

## HOW DOES ORGANIZED CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT VIEW COLLEGIATE SPORTS WAGERING?

(This is a first of a series of articles on sports wagering by Tom French, a TCG alliance. Tom began the FBI's sports wagering prevention program for professional and collegiate sports, is considered an expert on organized crime and sports bribery, and has appeared on ESPN Sports Center and other national media programs to speak on this subject. In the next newsletter, Mr. French will talk about specific investigative techniques for the compliance personnel).

Sports Illustrated reported that after two months of research into sports gambling, it was impossible to visit a college campus and not find sophisticated on- or off-campus book-making operations with a large student clientele that included athletes. However, since gambling is a "victimless crime," does anybody care?

If you believe that illegal gambling is a victimless crime, speak to the wife of a man who wagered their mortgage money on a sporting event or speak to the mother of a man who was found dead in the trunk of an automobile who was unable to pay his wagering bets. They will tell you about the real victims of gambling.

How does organized crime view the student-athlete? Their strategy is simple. If you control the athlete, you control the game. The criminal element believes that it has the ability to compromise the athlete and that the athlete has the ability to compromise the outcome of a contest. Athletes are compromised through the use of money, drugs (especially alcohol) and sex. In order for these compromisers to be utilized, an opportunity is needed. The combination of the opportunity and the consequences of the compromisers increases the likelihood that the athlete would engage in behavior that he/she previously would not have considered. (Interestingly, the same approach often is used by unethical sports agents).

Law enforcement targets the criminal element and not athletes. However, if an athlete is involved with the criminal element, that athlete becomes a subject of a criminal case through the use of court-authorized wiretaps, undercover operatives, informants and Federal grand juries. No requirement exists for the FBI to notify the institution or campus law enforcement about an undercover operation on the college's campus. While this customarily is done at some point in the operation, the FBI will not compromise its investigation, especially if undercover male or female operatives are being utilized.

Law enforcement views sports wagering as a serious problem that breeds other criminal acts. It also believes that athletes do not understand their vulnerability and will expose themselves to the opportunity and the compromisers, probably because they have faith in their discipline. As a result, a NCAA member needs to reduce the opportunities for the student-athletes to be exposed to these compromisers and educate them on their effects.

(Mr. French is available through TCG to conduct sports wagering audits, and educational sessions for campus administrators, student leaders, campus law enforcement officials, athletics administrators, and student athletes).