NCAA Sanctions and Their Effect on Athletic Success

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NCAA Sanctions and Their Effect on Athletic Success

Abstract
Cheating is a part of everyday life and is prominent aspect in the competitive nature of business. The ultimate goal of cheating is to gain an advantage over your competitors and ultimately be successful. Even though cheating is considered wrong, why do people still do it? The risk of being caught and punished is seemingly outweighed by the reward of success from cheating. This concept is relevant in the sporting world as well with the violation of rules by college athletic programs. In the highly competitive division I level of intercollegiate athletics the goal is to be the best. To be the best you must have the best coaching staff and acquire the best players. Not only do programs have to fight other programs to get players, they must keep those players satisfied and eligible even if it means violating rules to do so. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violations are frequently occurring throughout the world of collegiate athletics at the division I level. These violations come at both the major and secondary level, while major violations provide a significant competitive advantage for programs. The NCAA committee of infractions hands down sanctions to violating programs to prohibit these competitive advantages and promote fair competition throughout, however their jurisdiction has been seemingly ineffective throughout history (Ribock, 2012). The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between NCAA sanctions for major violation and the future success of the violating programs. From the research I have conducted, I found that generally, teams remain unaffected when it comes to athletic success after sanctions set in place by the NCAA. The inadequate sanctions, lack of enforcement and monitoring of violations actually reinforce cheating in intercollegiate athletics because the sanctions often do not affect the future success of athletic programs.

These sanctions are often avoidable but through possible reform, the NCAA could improve their techniques to further enforce fair competition throughout. I expect this research to continue to provide evidence that sanctions handed down by the National Collegiate Athletic Association rarely effect the success of athletic programs on the field in the time period after. Gaining a competitive advantage over your opposition through the cheating process is something that will be nearly impossible to ever abolish and fully monitor, which leads to an increase in violations against the governing body of the NCAA, especially when the sanctions don’t always have lasting effects.

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Cheating is a part of everyday life and is prominent aspect in the competitive nature of business. The ultimate goal of cheating is to gain an advantage over your competitors and ultimately be successful. Even though cheating is considered wrong, why do people still do it? The risk of being caught and punished is seemingly outweighed by the reward of success from cheating. This concept is relevant in the sporting world as well with the violation of rules by college athletic programs. In the highly competitive division I level of intercollegiate athletics the goal is to be the best. To be the best you must have the best coaching staff and acquire the best players. Not only do programs have to fight other programs to get players, they must keep those players satisfied and eligible even if it means violating rules to do so. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violations are frequently occurring throughout the world of collegiate athletics at the division I level. These violations come at both the major and secondary level, while major violations provide a significant competitive advantage for programs. The NCAA committee of infractions hands down sanctions to violating programs to prohibit these competitive advantages and promote fair competition throughout, however their jurisdiction has been seemingly ineffective throughout history (Ribock, 2012). The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between NCAA sanctions for major violation and the future success of the violating programs. From the research I have conducted, I found that generally, teams remain unaffected when it comes to athletic success after sanctions set in place by the NCAA. The inadequate sanctions, lack of enforcement and monitoring of violations actually reinforce cheating in intercollegiate athletics because the sanctions often do not affect the future success of athletic programs.
These sanctions are often avoidable but through possible reform, the NCAA could improve their techniques to further enforce fair competition throughout. I expect this research to continue to provide evidence that sanctions handed down by the National Collegiate Athletic Association rarely effect the success of athletic programs on the field in the time period after. Gaining a competitive advantage over your opposition through the cheating process is something that will be nearly impossible to ever abolish and fully monitor, which leads to an increase in violations against the governing body of the NCAA, especially when the sanctions don’t always have lasting effects.

**Introduction**

In just about every facet of life there are those who are willing to cheat in order to receive what they want or to be the best. It seems that programs believe they have the ability to cheat without any repercussions. In the world of college athletics, cheating is just as relevant and comes in numerous forms. For coaches, players and athletic departments, the sanctions set in place by the NCAA for major violations seem to be relatively ineffective in deterring them which makes the could be the reward of ultimate success, bragging rights and even financial gain much easier to obtain. In the assessment of the relationship between NCAA sanctions and future success of athletic programs, the winning percentage of major revenue division I athletic programs in the years following the sanctions for major violations. I am performing this research in hopes to answer the ultimate research question of whether or not there is a relationship between NCAA sanctions and athletic program success on the field. This research is relevant because the analysis of the relationship between sanctions and success can reveal possible flaws in the monitoring and control systems the National Collegiate Athletic Association has in
place and can aid in possible reform (Potuto, 2010). By discovering the results of sanction and success, the public will be able to see whether or not the National Collegiate Athletic Association is following their purpose and mission of fair competition in intercollegiate athletics.

**Literature Review**

The NCAA is one of the major governing bodies of collegiate athletics. It is divided into multiple levels while this study focuses on major revenue division I Football Bowl-Subdivision (FBS) teams that have committed major violations since the year 2000. Teams are classified in the FBS if they are in a major conference which is eligible for a bid to the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) games. They are also classified by the specific number of scholarships that they can offer to individual player. The FBS consists of 120 football teams and 348 Men’s basketball teams, which were the taget of this research.

Under National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations, there are two types of violations that can occur within a program or athletic department; these are major and secondary violations which encompass numerous categories of wrongdoing. A major violation entices a drastic competitive advantage for a certain program or department while secondary violations are isolated and provide somewhat of a minor competitive advantage. Naturally, a secondary violation has a seemingly less severe structure of sanction than that of a major violation. The NCAA presents rigid definition for both forms of violations. A secondary violation is “an isolated or inadvertent violation that provides (or intends to provide) only minimal recruiting, competitive or other
advantages. Secondary violations occur frequently and are usually resolved administratively.” (NCAA pp.1, 2013) While a major violation “usually provides an extensive recruiting or competitive advantage. Alleged major infractions are investigated by enforcement staff and can lead to severe penalties against the school and involved individuals.” (NCAA pp.2, 2013) When assessing the reward being greater than the risk of sanction, most programs look long term and at the big picture. Often times sanctions set in place by the NCAA on violators both at the major and primary levels will not drastically affect the competitiveness of the program long term thus enticing coaches, players and departments to proceed with violations (Summary of ncaa, 2011).

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a governing body with rules and regulations in place to promote fair competition all throughout (Jones, 2012). These regulations include things such as amateurism, recruitment, improper benefits, drug use, financial aid, expenses, ethical conduct, and academic standards (NCAA, 2013). Although these regulations are in place, it is widely believed that violations occur on a daily basis at the Division I level and due to poor enforcement and sanction by the NCAA, violations continue to occur. Violations over the recent years in numerous programs haven’t seemed to hinder athletic success (Baxter, Margavio & Lambert, 1996). Major programs such as the University of Indiana, Boise State University, West Virginia University, Georgia Tech University, The University of Oregon, The University of Tennessee, Ohio State University, Samford University and The University of North Carolina have all been on the receiving ends of sanctions put down by the NCAA yet have remained successful on the field. These violations came in both the major and secondary variety from players, coaches and athletic departments. Even after the
violations, the programs continued to prosper athletically even after paying the price of sanction (Dohrmann; Hackney; Harden; Pierce; Polsinello; Sturgis; Thomas & Wagner, 2011). If violations of these rules result little to no sanction whatsoever, and the possible sanctions don’t have a drastic effect on the success of programs, there would be no reason to cease breaking of the rules. There are certainly violations occurring behind closed doors that are never exposed as departments and programs have adapted to the changing times and have been able to fly under the radar of NCAA jurisdiction (Otto, 2005).

On the other hand, major division I programs are often under more intensive watch and held to higher standards in the media making it much harder to avoid accusations and sanctions. Major revenue sports are constantly under the spotlight of the media and governance in comparison to non-revenue sports. This spotlight results in a higher scrutiny and a more intense watch under the NCAA to abide by regulations (Humphreys, 2012). Although this study is open to all sports at the division I level, most of the prominent cases of violations that result in public and severe sanctions are involve major revenue sports such as men’s basketball and football programs. This is often due to an idea of more competition not only for competition, but revenue reasons as well (Danna, 1998). There are cases of major violations in all sports however, in most women’s sports (both revenue and non-revenue) and non-revenue men’s sports the violations generally occur at the secondary level. With the stress on self-reporting of violations and the idea that secondary violations can be corrected within the institution itself rather than through NCAA involvement, these secondary violations rarely surface or have effect on the long term athletic success of programs (Winfree & McCluskey, 2008).
If simply bending or breaking a rule can result in the betterment or your team or program and potentially result in a national championship, the reward in itself will be worth the risk of sanction. This in a sense encourages cheating from the many working parts within athletic departments across the country. Some specific violations can have direct benefits relating to the success of programs of all varieties at the Division I level. A prime example of this would be a recruiting violation. In pursuit of a top prospect a school could offer improper benefits or even contact a player outside of the allotted time periods in order to persuade that player to commit to a school. In turn, this results in a competitive advantage for programs that violate which could result in success on the field. Another violation that could benefit direct success is how a school or program handles violations that have occurred (Winfield, 2010). The self-reporting of violations is encouraged by the NCAA but if a program was aware of violations that have occurred within, they could withhold that information from the NCAA. By withholding this information that is undetected by the governing body, they could avoid sanctions on the program and individual players themselves which could continue to result in their success on the field (Marsh, 2009).

The death penalty is the most severe form of sanction that the NCAA can enforce on a program for certain violations. It has only been used three times at the division 1 level of college athletics, most notably on the Southern Methodist University (SMU) football program in 1987. This penalty prevents the program from participating in their sport for an allotted period of time. (NCAA, 2013) Not only does this directly affect their ability to participate, but also the credibility of the program for the era after the death penalty as it is hard to recover from such a loss. When violations surfaced against SMU,
they were of both major and secondary stature and were mainly related to improper benefits and recruiting violations. The penalties were severe and cost SMU in the future of their football program. It resulted in the loss of the entire 1987 football season, loss of home contests in the 1988 season, loss of scholarships, no off campus recruiting for two seasons, and a limitation on the number of coaches hired on their staff. Some programs with severe violations have aroused the idea of the NCAA enforcing the death penalty once again. The University of Miami football program was under heavy speculation in the late 20th century with their unsung success in the football world and faced many allegations and penalties due to their player benefits and recruiting violations yet still didn’t receive the death penalty, which sources said seemed deserving (Fusco, 2011).

This lack of enforcement by the NCAA could be causing the continuation of violations.

The most prominent issues causing the reward to be greater than the risk involve the specific sanctions put in place by the NCAA. With minimal enforcement and sanctions put in place on violators, they are likely to become repeat offenders whether it be at the major or secondary level. Ribock stated “the NCAA has been enabling cheating with their lack of enforcement as they thought it set the example for every institution that violates the NCAA bylaws when it punished Southern Methodist University (SMU) with the “death penalty.” The situation at SMU, however, did not provide the necessary forum for the NCAA to send a message to coaches who violate NCAA bylaws. There should be stricter sanctions for coaches who violate each bylaw, and not just sanctions for outrageous and grievous violations such as those that occurred at SMU. The death penalty at SMU is an extreme example of the widespread cheating that goes on in college athletics; the principle, however, should be noted. If the NCAA does not punish coaches
who violate the bylaws, they will continue to do all they can to win, even if that means violating rules. Coaches know the NCAA will not strictly punish them unless they lie to NCAA investigators or commit a major violation” (Ribock, p. 393-394, 2011).

Violations at the division I level can begin during the recruiting process. To be successful on the field, a number of variables must work in your favor including having the most talented players. Coaches, alumni and athletic departments are willing to do whatever it takes to land the top recruits even if that means breaking the rules. Between the years of 2001 and 2011 53 of the 120 universities at the bowl subdivision level were found to have committed violations both major and secondary. Of those 53 schools, 21 committed recruiting violations which can range from duration of phone calls to improper benefits (Lederman, 2011). With the increase in competitive awareness and sport as a source of revenue to institutions, violations are on the rise as every school is fighting to be the best. The number of violations has more than tripled in the new millennium compared to the twenty years prior (McGee, 2011).

The next steps following recruiting a student-athlete to an institution are to keep that individual eligible and satisfied. Often, those steps require violating NCAA rules and regulations. A recent study of male division I football and basketball programs expressed that seventy percent of admitted to committing NCAA violations, typically at the secondary level. These secondary violations consisted of benefits to enhance the stay of athletes such monetary bonuses (under $50) and free meals. Major violations were prevalent in the study and consisted of improper benefits (cars, apartments, and cash) and academic fraud. Even with the student-athletes openly admitting to violating rules, every
participant in the survey expressed that neither them, their program, nor their athletic department were ever punished for the violations (Cullen, Latessa & Jonson, 2011).

Studies have shown that the inadequate sanctions set in place by the NCAA as a governing body in fact encourage and enable cheating. These inadequate sanctions make the reward seem that much greater than the risks, and at a competitive division one level, the price of winning is incredibly high. By enabling cheating within programs and athletic departments, the validity and fairness of competition plummets. It even contradicts the purpose of the NCAA, which is to promote fair competition throughout. (NCAA, 2013) By not carrying a big stick, the NCAA is allowing players, coaches and departments to either get away scot-free from the two tiers of violations, or setting in place minimal sanctions which do not affect the competitiveness or long term success of the program. A specific measure of the reward being worth the risk could be measured by win percentage and championships post-violations and sanction. If the sanction doesn’t seem to have an effect on these outcomes, it could seem that the reward of success was worth the risk of violating (Depken & Wilson, 2006). It is apparent that only the death penalty has proven to be an effective form of sanction on programs.

Coaches are often the biggest violators of the NCAA jurisdiction but have the easiest out. Many coaches jump ship to the professional level of their sport or even change schools when there is the first sign of sanction being set in place. This allows for them to first, avoid the sanction and its effect on the program whatever that may be and second, assure themselves another job in fear that they may lose their position at the current school. Most recently in college football and basketball, coaches have been leaving schools to turn professional or just resigning to avoid the liability. Chip Kelly,
former University of Oregon head football coach, just accepted a head coaching job in the National Football League (NFL) as violations surfaced within the program (Wagner, 2013). Both Pete Carroll, former head coach of the University of Southern California football team and Jim Tressel, former Ohio State University football head coach, left their programs at the first sight of violations to avoid sanction. Tressel resigned while Carroll left for a position in the NFL. The ability for coaches to jump ship avoiding sanction only entices them to violate more, making the reward worth the risk (Stangel, 2000). However, there are alternative variables that could be contributing factors to coaches jumping ship. Salaries in professional sports are often greater than that at the collegiate level as well as a greater opportunity. In these cases it could be coincidence that head coaches are leaving while violations are surfacing. Coincidence seems like a viable option when a coach leaves for a professional or better paying position as the opportunity may be greater. Suspicion arises when a coach simply resigns from his/her position because prima fascia would leave outsiders to believe that the coach is leaving to avoid sanction. Also, the two-tier structure of violations allows coaches to commit numerous amounts of secondary violations without any severe forms of sanction. Often times these secondary violations occur during the recruiting process giving schools an unfair advantage over the competition. The tiers leave no room for a middle ground as they only represent polar opposites, major violations could end a program while secondary violations could be shrugged off as if they were never even committed (Ribock, 2012).

A study of division I college athletics has shown that the increase in success and championships within a certain athletic program can lead to future violations as there is
often an uneven balance of sanction distributed to successful programs (Johnson, 1992). However, with the success and power of these programs comes the technique and ability to avoid sanction and fly under the radar of the NCAA watch. Most prominently in division one football programs, Bowl Championship Series (BCS) championships can directly lead to recruiting violations mainly at the secondary level. Statistics from this study show that recruiting violations increase in the season following a BCS championship because teams are fighting to rebuild and repeat (Dittmore & Crow, 2010). However, because of the poor enforcement and guidance of the NCAA, schools find the reward to be greater than the risk of sanction based on severity (Clark & Batista, 2009).

As it can be seen through recent violations in the realm of college athletics, the sanctions put in place by the NCAA do not have as much of a long-term effect on athletic programs. Some programs that commit secondary violations or non-recruiting related major violations are able to rebuild with sanctions such as post season bans. A post-season ban may result in the loss of motivation in an athletic department but it is a sanction that is easily rebounded from. In cases such as the Ohio State University Football team and University of Connecticut men’s basketball team, there have been minor sanctions set in place but their level of competitiveness has remained relatively stable throughout. The Ohio State University football program received a post-season ban, loss of scholarships and is currently under probation for secondary improper benefits violation yet continued to prosper in the 2012 football season posting an undefeated record (Penrose, 2012). The University of Connecticut men’s basketball program also received a single year post-season ban due to secondary academic progress violations (Winn & Hess, 2011). The Huskies still completed their season with 20-10 record. Both
programs success seemed to be unaffected on the field by the sanctions in place (Dorhmann & Epstein, 2011). Although they seemed to be unscathed on the field, these sanctions do have a price. Economic loss ensues as the schools lose out on major sources of revenue which occur during the post season. For Ohio State and the University of Connecticut, the attendance ratings for contests as well as merchandise sales were unaffected, in fact on the rise during the time of sanction however they still suffered in revenue losses (Sefner, Feinglass, 2012).

**Methods**

It is apparent throughout the history of collegiate athletics that major violations are a commonly occurring principle. The competitive and cutthroat nature of major division I athletics results in the strive for victory, at all costs. These costs often violate NCAA regulations which result in sanctions with the purpose to deter future violation. Over the last thirteen years, there have been multiple violations at the division I FBS level by major revenue sports and this research will identify the relationship between the sanctions and future athletic success of the violating programs.

**Research Tradition**

The most effective approach to this research will be the use of interpretivism. Interpretive approaches allow the researcher to explore and uncover explanations, rather than deduce them from measurements (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Using this approach I will be able to identify the relationship based on the analysis of athletic program success rates after violations rather than looking at measurements. While identifying this relationship, it is not necessarily represented numerically much like the positivist
approach. This data will require myself, the researcher, to search for the relationship based on the secondary data rather than using strictly quantitative information. The data will consist of both qualitative and quantitative information relating to NCAA violations, sanctions and program success. Using the critical interpretivism expressed by Chris Gratton and Ian Jones, I will examine the historical information of major NCAA violations in the last thirteen years in attempt to see the truth behind the relationship between NCAA sanctions and the future on-field success of the violating programs (Gratton & Jones, 2012). This relationship isn’t necessarily direct as there are many variables related to success, but through this interpretivism approach I will understand the existence of a relationship between success and sanctions.

This secondary information will come from the NCAA database of rules, regulations, and sanctions as well as their official reports on programs that have violated along with the sanctions handed to them. Academic journals and sources contain secondary information regarding past research done on lack of institutional control and inadequate sanctions by the NCAA and will relate to my hypothesis of the potential of athletic programs remaining successful on the field even after receiving sanctions from the NCAA. Many of these scholarly sources regarding past research and case studies on programs receiving sanctions from the NCAA, come directly from law review journals at accredited institutions such as the Marquette Law Review and the San Diego Law Review. The only qualitative measures in this study will be the different types of violations, while the quantitative measure will be of win percentages and win-loss records. I will also analyze team websites to explore their success post-violation and sanction to determine whether they were affected significantly. I will analyze the teams
win/loss records both overall and in conference and determine success based on improvement from previous years and an above .500 win percentage.

The secondary information in place will consist of; the specific rules and regulations in relation to violations, reports on schools that have violated, how those schools violated, the specific sport and position that performed the violation/s, NCAA reports on the violations and the sanctions put in place, news and team sources related to the cases, past studies conducted on NCAA jurisdictions and school violations, athletic records of athletic success both pre and post violation, and efforts of reform the sanction process of the NCAA. These violations will be both of major qualifications only in a variety of programs at the division I level of collegiate athletics at the revenue producing level. This revenue sports include men’s basketball and football only. After examining the violations and sanctions themselves, I will use the quantitative data from past studies and team sources regarding win percentage to further reinforce the hypothesis of sanctions leaving teams relatively unscathed on the field. This measure of success is the success of teams following their sanction; this success will be measured by win percentage and improvement. By having a qualitative measure of success (win percentages), it will make the possibility of relating the inadequate sanctions by the NCAA having an irrelevant effect on win percentage of violating programs. If a program continues to prosper even after sanctions have been set in place, it will reinforce the idea that the violation itself did not have a direct effect on the athletic success and competitiveness of the team.
Conceptual Framework

A majority of major violations occur at the division I FBS level as these renowned programs are often under a national spotlight. In addition to the spotlight, the competitive conferences they play in reinforce the idea of winning and often violating NCAA rules is the best way to gain a competitive advantage. There are a wide variety of violation types within the subcategories of major and secondary violations. There are over 4,000 secondary violations reported every year in division I athletics but they are often solved internally or result in no punishment. In addition, secondary violations are not available to the public through NCAA legislation. Due to the severity of major violations and their resulting sanctions, the NCAA has a public database of major violators throughout history.

With this information readily available, it seemed the majority of violations came from the major revenue sports including Men’s Basketball and Football. Through ineffective control and punishment by the NCAA, it seemed that sanctions were not deterring programs from violating rules as these violations continue to occur. The inadequacy of sanctions that are in place by the NCAA and the ease in which programs can avoid these punishments seemingly reinforce violations in college athletics (Ribock, 2012). In everyday life, if we could cheat in order to obtain what we wanted with little to no punishment would we do it? There is question of morality within the violations of NCAA regulations but it is important to understand the reinforcement of cheating and the relevance of cheating in college athletics. College athletics, especially major revenue programs are driven through success and monetary gain. Monetary gain is often the result
of success therefore programs are seemingly willing to do whatever it takes to gain competitive advantages over their opponents, even if that means violating rules.

Within this research exists many variables that could impact the results of the findings. Variables such as the time period of violation, type of major violation, type of sanction will all be controlled for in the data collection process. There are programs with multiple major violations that have received the heaviest form of sanctions and programs that are first time violators but both will be assessed as long as they fall under the major violation category. Program history in the analysis was the biggest concern as it would be tough to identify the relationship post-sanction of a team that has historically struggled before the violation itself. I will account for variables by separating the data by sport type (men’s basketball versus football) and by time period of the sanction. The history of athletic success will ultimately be a controlled variable in my comparison to success post-sanction. I will measure the success of programs by analyzing the win percentage of said programs in a three-year period prior to the sanction. To be eligible for the research the team will have to hold an above five-hundred win percentage in that time period. Controlling these variables will allow for a random sample, eliminating data fishing and providing a fair assessment for the research. By highlighting the year of the sanction, and comparing win percentages of programs in the three year periods before and after, it will level the comparison in attempt to find a potential relationship between sanctions and future success. Although the specific violations may vary from case to case and program to program, categorizing them in major and secondary violations will also provide a better comparison.
Overall, the lack of ability to properly enforce rules, regulations and sanctions by the NCAA has led to an increase in violations throughout the world of division I athletics. While focusing on the big picture, which is ultimately success and winning, coaches and athletic departments see the reward of committing a variety of violations to be greater than the risk of deflated athletic success. There have been active movements to pursue rule changes in the NCAA as well as increase both the monitoring of schools and the severity of sanctions. The NCAA and committee of infractions, which is in charge of assessing violations and placing sanctions, have been under scrutiny for a lack of institutional control. It is believed that this lack of control is resulting in unfair play and a lack of competitive balance at the division I level so the NCAA is working to reform itself and its rules (Carroll, Mitten, Musselman, 2012). By using past violations as a baseline and potential changes to the governing body that is the NCAA, it is hopeful to understand why the reward is seemingly greater than the risk to commit and the effect sanctions have on the athletic success of a program.

There are also variables that my research can control. It would not be possible to determine if the sanctions themselves directly affected the program’s success, rather it can only express a possible relationship between the sanctions and future success. Variables such as high quality players remaining on a team even with sanctions in place, high quality coaches remaining in programs and establishing reputation to limit the effects of the sanctions, and even the timing of the sanctions. If sanctions are placed down a team that has already maintained a quality recruiting class, they may be unaffected by the sanction. There are outside reasons beyond this study, like the influence
of academics, the could result in records improving, dropping, or remaining the same during NCAA sanctions, that cannot be controlled for.

**Theoretical Framework**

Previous research has stated that inadequate punishments by the NCAA have reinforced cheating and violation in college athletics. Through escape mechanisms such as transferring for players and “jumping ship” to other schools or professional leagues, key components of the violation process are able to avoid the repercussions of sanctions (Ribock, 2012). The punishments have been represented as ineffective as there has been no decrease in the number of violations over the years, rather an increase since the early 1980’s (Pututo, 2010). This is the result of poor regulation and enforcement of regulations by the NCAA as a governing body as it has been a target of reform since the increase in unfair competitive advantages (Marsh, 2009). Throughout history the NCAA has only exercised its ultimate power of the “death penalty” a handful of times, even though this seems to be the only effective form of punishment in hindering athletic success and deterring future violations (Otto, 2005).

As a result of athletic success, there is an increase in violations at the FBS level as the demand for future success skyrockets based on expectations (Clark & Batista, 2009). This further reinforces that in the cutthroat world of competitive and money driven major revenue athletics, that the demand for success on and off the field somewhat justifies cheating.

Using the previous studies done on NCAA sanctions and the motives behind violations, I formed a hypothesis based on the analysis of team success based on win
percentages. I believe that the relationship between NCAA sanctions for major violations and success on the field is also a factor in reinforcing programs to commit violations as these punishments are often ineffective in hindering athletic success. I believe that teams will remain relatively unscathed as far as win percentages in the years after NCAA sanctions have been handed down. In turn, it will be more likely to see major violations occurring throughout college athletics when past programs have not been harshly affected by the sanctions.

**Design**

For this research I will be studying samples of secondary data over an extended period of time. I will first be searching for records of major NCAA Division I football and men’s basketball programs that have sanctions against them from the year 2000 to 2013. These sanctions will be the result of classified major violations at the FBS level. Next I will analyze their performance records in the three year period prior to the sanctions to make sure that they are eligible for the data collection as teams with historically under-performing records would not be included in the research. For the programs eligible based on previous record requirement, I will test their records in the years after the sanction and any season with a win percentage above .500% would be considered successful. This interpretation of records after the sanctions will hopefully establish a relation between sanctions and the success on the field for athletic program. The purpose of these sanctions are to deter violations and produce fair competition throughout however, if there are no negative repercussions relating to on-field success, what is there to shy away from?
Procedure

The data collection regarding win percentages both prior to sanctions and after sanctions can be accessed on program websites as well as the NCAA databases. News sources and the NCAA database also hold the data related to the specific type and time periods of sanctions by the major revenue programs at the Division I level. This secondary data is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is qualitative as it pertains to the different NCAA bylaws and specific sanctions for programs while the quantitative nature lies within the time periods and win-loss records for the programs prior to sanctions and post-sanctions.

The data will be gathered and separated by sport (men’s basketball and football) as well as by the program itself as some sanctions hit both sports within the same athletic program. Then begins the comparison between previous win-loss records before the sanctions and the win-loss records after sanctions. The previous win-loss records are primarily gathered in order to see if the programs are eligible for the study. The purpose of the records post-sanction are to see if there was any increase or decrease after the sanctions were in place. Through past studies and research I expect to find that teams remain relatively unaffected as far as athletic success goes in seasons after NCAA sanctions.

Results

The data sample collected consisted of NCAA division I programs with reported violations since the year 2000. Of the two tiers of violation (major and secondary) this data pool consisted of only those with major violations of the two main revenue sports,
men’s basketball and football. The NCAA monitors 124 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) teams and these teams are separated from other programs by fitting certain requirements that were discussed more in depth in the literature review. Of these 124 FBS schools, 29 schools have received sanctions from the NCAA since the year 2000 for both men’s basketball and football. The purpose of sanctions is to hinder the competitive advantage gained by violating the jurisdiction of the NCAA, which would seemingly result in poor on-field performance for violating programs. I analyzed the team’s records before and after the sanctions were handed down to see if there was any lasting effect on the win-loss percentage post-sanction.

It was predetermined that in order to be considered for data analysis, the teams had to hold an above .500% win percentage in a three year period prior to the sanctions. The reason for this is that it would not fit the criteria if a team had poor on-field performance prior to the sanctions as that could be the reason for their lasting struggles rather than the violation itself. Of the 46 total violating programs (both men’s basketball and football), half did not meet the previous record requirement so their data was not included in the post-violation record analysis. Upon further research of those programs that did not reach the previous record requirement, over half of the programs records in both football and basketball have been on the rise showing the minimal effects of NCAA sanctions on programs, even though their data was not continued throughout. Other data that was included in the collection process were the records and analysis of programs that had not committed any violations or programs that have committed strictly secondary violations. Secondary violations are often self-reported and the sanctions are much less severe, if there are sanctions at all. For the final data analysis, there were 23 total
programs eligible for the research (18 total schools). There were a total of 14 football programs and 9 men’s basketball programs that have committed major NCAA violations from 2000-2013 and were eligible for analysis in this study. The green highlighted areas in the table below represent win percentages above .500% and are considered “successful” while the red highlighted columns are win percentages below .500% and are not successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Reported Date</th>
<th>Post-Sanction Record Year 1</th>
<th>Post-sanction Record Year 2</th>
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<td>11-Mar-11</td>
<td>(22-11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Tech</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>7-Jan-11</td>
<td>(5-7)</td>
<td>(8-5)</td>
<td>(7-5)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
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<td>1-Jan-03</td>
<td>(10-3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Southern California</td>
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<td>10-Jun-10</td>
<td>(8-5)</td>
<td>(7-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
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<tr>
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<td>FB-(7-7)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(12-1)</td>
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<td>(22-11)</td>
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<td>(17-11)</td>
<td>(25-12)</td>
<td>(21-12)</td>
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<td>Marshall University</td>
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<td>1-Oct-01</td>
<td>(19-13)</td>
<td>(24-8)</td>
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<td>BB-(17-14)</td>
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Overall, the data complied with my original hypothesis of teams and programs remaining relatively unscathed on the field as it relates to win percentage after NCAA sanctions. The NCAA jurisdiction is seemingly ineffective in its attempted punishment and deterrence of unfair competitive advantages as schools seem unscathed by sanctions. Of the nine total men’s basketball programs that received sanction, 87% of the seasons were deemed successful after the sanctions had been put in place. Of the 14 football programs included in the data, 92% of the seasons post-sanction were deemed successful expressing the relationship between sanction and on-field success. The relationship
showed that in almost unanimous fashion, athletic programs remain relatively unaffected on the field in the years following NCAA sanctions for major violations.

**Conclusions**

Through my research on NCAA sanctions and their effect on division I football and men’s basketball programs relating to on-field success, the data has provided evidence in my hypothesis of ineffective punishment by the governing body of college athletics. A large portion of the programs that committed major violations in this time period remained successful on the field in the years following the sanctions that they received.

The NCAA is the governing body for a total of 350 divisions I men’s basketball programs and 249 division I football programs, 124 of those at the FBS level. The NCAA encourages fair and equal competition throughout but as in any industry; there are many looking for a competitive advantage whether it is achieved in an ethical way or not. Cheating is something that occurs both behind closed doors and publically through the NCAA’s efforts to enforce their rules by handing down sanctions for the varying violations.

The violations are divided into two tiers, major and secondary. Major violations entice a drastic competitive advantage for a certain program or department while secondary violations are isolated and provide somewhat of a minor competitive advantage. The enforcement staff processes approximately 4,000 secondary violations per year. The penalties for secondary violations typically are not of a type that would have long term effects on a program. The sanctions for major violations are much more
severe and the purpose of them is to punish the programs so severely that it deters them from cheating. Much of the literature review discussed earlier reflects on inadequate punishments by the NCAA and the need for reform in the jurisdiction process as it is easy to avoid and escape. The privacy of programs and their ability to fly under the radar allows them to commit violations that the NCAA can’t see or prove.

In addition, there are avoidance techniques for players and coaches to remain unscathed from sanctions as they are able to leave the program before sanctions are in place. There have been numerous past studies done on these avoidance techniques as well as the inadequate punishment of the NCAA seemingly reinforcing cheating as the sanctions don’t have a lasting effect on the success of the programs, aside from the death penalty which seems to have a length recovery period. My study looked at the physical records of the programs with major violations in attempt to see if the sanctions had an effect on their immediate on-field win percentage in the time period following the sanctions. The past studies done on avoidance techniques and inadequate punishments are further reinforced through this data collection. This data has shown that in addition to avoidance techniques, cheating is further reinforced through the lack of lasting effects on the success of college athletic programs.

Since there had been no analysis of actual program records and success, just inadequate punishments as they relate to NCAA enforcement, I believe this research can further aid in the reform of NCAA jurisdiction. Throughout the years it has been proven ineffective, intermittent and resistant to change. Numerous efforts are being made in the area of reform to the NCAA as a governing body and I believe a numerical representation of programs committing the most severe types of violation, yet remaining unaffected on
the field, will further push the NCAA to reform their jurisdiction in an attempt to promote equal competition throughout. These efforts are being expressed through scholarly journals on various levels such as Adam Marsh in his call for dissent and further independence in the NCAA infractions process, which was shown in the Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal in 2009.

My interpretation of this data proves my hypothesis of teams remaining unaffected on the field following NCAA sanction, and in fact the NCAA is nearly reinforcing these schools to commit violations as it has been proven in the past that most programs that gain a competitive advantage through violation and are sanctioned, still remain successful on the field. Although it cannot be fully proven that the sanctions themselves result in a team’s failure or success, the data shows teams continuing to thrive on the field even after they have received sanctions for major violations against the NCAA.

With the assistance of past literature regarding NCAA jurisdiction, guidelines, past violations and NCAA reform I was able to conduct research analyzing the effect that NCAA sanctions had on certain programs winning percentages. I looked at both men’s basketball and football programs at the division I level that have committed major violations since the year 2000. Of the programs analyzed, around 80% remained unaffected on the field as it relates to win percentages in the seasons immediately following the NCAA sanctions. In a sense, this reinforced programs to gain unfair competitive advantages without a lasting effect on their success. I believe this information will further enforce the NCAA to reform itself as a governing body to enforce fair and equal competition throughout the world of collegiate athletics.
Future Recommendations

My future recommendations to aid further research into the relationship between NCAA sanctions for major violations and on-field success of athletic programs would provide an even more in depth analysis of the relationship.

Analyzing the complete history of major violators regardless the sport, history of success or time period would provide a well-rounded data pool to see the variety of results of athletic success in the years following the sanctions. In addition to athletic success, the identification of finances as they relate to major violations and sanctions would be a fascinating look into the financial side of college athletics. The NCAA and its programs are driven through massive amounts of finances and the relationship between the possible financial losses/gains that a program accrues during a probation period of NCAA sanctions would be an interesting look at the impact these sanctions can have.
References


NCAA. *Summary of ncaa regualtions- ncaa division 1.* (2011). Retrieved from \documentcenter.ncaa.org\DavWWWRoot\msaa\ama\Compliance\Compliance Forms\2011-12\DI_JK\jh_06282011


