NCAA issues notice about nutritional-supplement provision
The NCAA News Online, May 23rd, 2005

NCAA membership services staff has posted an educational bulletin on the Legislative Service Database online (LSDBi) regarding the provision of nutritional supplements to student-athletes.

The bulletin serves as a reminder that in accordance with NCAA Bylaw 16.5.2.g, only non-muscle-building nutritional supplements may be given to student-athletes for the purpose of providing additional calories and electrolytes, as long as the supplements do not contain NCAA-banned substances.

The issue has merited additional attention recently in light of the increasingly changing supplement market and requests by the membership for further assistance in understanding the legislation.

Many supplement products contain NCAA-banned substances that are not always recognized as such or included in the supplement labels. Thus, student-athletes have tested positive for NCAA-banned substances by ingesting products they obtained in retail stores, gyms and over the Internet.

The Pacific-10 Conference first introduced legislation in 1999 to address concerns about the growing distribution by athletics departments of nutritional supplements that could be considered performance-enhancing and potentially harmful to student-athlete health and safety. The NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports recommended language to identify as permissible only those nutritional supplements that fall into one of four categories: carbohydrate/electrolyte drinks, energy bars, carbohydrate boosters, and vitamins and minerals. Those permissible categories, except for vitamins and minerals, were selected because they do not create a competitive advantage (through strength/muscle building) -- they provide for hydration and calorie replacement only. The vitamins and minerals category was created because of their general acceptance by the public and their widespread inclusion in foods.

"The legislation was intended to curtail the growing and rampant provision of supplements to student-athletes that contained performance-enhancing
or muscle-building ingredients and potentially could put a student-athlete at risk," said Mary Wilfert, NCAA assistant director of education outreach.

"Allowing institutions to provide those classes of supplements met the need to replace calories and fluids in student-athletes who expended them in large amounts during training and competition. By limiting distribution to those four classes, the legislation intended to root out supplements that were not necessary to calorie and fluid replacement and could be deemed to provide an unfair advantage."

Shortly before the nutritional-supplement legislation became effective, the NCAA membership services staff provided additional education about the new bylaw. The staff published a Legislative Assistance column in the August 14, 2000, issue of The NCAA News, emphasizing again the intent of the legislation to prohibit an institution from providing nutritional supplements unless they are non-muscle-building and are included in one of the four classes identified in the bylaw.

The article also pointed out other important factors, including:

* The legislation reflects a philosophy that proper nutrition based on scientific principles is one of the tenets to optimal performance.

* It is not permissible for an institution or an institutional staff member to sell or arrange the sale of muscle-building supplements to student-athletes.

* A permissible supplement can contain no more than 30 percent of its calories from protein (the percentage of calories from protein can be determined by multiplying protein grams by four and dividing that by the total calories in the product).

Finally, the article provided two lists -- one that included the permissible classes, and another containing examples of impermissible nutritional-supplement ingredients. The latter was not an exhaustive list, but rather a list of common ingredients as identified by the competitive-safeguards committee, based on anticipated questions from the membership.

In that same edition of the News, an official interpretation was published emphasizing those elements of the application of the legislation.

"The legislation from its inception was intended to protect student-athlete well-being," Wilfert said. "Because the supplement industry is not regulated in the same manner that food and drugs are, these products carry a risk in adversely affecting our student-athletes."
Wilfert noted that the NCAA posts the following warning: "Many nutritional/dietary supplements contain NCAA-banned substances. In addition, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not strictly regulate the supplement industry; therefore, purity and safety of nutritional/dietary supplements cannot be guaranteed. Impure supplements may lead to a positive NCAA drug test. The use of supplements is at the student-athlete's own risk. Student-athletes should contact their institution's team physician or athletic trainer for further information."

**Permissible/impermissible products**

To assist the membership in accurately applying Bylaw 16.5.2.g, posted below are two lists of supplements: one permissible for the institution to provide, the other containing examples of impermissible ingredients.

It is important to note that when reading the ingredient label of a supplement product, the listing of any impermissible ingredient makes the product impermissible. Further, when considering the product's protein content, the reader should consider the listing of the word "protein" and the number of grams included. If any other parts of a protein are listed separately, as in any amino acid or chain, it would not be permissible for an institution to provide such a supplement to its student-athletes. If the product lists a "proprietary protein" or "protein blend," then this is not protein from a whole food source, but rather a concoction created by the manufacturer, and in most instances includes impermissible supplement ingredients.

**Permissible**

- Vitamins and minerals
- Energy bars
- Calorie replacement drinks (for example, Ensure, Boost)
- Electrolyte replacement drinks (for example, Gatorade, Powerade)

**Impermissible**

- Amino acids (including amino acid chelates)
- Chondroitin*
- Chrysin
- CLA (Conjugated Linoleic Acid)
- Creatine/compounds containing creatine
- Garcinia Cambogia (Hydroxycitric Acid)
- Ginkgo Biloba
Ginseng
Glucosamine*
Glutathione
Glycerol **
Green tea
HMB (Hydroxy-methylbutyrate)
Melatonin
MSM (Methylsulfonyl Methane)
Protein powders
St. John's Wort
Tribulus
Weight-gainers
Yohimbe

* It is permissible for an institution to provide glucosamine and/or condroitin to a student-athlete for medical purposes, provided such substances are provided by a licensed medical doctor to treat a specific, diagnosed medical condition (as opposed to prescribing them for preventive reasons).

** Glycerine or glycerol as a binding ingredient in a supplement product is permissible.

**Applying Bylaw 16.5.2.g

In considering whether a supplement product shall be considered permissible under this legislation, a member institution should:

- Review the labeling ingredients to determine if the product meets the criteria set out within the legislation;
- Review the ingredients for any banned substances (see www.ncaa.org/health-safety);
- Determine whether the product contains any of the examples of "impermissible" ingredients referenced earlier;
- Determine if the product contains more than 30 percent calories from protein.

If at that time the member is still uncertain as to whether the terms of the legislation have been met, and in consultation with the institution's compliance office, the member should contact NCAA membership services for interpretive assistance and provide full written product-ingredient
information. Membership services will act in concert with sports medicine consultants to provide a review of the product and respond to the member institution. Products deemed permissible should be reviewed annually to determine if any reformulation of the product has introduced elements that make it no longer permissible to provide to student-athletes.

If an institution has an interest in providing a supplement product being offered by a manufacturer or distributor of the product, it is the institution's responsibility to follow the outlined steps. Do not refer the manufacturer or distributor to the NCAA for a product review.

For more information, contact Mary Wilfert at mwilfert@ncaa.org

View online at:
http://www2.ncaa.org/media_and_events/association_news/ncaa_news_online/2005/05_23_05/association_wide/4211n18.html

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