

# How Athletics Departments Can Prevent Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

*3 Keys to Preventing Harm & Developing Your  
Athletes for Positive Lives*



**CultureStrength**

*Science-Based Prevention & Personal Development*

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## A Difficult Task

Athletics Departments are in a difficult spot. Sexual assault and domestic violence are two of the most complicated issues in the world, and athletics departments are tasked with preventing them.

It can feel unfair, and in a sense it is unfair. Even most experts don't know how to prevent these behaviors. They only know how to talk about them as problems.

## The Stakes are High

For a collegiate athletic department, or for a football or basketball team, the stakes are high.

- Life-altering harm to the person violated or abused
- Reputational harm to the program and institution
- Tremendous drain on resources of money and time

Even though awareness is at an all-time high, these issues have not gone away. ADs and coaches are unsure of what more to do.

Here are three ways of viewing these issues that will help you strengthen your approach to preventing harm and protecting your institution.

### **1 True Goal - Work Backward from Your End Goal**

**Compliance is important, but it's not exactly your end goal.**

Meeting compliance is one of your minimum standards. You need to provide training to certain people. But your end goal is something greater.

For example, if you meet NCAA compliance but have a major case of assault, it's easy to see that your larger goal was to prevent harmful actions from happening.

That subtle distinction can mean the difference between an effective system of prevention and one that meets compliance but still leaves you at significant risk because it's not effective enough.

For example, the typical prevention steps like raising awareness, rules, and training on procedures have been in place where every major scandal has occurred.

Besides physical violence and threats, smartphones add a whole new level of risk because some people who would never be physical violent will rationalize unethical actions with their phone.

When you work backwards from your real goal of preventing such a long list of harmful actions, it helps you align priorities and decisions in a way that makes your overall approach more effective.

## **2** True Opponent - Know Your Opponent in this Area

**We need to know what we're up against.**

If we underestimate our opponent, we can put too much confidence in a strategy that won't work. Just like a scouting report needs to be accurate, it is critical to know what we're up against when it comes to preventing sexual misconduct and domestic violence.

Interestingly, what we're up against is not just the problem of psychopathy. *It's worse than that.* The major problem is that even otherwise good and decent people can have blind spots and

can justify or rationalize harmful actions. Good people can fail to recognize warning signs of a problem and fail to respond appropriately.

That means it's a much higher percentage of your population who could fail to act right, whether it be by causing the harm, having a blind spot about intervening, or making an error in judgment in their response.

To better protect people and your reputation, we must approach it more like we approach going up against the toughest opponent we've ever faced. When we know we're going up against our toughest opponent, we have a healthy fear that if we don't do almost everything right, we will lose.

*The complexity of human decision-making and behavior is a tough opponent. We cannot win without a next-level strategy that is proactive and sophisticated.*

### **3 True System - Go from Having a Speaker to Having a System**

**The opponent we are up against means there is no speaker who can be enough.**

I respect coaches and administrators who bring in speakers. We are speakers ourselves. But for the results we need, it will take going from having a speaker to having a system.

Preventing issues as complex as sexual misconduct and domestic violence calls for a carefully designed system of training and personal development. It must prepare young people for real-world challenges.

A great speaker can be one helpful piece. But there is a risk of a false sense of accomplishment from “bringing in a speaker.” We believe any other speaker will tell you the same thing if they are being honest and operating out of integrity.

There is too much at stake to embrace wishful thinking or to let our guard down.

**Caution:** *This does not mean the solution is an overly intensive series of programs on sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and hazing that create noise and resistance. A comprehensive curriculum can miss the mark as well if it is not designed to connect with your student athletes.*

The point is to do what will be *effective* at influencing healthy and ethical behavior.

Going from having a speaker to having a system means having a developmental system that your student athletes, coaches, and staff appreciate and respond well to, just like they would a great speaker.

## The Good News

The good news is you can develop your student athletes for positive lives at the same time you are helping to protect people and your teams. People like being equipped to be successful at navigating the challenges of their social life and relationships.

### About The Complete Strength System

You have a science-based system for optimizing the physical development of your athletes. The Complete Strength System was built so you can also have a science-based system for optimizing the development of the other strengths needed for life outside their sport, especially for their social life & relationships.

When young people are equipped with the strengths to navigate healthy social lives and personal relationships, they benefit for the rest of their lives.

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**See our Athletics page at [CompleteStrengthSystem.com](http://CompleteStrengthSystem.com).**

**Now scheduling for trainings and consulting.**

[info@culturestrength.com](mailto:info@culturestrength.com)

## About the Developers and Lead Trainers

### **Aaron Boe, M.S.Ed.**



Aaron Boe is a national consultant, trainer and speaker who has spent twenty-years studying the science of human decision-making and behavior. In 2001 he began studying the problems of sexual assault and domestic violence to see if there are ways to improve programs to prevent harm from occurring in the first place. His workshops have won multiple awards and he created The Complete Strength System of trainings and discussions for student athletes and athletics departments. He is the award-winning author of *In a Relationship: Avoid the Worst & Experience the Best in Your Social Life & Relationships*.

### **Kendrick Gholston, M.S.**



Kendrick Gholston is a former NFL player and University of Louisville alum who understands the challenges athletes face at every level. After his career as a professional athlete he decided to switch fields to post-secondary education. He spent over a decade working in student athlete development, including an emphasis in violence prevention. He is a key part of the Complete Strength System of helping coaches and athletic departments prevent problems off the field and develop their student-athletes.

**Contact us Today**

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