



## Social Media and Team Athletes

This guide isn't going to tell you what to do, you're smart people, you can make your own decisions. It is just going to lay out social media reality; the actions and consequences so that you can actually make decisions.



The reality is that college coaches, admission officers, landlords and potential employers use Social Media as a character check. Local fans will scrutinize your Social Media and local media will follow you. You have to make some decisions about what your personal social media rules are and then impose the discipline to follow them.

### Social Media Reality

Once you have sent a post, tweet or pic into the cyber world of Social Media **you no longer have control over it.**

- Everyone at every level of the media has overflowing files of “deleted” tweets, post, pic and vids. We often take screenshots of a tweet that is deleted within a couple of minutes.
- 90% of sexting pictures sent privately ended up being sent to another account or a dropbox or site. (IWF study)

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- High School athletes have been stripped of State titles for one tweet that was deleted within 30 minutes.

The language you use with your friends is not generally public language. Social Media is public. You are dealing with a wide audience.

**"If you have a social media nickname or something on your Twitter account that makes me sick, I'm not going to recruit you. I've turned down players based on their Twitter handles. I've turned down players based on Twitter pictures."**

Bret Bielema

Derogatory comments are taken very seriously on social media. It is generally believed that they indicate your true convictions.

- Racist, misogynistic comments draw attention quickly.
- You may not think that you are being racist or misogynistic but there are thousands of people who thought they were joking and subsequently lost their jobs or positions because others were really offended.
- Olympians have lost their spot and players have had pro contracts rescinded because of ONE tweet.

When you RT, share or like a tweet or post you are endorsing it. We see a lot of high school athletes get crossed off of "potential" lists because of their RTs.



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**Snaps do not go away in 1 -10 seconds.** Snaps remain on the SnapChat server for a minimum of 24 hours and you can pay to see the Snap again. And, Snaps stay on the server until everyone who is tagged has opened the Snap; that can be a very long time.

**Sexting** We're not making a moral judgement, **Sexting is a legal problem.** If you are under 18 Sexting is not legal.

In some states, like Texas and Pennsylvania, there are specific sexting laws which impose milder penalties for sexting. If your state does not have a sexting law then any charges are filed under the Child Pornography Laws and that can have a lasting effect on your life. In states without specific Sexting laws it is up to the Prosecutor to determine the charges. In a recent sexting case in Colorado the Prosecutor decided not to severely punish the hundreds of students involved. In a similar sexting case in Long Island, NY the Prosecutor did seek sever punishment, even for kids who had been sent pictures without asking for them.

Be aware that the psychology of our culture is that males will be blamed for initiating sexting faster than females will be.

**Lock your phone and password your Social Media accounts.** People get ahold of your phone and, as a joke, send out something that hurts your future. They don't hurt you on purpose, they think they're being funny. Having a scholarship pulled and losing over \$100,000.00 in college money isn't laughable.



Warren Pughsley @CoachPugs426 · 21m

@HSSocialMedia yep! Saw a kid lose a scholarship because of a foul post his friend made & he shared but didn't necessarily believe himself.



[View conversation](#)

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**Don't use social media for 2 hours before and 2 hours after a competition.** Emotions run high during that time and it's too easy to send something out in the heat of the moment that shouldn't be out there.

Realize that everyone has video capability and everyone will use it. Don't assume that anything you do with a group of people is "private." Do assume that it will end up as a viral video.

**Don't feed the Trolls.** There are always critics. Generally, the haters have never played your game, or have played it poorly. Ignore them. Why would you care what someone who has never stepped foot on the field thinks?

**Don't let the kids without a future ruin yours.** There are groups of people who will try to draw you into a Twitter rant or will goad you. People with great futures are never in those groups. Block the idiots.

There are three decisions a team needs to make collectively on Social Media:

1. Is our individual Social Media going to be a representation of our team's culture?
2. Do we want to be just kids in high school or do we want to be a brand?
3. Do the majority of us want to go to college or get a job after high school?

If the answer to those questions is "yes" then, as a team, you have to set some rules. The most important rule, and one that should be sacred to all, is what stays with the team and coach and what can be public. That's a discussion every team should have.

## To Build Your Brand or Your Team's Brand on Social Media:

1. Follow and share posts and tweets from the colleges that the Juniors and Seniors are interested in. It doesn't matter how many followers the college coach has, people who consistently share information will be noticed. That helps your teammates and yourself.



2. Thank your fans. If a group of people made an hour trip to see your team play, thank them. That will be appreciated.
3. Support the other teams and athletes in your school. If you follow the best professional athlete accounts, you'll see that they often have pictures from another sport that has their home base in the same town.

## Building Your Own Brand for College

1. Go through all the stupid stuff you posted when you were 12 and delete it.
2. If someone tags you in a tweets or post that is trouble, delete it from your feed.
3. Actively support the teams of the colleges that you are interested in.
4. Don't share illegal activity. (Yes student athletes often do that.)
5. If you've been injured don't try to hide that, put a positive spin on it and talk about how hard you're working in Rehab.
6. Try to balance the positive and negative in your feeds.

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7. Show the whole person. Show the work in the weight room, your help with outside activities, your religious groups or your chemistry class.
8. Don't answer those Twitter group personal questions. (There's no reason total strangers should know what your favorite color is, you are wasting time that athlete's don't have to waste.)
9. Take JJ Watt's advice; always think before you put anything out in the Cyber World.

"Read each tweet about 95 times before you send it. Look at every Instagram post about 95 times before you send it," Watt said. "A reputation takes years and years and years to build and it takes one press of a button to ruin it. Don't let that happen to you. You've done so much work, you've put in so much effort. Don't let one moment ruin your entire life because you wanted to be funny or you were mad or because you had a mood."