

# The Lack of Institutional Control in a Sport Organization

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### Background

During the 1950s, Miami, Florida was the center of racial and cultural tensions. In ESPN's 30 for 30 film titled *The U*, Corben and Spellman (2009) note that the city was full of drugs, prostitution, and murders. White police officers were acquitted after killing black people, leading to riots experienced by everyone living in Southern Florida.

The University of Miami was a predominantly white university, but the head football coach during the 1980s, Howard Schnellenberger, began recruiting black players from what were considered the "ghettos" surrounding Miami. His recruits were passionate about football because it was an escape route from the horrors they witnessed throughout their lives. They were determined to succeed. When the Hurricanes won their first National Championship title under Schnellenberger in 1983, the city of Miami revolved around football and nothing else (Corben & Spellman, 2009).

### Cause of the Issue

The University of Miami experienced conflict within their organization because it allowed outsiders who never attended "The U" to interact with the athletes as often as the coaches. By not setting distinct boundaries between the university's president, athletic department, football program, and the boosters, the University of Miami lost control of its institution.

### Consequences

#### Short-Term Effects (Corben & Spellman, 2011)

- Suspensions- Eight football players were suspended, seven of who were starters.
- Bowl Ban- The University of Miami instilled a self-imposed bowl ban for one year.
- Lack of Institutional Control- The NCAA charged the university with Lack of Institutional Control.

#### Long-Term Effects (Corben & Spellman, 2011)

- Deterring future recruits- Other universities used the period during the investigation to deter high school players from attending the University of Miami. "The U" lost numerous potential recruits over a period of three years while under investigation, which led to no real sanctions.

### The Issue

#### Nevin Shapiro

The most recent large issue at the University of Miami was a scandal involving Nevin Shapiro and the football program. Shapiro was involved in a \$930 million Ponzi scheme. Prior to be arrested, he had given the Miami athletic department \$150,000, giving him close access to the athletes ("Players got gifts," 2011).

#### NCAA Violations

- Money
- Cars
- Prostitutes
- Meals
- Nightclub outings
- Yacht parties



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### Theory

Buffering is a term that "refers to attempts to protect the technical core- the part of the organization primarily responsible for production- from fluctuations in the environment" (Slack and Parent, 2006). Typically, buffering is used to service machinery, provide training labor, or making sure things are cost effective (Slack and Parent, 2006). However, it can be applied to people within an organization. If the University of Miami had protected its athletic department and administrative unit (i.e. the president, the coaches, etc.) from being attached to outsiders like Shapiro, the scandal could have been completely eliminated. Buffering calls for trained personnel to be in the organization and be capable of identifying problems and reducing the risk of potential hazards (Slack and Parent, 2006). Nevin Shapiro was a clear source of potential hazard simply because of the amount of money he provided the University of Miami, along with his close access to the collegiate athletes.

### Goal

The first goal of my paper was to understand why the University of Miami has had so many problems throughout the years, especially within the football program. The second goal was to learn how large universities can work to prevent their athletes from breaking NCAA rules.

### Evaluation

The University of Miami could have avoided the Nevin Shapiro issue if they had been more conscious of what was occurring. Miami is a city full of white collar crime and the dollar amounts that Shapiro was giving the University of Miami were obscene, especially since he had no ties to the university. The U should have controlled the environmental uncertainty that Shapiro brought to the organization. Anyone with his status and access should be labeled as a potential hazard by large organizations like The U.

Unfortunately, the University of Miami, like many other institutions, failed to identify the risk of allowing Shapiro a tremendous amount of access to the athletes and athletic department. By the time the truth about Shapiro was released, it was too late for the University of Miami to eliminate the problem and instead was forced to suffer the consequences.