

College Basketball Scandal

By

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Following a two year FBI investigation, in September of 2017 the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York indicted ten people tied to major college basketball programs including four assistant coaches at major basketball programs and a representative of sports apparel company Adidas. The four coaches indicated were Auburn University coach Chuck Person, University of South California coach Tony Bland, University of Arizona coach Emanuel "Book" Richardson and Oklahoma State University coach Lamont Evans.

The essence of the charges were that the coaches received cash bribes from athlete advisors, business managers and financial advisors in return for the coaches steering particular players to the bribe payers for representation. Additionally, the indictments alleged that an executive of Adidas paid bribes to high school basketball players and their families to obtain their commitments to attend particular schools that had sponsorship agreements with Adidas.

The charges in the indictments included bribery, conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering. While federal bribery charges generally apply to public officials, these particular charges were brought pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 666 which prohibits bribery related to organizations that received federal grants or funding. Because federal funds are commonly received by colleges and universities, the Justice Department was authorized to pursue charges that might otherwise be more readily characterized as violations of NCAA rules and regulations. It is important to note that while the Justice Department has the ability to utilize court authorized wire-taps and other investigative techniques, the NCAA's power to investigate violations of its rules and regulations are quite limited.

According to Manhattan U.S. Attorney Joon H. Kim, "The picture of college basketball painted by the charges I s not a pretty one – coaches at some of the nation's top programs taking cash bribes, managers and advisors circling blue-chip prospects like coyotes and employees of a global sportswear company funneling cash to families of high school recruits. For the ten charged men, the madness of college basketball went well beyond the Big Dance in March. Month after month, the defendants allegedly exploited the hoop dreams of student-athletes around the country, treating them as little more than opportunities to enrich themselves through bribery and fraud schemes. The defendants' alleged criminal conduct not only sullied the spirit of amateur athletics, but showed contempt for the thousands of players and coaches who follow the rules, and play the game the right way."