Research question 2: Is there an entitlement that comes with being a high-profile football player that causes them to act out in a manner they would not otherwise? Do such actions roll over from the football field?

A quick glance at SportsCenter will show athletes who think they deserve more money or deserve to play more minutes. Do athletes think that because they are so entitled in other aspects of life that they deserve to have their way with women also, even if it comes at a violent cost? Additionally, if one were to watch a football game, there is at times an obvious disrespect that comes from players toward coaches, referees, other players or fans. Do they think the same

aggressive manner that is displayed on the field can be displayed toward their spouse, girlfriend or women they do not know?

Research question 3: What are the environmental factors under which these domestic and sexual violence situations occur?

Is alcohol a factor? Do they meet these women in bars or strip clubs? Are they meeting these women in lavish places or parties? How do those factors play a role?

Research question 4: How often are exceptions to sexual violence rules and consequences made for a team's "all-star" athletes? Are teams willing to "look away" from a sexual violence if it means the player can continue to play and the team can continue to make money?

When Jameis Winston was accused of sexual assault, some said the school delayed his hearing so that he could continue playing football (Schlabach, 2015). However, if a second-string defensive lineman had been accused of the same crime, would he have been able to stay on the team? Oftentimes there seems to be preferential treatment for the all-star players, even if it means bending (or even at times ignoring) the rules. How closely are those rules followed? How often are exceptions made for the "all-star" athletes?

These research questions will address many aspects of a professional football player's personal perceptions and star status that could affect their off-field decisions. Research regarding these questions will be conducted by reading literature already published by various academic journals that range in areas of topics from the biological makeup of an athlete to the psychology of athletes to general sexual assault numbers and statistics.

Research and Analysis

Before beginning a discussion about athletes and their sexual violence acts, it is important to address the facts of sexual assault. In 1992, it was reported that “1 in 7 adult women [experienced] a completed rape in their lifetime” while “1,800,000 to 4,000,000 women are physically abused by a partner each year” (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The numbers have only increased in the past 23 years. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the number of women that experience a completed rape has changed to 1 in 6, bringing the number of women in America who have been the victim of rape up to 17.7 million. Eighty percent of these women are under the age of 30 years old and of the rapists, only two percent of them ever spend one day in prison (Who are the victims?, 2015, para. 1-2). Additionally, victims of sexual assault may experience “anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, interpersonal problems, assault-related injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, and chronic stress-related physical health problems” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 549). These numbers are alarming, and obviously affects a woman not just physically, but also emotionally and psychologically.

For the purpose of this paper, “aggression” will be defined as “actively doing something unpleasant to someone” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 74). It is important to note that acting aggressively is directed at *someone*. On the football field, that could be a hard tackle, a grab to the face mask or even something such as getting into a fight in the locker room. However, off the field that could translate into actions such as rape and sexual assault. Additionally, for the purpose of this paper, it is important to define the terms sexual violence, sexual assault and rape. According to the National Institute of Justice, sexual violence is the umbrella term used to describe a “constellation of crimes including sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape.” Sexual assault is a more specific term that describes “unwanted behaviors... that are attempted or completed

against a victim's will or when a victim cannot consent because of age, disability, or the influence of alcohol or drugs." However, sexual assault does not include penetration of the victim. Finally, rape is defined as "nonconsensual oral, anal, or vaginal penetration of the victim by body parts or objects using force, threats of bodily harm, or by taking advantage of a victim who is incapacitated or otherwise incapable of giving consent" (Rape and sexual violence, para. 1, 3, 4). The following research questions address all three issues—sexual violence, sexual assault and rape.

The following research addresses the aforementioned questions:

Research question 1: Is there a biological difference that wires athletes to act out with more aggression? Is there a particular genetic makeup that is "more athletic" than another? Is there a particular genetic makeup that makes someone more aggressive or violent?

There is little research about how an all-star athlete may have a slightly different genetic makeup that makes them superior over other athletes. However, much research has been done about the psychology of athletes and how attitudes and behaviors influence their ability to perform at a high level. In regards to an athlete's aggression, there are two psychological learning theories that may explain why they behave in such a manner. The first comes from Sigmund Freud who proposed that "we are born with two opposing instincts, the life and death instincts. Our death instinct leads us to be aggressive... the instinct for aggression is always with us, we can to some extent exert conscious control over it. Thus, aggressive behavior is not always inevitable" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 79). The death instinct could explain the why athletes—or men in general—act aggressively toward women. Additionally, if football players are trained to act aggressively on the field, they may not quite know how to contain that aggression when they

are off the field. The second theory is the social learning theory, which states that “all human aggression, like other social behaviour, is learnt by imitation and reinforcement” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 80). When considering this theory, it could be said that all aggressive behavior that football players display on the field were learned. At the same time, it could be said that all aggressive behavior demonstrated toward women off the field is learned too. Whether the influence comes from a player’s family history, their socioeconomic background or from their teammates, the aggressiveness that they display off the field creates a negative impact on their personal life, which in turn, can affect their professional career.

Research also indicates that perhaps an athlete’s aggression may also be related to the role of masculinity in sports. According to Floor and Dyson (2007), “male athletes’ violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours, like those in any segment of the population, are likely to have multiple and interconnecting causes. Most generally, they may reflect wider associations between men, masculinity, gender norms, and tolerance for violence” (p. 39). Associations with violence and masculinity could potentially shape a football player’s perceptions thus influencing the way they treat people around them. However, the roles of masculinity are not just sports-specific, but rather affect all humans. According to Hong (2000), males are automatically more apt to commit a violent act based on the way masculinity is defined culturally. The author writes, “the predominant male socialization process in the United States inculcates in boys and men a hegemonic and limiting code that intimately links traditional male gender roles with violence” (p. 1). This piece of information is critical for two reasons. First of all, it is already engrained into a male’s mind that part of masculinity is acting violently and potentially giving them a sense of dominance over the “weaker” females. Secondly, if a male competes in an aggressive, contact sport that is traditionally seen as hyper-masculine (such as football), they

may be under the notion that they are required to act in a dominant, overbearing, overly-aggressive manner at all times. Unfortunately that often carries off the field leading to sexual violence against women.

Research question 2: Is there an entitlement that comes with being a high-profile football player that causes them to act out in a manner they would not otherwise? Do such actions roll over from the football field?

The average NFL player makes \$2 million per year. Additionally, they receive fame and money from endorsements as well as a huge, adoring fan base. It is no wonder that oftentimes football players act with a sense of entitlement—they have everything they could ever need or want. If they have a sense of monetary entitlement, why would they not have a sense of “entitlement” when it comes to women? Why would they not have this sense of entitlement when it comes to breaking the law? According to Flood and Dyson (2007), “the high-profile status and celebrity treatment of professional athletes has been seen potentially to feed a sense of entitlement and lack of accountability for one’s actions off the field” (p. 41). Perhaps the lack of accountability is the biggest factor in an athlete’s poor decisions. For example, Ray Rice’s original punishment for hitting his fiancée in the elevator was only a two game suspension. However, Tom Brady was originally suspended four games for his alleged role in the infamous “Deflate Gate.” Although the NFL later changed these suspensions after receiving pressure and criticism from the public, suspending Rice indefinitely and lifting Brady’s suspension completely, the fact that Rice received such a “soft” punishment to begin with is problematic. The fact that the NFL did not suspend Rice indefinitely from the start showed that they did not place a lot of value on his fiancée’s well-being. Perhaps the NFL was more willing to let Rice off easy than lose a big name, money-making player for a season.

When discussing entitlement that athletes feel, it is also important to address the importance of football teams to a high school, a university or a city. While football has the ability to bring a community, campus or town together, perhaps one of the most important things that football brings to a town is money, and potentially, success and glory. In regards to college football, Rammel (2014) wrote:

“What began as a celebration of the best in amateur sports has become big business, with revenues and television contracts surpassing untold billions. A university’s athletic program, especially its football program, is often regarded as fundamental to the success of the university because of its potential for national prominence, name recognition, and loyalty to the institution and its brand” (p. 135).

Despite having not won a Super Bowl since 1995, the Dallas Cowboys continue to be the most valuable team in the NFL with a value of more than \$4 billion with \$620 million revenue generated in 2014, mostly due to its franchise history and storied traditions (Ozanain, 2015). It is also worth mentioning that this is the same Dallas Cowboys team who signed Greg Hardy for the 2015-2016 season, knowing that he had been charged with domestic violence during the off-season.

In reality, when teams, particularly professional teams who operate more as a business, work with athletes that feel they are entitled to whatever they want, problems will arise. There is some tension for team management who must choose whether or not to punish their athletes for their off-the-field actions—no team wants to lose money because their star player is sitting the bench. Additionally, teams must manage bad publicity and launch PR campaigns when its athletes are caught in a scandal or are accused of a crime. However, as much as a team does not

want to be associated with an athlete who has been accused of a sexually violent crime, they are prone to hold on to money-making athletes. Therefore, the team has to choose whether or not to endure the media storm with the player until they are officially charged or not charged with the crime, or go ahead and release the player as a precautionary measure. Regardless of their decision, when a player puts himself above his team and his organization and chooses to make poor, criminal choices it causes problems for more than just the players themselves. It also affects their teammates, coaching staff and front office staff who must bear the media brunt of the act.

The bottom line is there is a growing problem with athletes committing acts of sexual violence, most noticeably in the sport of football. However, because of the fame, name recognition, and yes, even money that certain players bring to a franchise or town, very few players receive the punishment they deserve for committing such acts. Sexual violence is an issue that affects too many people for the punishment not to be taken seriously. Regardless of one's status or fame, justice should always be served.

Research question 3: What are the environmental factors under which these domestic and sexual violence situations occur?

There are several environmental factors that could play a role in domestic or sexual violence situations. The first, and perhaps the most obvious factor, is alcohol. According to Kaysen, Neighbors, Martell, Fossos and Larimer (2006), a survey of college students showed that “75% of men and 55% of women report having used alcohol or drugs at the time of a sexual assault” (Drinking as a risk factor for sexual assault section, para. 1). Alcohol is known to impair judgement and decision-making skills. In many cases, athletes find themselves on the

“A-list” to the hottest parties where plenty of alcohol and women are present. If a player were to consume too much alcohol, this environment could be problematic and lead to sexual violence or rape. A second factor that might not be as widely considered is peer pressure from teammates. Parrot and Cummings (1994) state that athletes face a very particular set of circumstances that include “their training in aggression, their high status on campus, the behavior of female fans, alcohol and other drug use, and the peer pressure inherent in most all-male groups” (p. 179). The authors continue to explain that in addition to these individual pressures that athletes face from fans, the media, etc., there are also a second set of pressures that come from their teammates. Not only do their teammates have expectations for their on-field behavior but perhaps also the manner in which they act off the field. These off-field behaviors could include behaviors at bars, parties, etc. that could result in acts of sexual violence. They write: “Male bonding among team members appears to be a contributing factor to gang rape, and most gang rape charges against athletes seem to involve members of such contact team sports as football” (p. 179). Within a team there is an obvious hierarchy of veterans and rookies. It would be easy for a rookie to be “bullied” into drinking too much or taking home a woman at the end of the night. Just as with alcohol, when someone feels pressure to act a certain way, they oftentimes do not use their best judgement or act in a manner in which they normally would.

The locker room culture could also play a role in the way an athlete objectifies women, which could ultimately play a role in the way they treat women. According to interviews conducted with former hockey players by Pappas, McKenry and Catlett (2004), women are often degraded when discussed in the locker room. One player said that his teammates “treat women like objects—sexual objects... and don’t care what they say at all because they think they’re still going to have sex or whatever” (p. 306). This research could be very telling of the culture in a

football locker room as well because hockey and football share several similarities. Both sports are extremely competitive, involve physicality and require aggression. Therefore, if hockey players and football players alike do not care about the way they talk about women when in the locker room, they might be less likely to care about how they treat women. Additionally, if the culture of the locker room does not hold men accountable to each other for their conversations, they might be less likely to hold each other accountable for their sexually violent actions.

Research question 4: How often are exceptions to sexual violence rules and consequences made for a team's "all-star" athletes?

It is no secret that college and professional athletes receive preferential treatment in many areas of their lives. It is why they receive academic scholarships as college athletes and multi-million dollar contracts as professional players. Players' names and faces are plastered all over sports memorabilia, adding to their popularity and thus boosting their egos even more. However, perhaps there is one more powerful influence on an athlete's ego than his fans—perhaps it is the comradery he finds with fellow teammates who share in his glory and fame. An example of this concept does not come from an athlete, but rather one of the men behind the athlete—a coach. The example comes from Penn State University's cover-up of Jerry Sandusky's sex crimes. Sandusky had high status within the Penn State football organization—in addition to being a longtime coach for the famous Joe Paterno, he was also an alumnus football player of the university and respected for his nonprofit work in the community. Although Sandusky committed these actions against young boys rather than women, his criminal activity is the best and, perhaps the most dramatic, example of how one's status can cover up their sexually violent criminal history. According to the Hollander's theory of status and idiosyncrasy credits,

Sandusky's status is what protected him for so many years. Baily and Ferguson (2013) wrote about Hollander's theory, stating:

“Status is accumulated over time through an individual's contributions to the group, such as adhering to group norms, affiliating with the group for a long period, and performing well within a broad of group-related tasks. These behaviors elevate the individual's status within the group, in part, because they enhance the prestige of the group relative to other groups” (150).

As a coach, Sandusky had contributed to Joe Paterno's era as the Penn State head coach; after all, a head coach relies heavily on his staff to help develop players into talented athletes. As a member of Joe Paterno's “group,” Sandusky held a lot of prestige as defensive coordinator that he may not have had if he coached at another school. The Paterno era at Penn State held so much weight for the school that many believe Coach Paterno is the reason that the Sandusky sexual abuse allegations did not surface sooner. According to the Freeh Report (2012), officials of Penn State, including Vice President of Finance and Treasurer Gary Schultz, Penn State President Graham Spanier and Athletic Director Tim Curley, knew of Sandusky's actions in 1998, but did not begin to act on the problem until 2001. Even then, Paterno held lot of weight in the way the officials handled the matter. The Freeh Report (2012) states that on February 26, 2001 Schultz and Curley created a plan on how to deal with the Sandusky scandal. However, after speaking with Coach Paterno later that day, the plans were changed on February 27, 2001 so that officials would simply offer “professional help” to Sandusky and if he was cooperative informing his organization, The Second Mile, about his actions, they “would not inform the Department of Public Welfare of the allegation” (p. 63). This incident is problematic for a two reasons. First of all, the officials were legally obligated to report the incident under the Clery

Act which states that higher education institutions that receive federal funding have to report crimes that involve, among other offenses, sex offenses (Jeanne Clery Act, 1990, p. 2).

Secondly, Paterno clearly had too much influence in the situation based on the fact that Sandusky's "punishment" changed immediately after the school officials had a conversation with the head coach. According to the theory of status and idiosyncrasy credits, "when high-status individuals deviate, group members give them the benefit of the doubt out of their respect for their previous contributions and the group's established hierarchy (p. 151). The hierarchy of officials at Penn State clearly succumbed to the authority of Joe Paterno for fear of ruining the university's football culture. Although Jerry Sandusky ultimately received the punishment he deserved for his sex crimes, it took almost 15 years for him to be convicted because of his status as a college football assistant coach for one of the most prestigious head coaches in college football history.

A Need for Action

The NFL and NCAA are taking steps toward reducing sexual violence amongst its players, however there is still much work that needs to be done. The behavior change model of communication is one way in which the number of sexual violence crimes among football players could be reduced. According to Schiavo (2013), there are five stages of the behavior change model that "[describe] different 'levels of motivation or readiness to change.'" These stages include the precontemplation, contemplation, decision, action and maintenance (p. 48). In regards to football and launching a campaign against sexual violence, the precontemplation phase would include players learning about the harm of sexual violence and the possible consequences, even though they have no intention of changing their behavior. That is not to say that all football players will commit an act of sexual violence, but it also does not mean they are

working to reduce the influences that could lead them to be sexually violent. The contemplation would include a player choosing whether or not to adopt the measures and practices that are being presented that could help reduce sexual violence. The decision phase is exactly what it sounds like—the player would ultimately decide if they will adopt practices. The action phase is critical because it is when the athlete would put into practice these new, non-aggressive, non-violent off-the-field behaviors for a short time. These practices may include removing themselves from certain situations where large amounts of alcohol will be involved, or choosing not to take a woman home at the end of the night. This short time period is critical because if the athlete sees the positive impact of their actions, they are more likely to continue with those behaviors. However, if they find the practices too difficult to perform or fail to see the benefits, they may be more likely to fall back into aggressive behaviors that could potentially lead to instances of sexual violence. The final step is maintenance, which means that a person performs the behavior for more than six months. If an athlete could maintain healthy, non-aggressive behaviors for their entire career perhaps these actions would become so engrained into who they are as a person that it would also benefit them as a male and as a human.

The behavior change model is perhaps just one way in which awareness and action toward reducing sexual violence could be communicated to football players. Although it is unlikely that any form of communication or awareness will completely eradicate sexual violence among athletes, it is a step in the right direction.

Conclusion

There is not one specific or direct correlation between why football players cannot seem to “turn off” their aggression after they leave the field and why they act violently toward women.

A variety of influences play a role including peer pressure, locker room culture, entitlement issues and the United States' definition of masculinity and the cultural norms that are associated with that term. Additionally, the fact that an athlete's punishment for sexually violent crimes is oftentimes reduced so that it does not cost the team or league money does not help an athlete learn from their mistakes—mistakes that caused harm the victim physically, emotionally and mentally.

Although it would be difficult to eradicate the problem of sexual violence completely, raising awareness, and offering training and support to football players would perhaps teach them how to keep their aggression on the field, and not carry it off the field. Using a form of the behavior change model, this action could potentially reduce the number of football players that are accused of sexually violent crimes. While awareness is certainly being raised among the general public through campaigns such as “No More” and “It’s On Us”, the number of sexual violence cases against football players will not be reduced until the athletes themselves start changing their behaviors. To create a lasting effect, players would need to stay in the maintenance stage of the behavior change model, which would not only keep them out of trouble during their career, but afterwards as well.

Without proper intervention, this problem will continue to manifest itself among football players. There needs to be changes in locker room culture where men hold each other accountable to their actions, rather than focusing solely on the game. The peer pressure among teammates needs to stop, not only for the health of the athletes, but also for the women who are affected by this type of bullying. When a sexual violence allegation comes forth, it is imperative that teams act quickly and punish the player accordingly rather than keeping it hidden as Penn State did with Jerry Sandusky's actions. Until players realize the seriousness of their actions and

the importance of treating women with respect and as an equal, sexual violence will continue to be a problem among football players at all levels of play. Although an athlete might not be able to control the influences in their lives due to the nature of their sport, they can control their own actions.

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