

## CASE SUMMARY

### **UT Martin failed to monitor women's soccer, softball programs** *Coaches required student-athletes to return scholarship funds for reimbursements of donations and other purposes*

Violations occurred in the UT Martin women's soccer and softball programs when players who received midyear scholarship increases were required by coaches to return those funds or reimburse teammates for donations. The case was processed via negotiated resolution and was approved by the Division I Committee on Infractions.

Additional recruiting violations occurred in the softball program.

In women's soccer, the parties agreed that former women's soccer head coach Philip McNamara and former women's soccer assistant coach Leslie Gillies instructed every member of the team to donate \$300 to the Captain's Challenge, the fundraising effort for the school's foundation. McNamara then instructed four student-athletes — who had received \$3,000 each in midyear scholarship increases — to return their increases to him or Gillies, or directly to teammates, to reimburse donations made by other members of the team, plus women's soccer staff members and individuals affiliated with the program. The redistribution of the funds resulted in impermissible scholarship reductions for the four student-athletes and impermissible benefits for nine student-athletes who received reimbursements for their donations.

Similar violations occurred in the softball program where three student-athletes received midyear scholarship increases of \$10,000 total. The parties agreed that former softball head coach Brian Dunn instructed the student-athletes to return \$4,000 of those scholarships back to him to fund team expenses. The investigation did not establish how those funds were ultimately used, including whether the money was directed to team-related expenses. Again, the return of the scholarships constituted impermissible scholarship reductions.

Additional violations occurred in the softball program when Dunn and former softball assistant coach (and current head coach) Chelsea Farmer emailed more than 500 prospects before Sept. 1 of the junior year of high school inviting them to off-campus camps called "prospect events." Dunn had created and oversaw the prospect events and directed staff — including Farmer — to bypass the school's normal camp procedures in arranging the events, including registration and payment (which ultimately went to Dunn).

Due to their personal involvement in the violations, McNamara and Dunn violated head coach responsibility rules. Additionally, McNamara, Dunn and Gillies violated ethical conduct rules when they knowingly impermissibly reduced scholarships by instructing

student-athletes to return their scholarships to coaches or directly as impermissible benefits to other student-athletes.

Finally, the school and the enforcement staff agreed that the school failed to monitor its women's soccer and softball programs when it did not adequately ensure compliance with financial aid and recruiting rules and did not detect the recruiting violations in softball.

The violations were classified as Level II-Mitigated for the school and Gillies, Level II-Standard for Farmer, and Level II-Aggravated for McNamara and Dunn.

The following penalties apply:

- One year of probation.
- A fine of \$25,000.
- A reduction of one women's soccer scholarship or one roster spot for the 2025-26 academic year.
- A two-week ban on softball recruiting activities during the 2024-25 academic year.
- A two-year show-cause order for Dunn, during which any employing member school must restrict him from all athletically related activities. If he is employed in an athletically related position during this time, he will be suspended from 50% of the softball regular season contests during his first year of employment.
- A two-year show-cause order for McNamara, during which any employing member school must restrict him from all athletically related activities. If he is employed in an athletically related position during this time, he will be suspended from 50% of the women's soccer regular season contests during his first year of employment.
- A one-year show-cause order for Gillies, during which any employing member school shall suspend her from two regular season women's soccer contests.
- A one-year show-cause order for Farmer, including a five-game suspension (served in February 2025).

Members of the Committee on Infractions are drawn from the NCAA membership and the public. The panel members who reviewed this case are:

- Cassandra Kirk, chief magistrate judge in Fulton County, Georgia.
- Kay Norton, chief hearing officer and president emerita of Northern Colorado, chair of the Committee on Infractions.
- Vince Nicastro, deputy commissioner and chief operating officer of the Big East Conference.