



**2013 NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWL  
CASES FOR NATIONAL QUALIFYING EVENTS**

Released 16 August 2012

**Thanks to Michael Burroughs, Matt Deaton, Roberta Israeloff, Joshua Jones, Crystal Shackleford, and Heather Van Wallendael for their help in compiling and editing.**



## **1. Red Cross and the Taliban**

A 2010 document published by the International Committee of the Red Cross/ Red Crescent reported that the ICRC had provided free first aid training and medical kits to Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. Many were surprised to hear that the Red Cross worked with the Taliban; one unnamed Afghan official stated that nobody should help Taliban fighters by providing them with training or equipment of any kind because they do "not deserve to be treated like humans."

Others, like Center for Strategic and International Studies senior fellow Stephanie Sanok, worry that such actions may lead to further cooperation with the Taliban in the future. "Where do you draw the line?" Sanok asked. "What kind of assistance is it acceptable to provide the Taliban?" She noted that there are already hospitals run by independent non-governmental organizations which treat any patient—no questions asked—and thus ensure the physical well-being of the critically injured on both sides.

The ICRC remained unapologetic in the face of the largely negative feedback and stressed the importance of its historic neutrality. Spokesperson Christian Cardon said, "We treat and train people on the basis of medical necessity as an impartial organization, regardless of race or politics" and pointed out that "the ICRC is not a judge ... it is not a policeman. The role of the ICRC is to assist and protect victims of armed conflict."

Mr. Cardon also noted that the three-day workshop included not only first aid classes but also lessons on the Geneva Conventions and their importance. The ICRC has provided similar workshops to fighters in the Gaza Strip and Sudan during active conflicts; in Afghanistan, it trained 70 Taliban fighters as well as Afghan security forces, policemen and taxi drivers.

Widespread skepticism of the ICRC workshops in Afghanistan remains, especially in the US, where some have accused the ICRC of aiding the enemy and small donors are wondering if their money helped train Taliban fighters. Although the ICRC remains steadfast in its adherence to its well-established policy of impartiality, some are wondering if neutrality is always a valid option.

### **Study Questions:**

Should the ICRC be allowed to provide first aid training to armed insurgents?

Is neutrality in conflicts always a morally permissible option?

## **2. facebook in Hiring**

The use of social media sites like facebook has skyrocketed in recent years. One study suggests that more than half of all Americans over the age of 12 have a facebook account. For many, facebook and Twitter are important ways to interact socially and even to define who they are -- a phenomenon which is increasingly being monitored by potential employers.

An increasing number of employers are requesting that job applicants grant them access to social media accounts, or even ask applicants to hand over their passwords. Future Virginia State Troopers, for example, are required to sign into their accounts during the interview process and let an administrator look through their information. Virginia State Police spokeswoman Corinne Geller argues, "It's a virtual character check as much as the rest of the process is a physical background check." Indeed, one may argue that the drug- and lie-detector tests already required of applicants by many companies are far more invasive than a check of one's online profile. Viewed in this light, a facebook check may simply offer the company a more comprehensive impression of their applicants. In a world in which public opinion can have a severe impact on business performance, industry representatives argue that it is vital for the company to know exactly whom they hire and how these employees will behave not just at work but also after hours. Employers, they believe, have not only an incentive but a right and obligation to know whom they hire.

But many have protested that to request an applicant's facebook account is not simply another background check but rather a serious invasion of her privacy, akin to requesting to read her mail or text messages. And it is not only in the applicant's interest to have her privacy respected; having access to social media accounts may also expose potential employers to information which they do not want to know. Many facebook users, for example, post personal information such as marital status, sexual orientation or religious affiliation on their online profiles, information about which employers are not allowed to inquire about during the interview process to prevent possible accusations of discrimination. If employers are inadvertently exposed to this information, they may find themselves in situations in which they are unable to render unbiased decisions. Indeed, American Civil Liberties Union staff attorney Catherine Stump cautioned that the practice may put employers at risk for privacy and discrimination lawsuits and could at times be in violation of the Fourth Amendment.

Although there are currently no legal guidelines regulating employers' screening practices of applicants' social media accounts, a facebook spokesperson stated the company is looking forward to "engaging with policy makers" to discourage the practice in the future.

### **Study Questions:**

Should employers be allowed to request access to applicants' social media profiles?

To what extent, if at all, can it be considered morally permissible for an employer to invade a potential employee's privacy in order to identify the ideal applicant?

### **3. Enhancing Academic Performance via Prescription Medications**

Just as steroids have been permeating the culture of baseball for some time now, prescription drugs such as Adderall and Ritalin have begun to permeate high school and college campuses. Some argue that as a result of widespread use, students face increased pressure to use these medications in order to stay competitive with their peers and set themselves up well for college, graduate school, or the workforce.

“Adderall was passed around like candy before tests, exams and the SAT,” said one former North Carolina high school student. “The majority of my friends have bought or sold Adderall for these purposes.”

Medications like Adderall and Ritalin are usually prescribed to treat Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Many students use these medications regularly to address their ADD or ADHD, not simply to stay up all night to meet a deadline. But some high school and college users of these medications do not have a prescription and were given the pills by friends or purchased them on the black market.

#### **Study Questions:**

Under what conditions, if any, is it morally permissible to consume Adderall, Ritalin, etc., for the purposes of increasing performance?

Is there a relevant moral difference between taking these medications with a prescription and taking these medications without a prescription, assuming that each party uses the medicine for similar ends (studying, taking an exam, etc.)?

#### **4. “Charlie Hustle”**

Pete Rose was a Major League Baseball (MLB) player for 24 seasons, beginning in 1963. He still holds the all-time records for most career hits and most career singles. He is in the top five in several other hitting categories.

Between August 1984 and August 1989, Rose was the manager for the Cincinnati Reds. His teams went 426-388 over 6 seasons. In early 1989, rumors that Rose bet on baseball games reached the office of the Commissioner of Baseball. Rose was questioned, but denied the rumors. A new commissioner took over a month later and opened an investigation. Learning of the story, the press reported that Rose bet on baseball games while being manager. Upon completion of the commissioner’s investigation, Rose entered into a settlement: in return for MLB not formally finding him ‘guilty’ of gambling, Rose accepted a spot on baseball’s “ineligible list.” This means that, among other conditions (including not being able to work for a baseball team), he is not eligible to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, despite being one of the sport’s greatest hitters ever.

On multiple occasions, Rose has asked that this ruling be revoked, but to date no commissioner has agreed. In 2004, Rose admitted that he gambled on baseball games as a manager, including games involving the Reds. He claims to have never bet against his own team, but the investigator said that he believes Rose may have done so.

Because of the recent steroid issues in MLB, some people argue that players who gamble are not as morally culpable as those who use steroids. They maintain that gambling for your team to win does not tamper with or alter record-keeping in the same way that steroid use does. In a 2007 interview, Rose said, "If you're going to put these guys that supposedly did steroids into the Hall of Fame, I mean I've got to get a shot somewhere. I was wrong ... but these guys today, if the allegations are true, they're making a mockery of the game. If you're going to cheat and alter the records of the game, that's worse than betting on your team to win."

A recent poll agrees: 75% of adult respondents said they thought players’ use of performance-enhancing drugs such as steroids was a more serious offense than gambling on games, compared with 14% who said Rose’s offense was worse. Nine percent viewed these actions as equally serious.

Rose has over 1,500 more hits than Babe Ruth, a known alcoholic who often came to games drunk. Yet he is known as one of the greatest baseball players of all time and will always be honored in the Hall of Fame, while Pete Rose’s accomplishments may never receive the same recognition.

#### **Study Questions:**

If MLB allows Rose him to “hold records,” then should it allow him into the Hall of Fame?

Should gambling (for your team) be considered as bad an offense, or worse, than performance-enhancing drug use?

## **5. Title IX and Female Athletes**

Federal “Title IX” mandates equal opportunity for male and female athletes at public institutions and includes this provision: if a public high school does not have the female equivalent for a sport (baseball-softball, basketball, etc.) then any girl may opt to try out for the boy’s team. (To make the team, girls need to demonstrate the same skills as boys.) This allows girls to represent their schools on the baseball field, the football field, and the wrestling mat.

In May 2012, the Our Lady of Sorrows HS baseball team forfeited the Arizona State Baseball Championship rather than face Paige Sultzbach and her (male) teammates of Mesa Preparatory Academy. In an official statement, Our Lady of Sorrows stated that the school had strict rules against coed sports (and academics). Keeping boys and girls separate is a foundational principle of the branch of Catholicism that is affiliated with Our Lady of Sorrows High School.

This is not the first time religion has been used to defend forfeiting to a team with a female member, but it is the first time in the context of a non-contact sport. In February 2011, Joel Northup forfeited his first match in the Iowa state tournament because he had to wrestle one of two females who qualified for the state championship. He stated, "I have a tremendous amount of respect for Cassy...However, wrestling is a contact sport and it can get violent at times. As a matter of conscience and faith, I do not believe that it is appropriate for a boy to engage a girl in this manner." Also in 2011, Mina Johnson, an eighth-grade football player in North Carolina, chose to sit out a game rather than have her team win by forfeit. Her team’s opponents, the Lasker Northeast Academy, had made it clear that if they faced a girl on the field, they would forfeit rather than play.

During the regular season, Paige Sultzbach decided to sit out games against Our Lady of Sorrows. In interviews, she stated that the games were on the Our Lady of Sorrows’ home field and she felt she should play by their rules. The championship, however, was to be held on neutral ground, where she felt she should be allowed to play. Our Lady of Sorrows chose not to play and allowed Paige and her teammates to win by default.

### **Study Questions:**

Should there be different regulations concerning girls playing on boy’s teams based on whether or not it is a contact sport? Should whether or not a team is playing at home be a consideration?

Are there any moral justifications for ignoring another group’s religious beliefs in order to promote fairness and equality?

## 6. SAT Debate

The SAT assesses the aptitude of high school students across the United States for the purpose of college admissions decisions. The SAT is considered an important part of a student's application package at most universities as it allows admissions officers to compare applicants on a standardized measure (that grades and other factors may not allow). The exam is broken down into three sections – math, critical reading, and writing. It takes approximately three hours and forty-five minutes to complete and costs \$49. Potential scores range between 600-2400.

Although studies have shown strong correlation between students' SAT scores and their first-year college GPA, critics question the fairness of this testing measure across all races, incomes, and cultures. These people cite the fact that many students take the exam multiple times and enroll in pricey preparation classes. Studies show that taking prep classes and taking the SAT greater than two times results in much higher exam scores.

Research has linked higher family income to high SAT scores across each of the three sections. The *New York Times* found that students whose family income is \$20,000 or less have a mean score of 1310 on the SAT while students whose family income is greater than \$200,000 score 1715 (on average).

In addition, SAT scores increase by 30 points each time the exam is retaken. Not all families can afford to pay \$49 each time a student wants to retake the test. Wealthier families are also able to engage tutors and to enroll their children in SAT prep courses, which can cost thousands of dollars. Some say the income/wealth effect is even more widespread because wealthier families can expose their children to a broader range of cultural ideas and experiences thanks to travel and access to cultural events, all of which enhance aptitude. In short, many are calling for the SAT and its role in college admissions to be reevaluated since the goal of achieving a level playing field is not realized in practice.

### Study Questions:

Should SAT scores be required for admission to public universities?

Should students be allowed to take their best scores for submission?

## **7. Academic Integrity**

Cheating is defined as “acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage.” However, many American children and young adults seem to think of cheating as a normal, if not acceptable, action towards gaining a desired result.

Cheaters are not predominantly low-scoring, below-average students. The majority of high-school cheaters today are actually high-performing, college-bound students. And they aren’t necessarily only cheating on tests. A recent study found that while 22% of students reports having cheated at least once on a test, 43% admits to providing or receiving “unauthorized collaboration” on homework.

The continued proliferation of technology and web-based research and interaction, including the popularity of social media sites such as facebook, plays a role in today’s culture of cheating. Some students consider facebook to be one big study group, using it often to network with classmates and solicit assistance. Reliance on social media may also work to normalize the type of “virtual” cheating that looks more like helping out a classmate than smuggling in exam answers.

Unauthorized collaboration at the university level is also highly prevalent, sparking a dialogue about what constitutes cheating. According to Don McCabe, a Rutgers Business School professor, “The number of self-reported cheaters has decreased at the college level, but that merely reflects the increasing number of students who think there’s nothing wrong with borrowing work.” Claiming that the definition of cheating is changing, he states that most students view homework as a collaborative effort and that finding answers online or through friends is an example of being resourceful. Some students even argue that they should be allowed to collaborate; after all, in the post-graduate workplace, people are often encouraged to work together to maximize their resources.

Trevor Harding, a professor at California Polytechnic Institute, has documented a definite shift in students’ conception of cheating. He discovered something he calls the “technological detachment phenomenon.” Although most students agree that bringing a cheat sheet into an exam is cheating, most think it is acceptable to bring a graphing calculator with pre-programmed equations.

### **Study Questions:**

Should students be allowed to collaborate on homework assignments? If so, under what conditions?

Under what conditions, if any, is cheating morally permissible?



## **8. Texas History Textbooks**

In 2010, the Texas State Board of Education ignited controversy over the content of public education in that state. It voted to adopt, along partisan political lines, a new “social studies and history curriculum that amends or waters down the teaching of the civil rights movement, slavery, America's relationship with the U.N. and hundreds of other items,” according to the Associated Press.

As this decision affects the education of approximately 4.8 million Texas schoolchildren, many political and civil rights groups were gravely concerned over the effect this could have on the development of political and cultural knowledge and ideology.

Moreover, the change in curriculum may have drastic effects on many children who do not live in Texas. Because the state is such a dominant consumer of textbooks, many textbook publishing companies produce books that conform to Texas curriculum requirements but which are then sold to districts across the country.

Of course, the potential content of education is nearly limitless. It is impossible to teach every event in human history – even only those that we know about. Therefore, decisions must be made about which events and ideas are meaningful, interesting, or otherwise worthy of inclusion in a curriculum.

### **Study Questions:**

Is it morally acceptable for policymakers to select a public education curriculum that reinforces their own ideology?

Given the impossibility of including every historical event in public school curriculum, how do we go about selecting which events in history ought to be included?

[http://www.heraldsun.com/view/full\\_story/7586342/article-New-twist-on-history-for-Texas-schools](http://www.heraldsun.com/view/full_story/7586342/article-New-twist-on-history-for-Texas-schools)

## 9. Jail Strip Search

The U.S. Supreme Court's 2012 ruling in *Florence vs. Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Burlington* established that jail strip searches are now legal in the United States regardless of the offense an individual has been arrested for or charged with. This means that those arrested for matters as small as a traffic violation are subject to strip searches by authorities.

Controversy surrounding the decision involves the Fourth Amendment, which addresses privacy rights and protects citizens from "unlawful search." In light of the 2012 ruling, many are questioning the interpretation of "unlawful" in this context. The ostensible purpose of strip searches is to ensure jailhouse security for inmates as well as those who run the jail. The recent ruling grants permission to search any person arrested for any crime under the presumption that even a low-level nonviolent offender could be carrying a weapon.

The Court's ruling was a 5-4 decision: the four dissenting justices disagreed with a policy that gives police full discretion in deciding to strip-search anyone brought to the jail for nearly any reason. They maintained that strip searches are "inherently harmful, humiliating, and degrading," and especially acute when the person in question had only violated a traffic law.

### Study Questions:

Without reasonable suspicion that a person is carrying contraband, is it morally permissible to strip-search suspects citing jailhouse security concerns? Is it morally permissible to search them for illegal drugs or other contraband?

How does one ethically balance the competing needs for jailhouse safety with an individual's right to privacy?

## **10. Confidentiality in Juvenile Cases**

In the United States, courts often try to protect the identities of juvenile offenders by keeping their names redacted in public documents and instructing the parties to the case to keep identities secret. This can apply to any number of crimes and misdemeanors, including sexual assault.

Savannah, a high school student from Kentucky, was sexually assaulted by two boys at a party after passing out from drinking. The boys took photos of their assault and forwarded them around the high school. They were arrested and charged, and took a plea bargain that Savannah thought was too light. The court also ordered Savannah to not publicly name her attackers.

Outraged at the course of events, Savannah defied the court and named her attackers on Twitter, saying “I’m not protecting anyone that made my life a living Hell.”

Some criminal justice experts say that rape and sexual assault are underreported crimes. It may be that the practice of keeping victims and attackers secret contributes to this under-reporting. Savannah, for example, posted on her facebook wall: “If reporting a rape only got me to the point that I’m not allowed to talk about it, then I regret it...I regret reporting it.”

In adult sexual assault cases, most media outlets have a policy of not releasing victims’ names without their consent, but adult offenders are nearly always disclosed (in fact, there is an online database of convicted sex offenders).

Savannah was charged with contempt of court, charges that were later dropped.

### **Study Questions:**

Did Savannah behave ethically when she defied the court order and released her attackers’ names?

Savannah was a victim of a crime, part of which involved the public distribution of photos of her being assaulted. Was the gag order by the court ethical?

## **11. Racial Justice Act**

Recent studies performed by universities, government agencies, and non-profits indicate that race is a factor in capital (death penalty) cases in some parts of the United States. For example, a study in Georgia showed that prosecutors sought the death penalty in 70% of cases involving black defendants and white victims, but in only 15% of cases with white defendants and black victims. A 2001 study in North Carolina looked at five years of murder cases and determined that an offender was three times more likely to receive the death penalty if the victim was white instead of a member of a racial minority.

In 2009, the North Carolina legislature and governor passed the Racial Justice Act. The law allowed those convicted and sentenced to death to present evidence of racial bias in their cases to have their sentences reduced to "life without the possibility of parole."

In July 2012, a new legislature overturned key aspects of the RJA, saying in part that it is too difficult to prove racial bias in individual cases – that overall patterns are not indicative of racial bias in any one case. Approximately 150 people are currently on North Carolina's death row.

### **Study Question:**

Is it right to cite statistics to try to prove potential racial bias in individual cases?

## **12. Polar Bears**

The declining population of polar bears within their natural habitat has sparked debate about the effectiveness and morality of zoos, as well as their ability to preserve populations. There are between 20,000 and 25,000 polar bears left on earth and scientists are predicting their extinction within 70 years. Some zoos are proposing to save the polar bear by increasing polar bear exhibits. The St. Louis Zoo, for example, is completely redefining captivity for the bears and has invested \$20 million to recreate the natural habitat of the animal, which includes designing saltwater pools and ice-like cliffs.

Those who support increasing polar bear exhibits recognize it is not an ideal solution but feel that it will ensure the preservation of the bear. Juliet Eilperin states, "In a worst-case scenario, a remnant group of bears would survive in captivity." Captive breeding is not a new concept, and the process has helped save species such as the Guam rails, black-footed ferrets, and California condors from extinction. Some of the saved species are even reintroduced into the wild in hopes that they can repopulate in the future. In many cases, captive breeding gives experts time to assess the habitat of endangered animals and explore reasons and solutions for the decreasing population. This process can give the species time to repopulate in captivity while their habitat is improved.

Although captive breeding has been an effective solution for some species, opponents point out the difficulties of using this method for polar bears. Ronald Sandler, associate professor of philosophy at Northeastern University, believes polar bears are, "one of the worst candidates for captivity." He explains that their natural lifestyle includes roaming for thousands of miles through arctic conditions, a routine which cannot take place within the confines of a zoo exhibit. He also argues that polar bear advocates should be more concerned with global warming, a process which is destroying the habitats of these bears and consequently decreasing their numbers. Other opponents argue against reintroducing captivity-bred animals into their natural habitats: they question the animals' ability to adapt after confinement.

### **Study Questions:**

Is increasing the number of polar bear exhibits in zoos an ethical way to attempt to save them?

Would this strategy be ethical if used to save a physically smaller species?

### **13. Off-Shore Drilling**

Despite public resistance after Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Shell Oil will be forging ahead with its plans to begin drilling off the coast of Alaska in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement approved Shell's plans in February 2012, provided the company could prove its ability to clean a worst-case-scenario oil spill.

Since then, Shell has performed several dry-runs with their clean-up crews and machinery. The government and the company claim that this proves their ability to clean up a spill. Furthermore, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar insists that the likelihood of a spill is very small given the safety and preventative measures that have been implemented.

"I believe, first of all, that there is not going to be an oil spill, because frankly, the scrutiny that is going to be involved, including the prevention effort that we have, and the oversight effort that we have — the inspectors we have on 24/7, and all of the rest of the measures that have been taken, and the high risk, frankly, that Shell and the entire industry would have is something were to go wrong — I don't expect that there is going to be a problem," Salazar said.

Despite assurance from both Salazar and Shell, environmental activist groups are skeptical. They cite the many problems with cleanup in the Arctic region as reason to hesitate. First of all, the region's six months of icy conditions threaten both the safety of the initial operation and the efficacy of a cleanup. When the last spill exercise conducted in icy conditions took place in 2000, the equipment, normally used for coral, was no match for the weather. Since then, new machinery and equipment have been developed; however, none has been properly tested in real conditions. Furthermore, activists point out that Shell has not had to develop the infrastructure along the Alaskan coast — such as structures to house and feed volunteers in the event of a clean-up. Shell claims that this implementation is not needed because their recovery plan projects "encountering" 90% of any spilled oil on site and only 10% close to or on the shore." Critics suggest that such numbers are ridiculously inflated and Shell needs to focus on contingency plans.

#### **Study Questions:**

Given the projected low chance of an oil spill, should Shell have to prepare infrastructure for onshore oil cleanup?

Should off-shore drilling be more restricted because of the potential effects of an oil spill, no matter how unlikely such a spill may be?

## **14. Lifesavers**

When we picture a beach in summer, we see swimmers, sunbathers, kids playing in the sand, and a long line of lifeguard towers. What we probably don't know is that the companies that staff these lifeguard towers have rules about under what circumstances lifeguards can save lives.

For example, John Ellis Management, a South Florida company, forbids lifeguards from leaving their posts to attend to swimmers in the water outside of the designated company zone. If alerted to an incident outside of the company's zone of protection, lifeguards are instructed to call 911. However, in July 2012, lifeguard Tomas Lopez noticed a drowning man about 1500 feet outside of his zone and sprang into action. By the time Lopez pulled the victim out of the water, he'd already turned blue.

Even though Lopez had secured another lifeguard to take his post while he rescued the victim, JEM fired Lopez almost immediately. Three lifeguards quit out of protest and two were fired for stating they would have done the same thing. The company later agreed to hire them all back although it defended its actions citing liability issues. According to the contract JEM offers its employees, lifeguards agree to protect a certain area and that if they leave this area to go to an unprotected zone, they are no longer doing their jobs. Furthermore, the unprotected area is clearly marked with signs warning swimmers to swim at their own risk.

### **Study Questions:**

Should company policy forbid lifeguards from helping people outside of the designated area?

Does the lifeguard have a primary duty to his assigned 'area,' or to all swimmers?

## **15. Health and Human Services Mandate**

On February 15, 2012 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a new mandate now known as the “contraceptive rule” that requires insurance providers to cover sterilization, abortion, and contraceptives. This mandate exempts churches and religious organizations, but not church-affiliated nonprofit corporations (such as hospitals and universities).

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has vocally and publicly stood against the rule, arguing that it infringes upon their religious freedom. Catholic doctrine has long been strictly opposed to all forms of contraception. By mandating that all insurance plans cover birth control, including abortion, the new mandate puts the Church and its affiliate organizations in the position of spending money on a policy that covers actions directly contradictory to the Church’s teachings.

Proponents of the new rule accuse the USCCB of attempting to deny rights to employees (who may themselves not be Catholic) of Catholic institutions such as Georgetown University or some of the largest hospitals in the U.S. Some point out that no patient is *required* to buy or use contraceptives, so individuals are free to practice their own faiths, but that it is not fair for large employer to be exempt from a federal health care regulation simply because the large employer is affiliated with the Catholic Church.

### **Study Questions:**

Can an employer ethically limit the health care options of its employees based on its institutional morality?

Can the government force a religious institution to spend money on actions it finds immoral?