



BETTER ATHLETES  
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# In Light of Incognito: How to Combat Hazing and Bullying

The firestorm around Richie Incognito, the Miami Dolphins player accused of bullying teammate Jonathan Martin with racial slurs and threats of violence raises the profile on **hazing, bullying and locker room culture** throughout sports. Often passed off as a team-bonding exercise or a rite of initiation to “welcome” new teammates, hazing is actually one of the most damaging experiences possible for a team, the players being hazed and even the hazers themselves.

Hazing is so problematic at all levels of sports that PCA now offers an anti-hazing component within our workshops. Here are **pointers for coaches, parents, athletes and administrators**:

- **Coaches and administrators** should have a **zero-tolerance policy**. Share that policy, in writing, with everyone involved in your program.
- **Coaches** can cultivate camaraderie by teaching teammates to respect each other. Emphasize this at every practice and game, because operating in an environment of respect will improve **individual and team performance** and lend to better teaching and learning of life lessons through sports.
- **Parents** should check in frequently with their youth athletes, using **open-ended prompts**, such as “Tell me about practice.” Listen and watch carefully for any change in your child, such as suddenly not wanting to practice or participate in team activities.
- **Athletes** should heed these comments from PCA Chief Impact Officer Tina Syer, who spearheaded development of PCA’s anti-hazing workshop components: “**The strongest team leaders don’t just refrain from hazing; they actually shut it down** when they see it. It takes moral courage to intervene. Even if you were hazed, that does not mean you should continue this ‘tradition.’ Have the moral courage to break the cycle.”

Here are links to additional PCA Resources on this topic:

[Google+ Hangout, Phasing Out Hazing >>](#)

[“Today’s Take” items from Nov. 4-Nov. 14, 2013 >>](#)

[Sample Honoring the Game script >>](#), in which coaches emphasize ROOTS (respect for Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self).

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