

**Homeruns, Slap Shots, and Touchdowns:  
Best Practices for Rebuilding an Athlete's Reputation Following a Scandal**

Capstone

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Muffy Elizabeth Lavens

Faculty Advisor: Bill Healey

New York University

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**Abstract**

The world of sports has faced a fair share of scandals, from the “Black Sox” Scandal in 1919 to today with the current Miami Dolphins bullying scandal. This capstone paper will explore various athletic scandals across the four most popular major leagues: NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL. These scandals include performance enhancing drugs, sex scandals, and violence. From case study examples, interviews with sports industry executives, and a survey of sports fans, a set of best practices to rebuilding an athlete’s reputation will be determined. This set of best practices will serve as a framework for public relations professionals to help an athlete facing a scandal rebuild their reputation and continue their career.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Professional athletes are known for more than just the sport they play. In today's world, professional athletes and celebrities are synonymous. Many are paid more money annually than most people can hope to make in a lifetime, they're seen in all forms of media, and are often considered role models. What they do both on and off the field impacts how the public views them, contributing to the overall success of the sport's image. The media is quick to show the good and bad of an athlete and their sport as seen through TV, newspapers, social media, and every other outlet. The public hears everything and eagerly consumes every tidbit of information on them; from record-breaking games, to unbelievable losses, and scandals.

With all of media attention they receive it's hard for athletes to keep their personal lives private, and when something goes awry, the media is quick to report it (Summers & Johnson Morgan, 2008). The media includes a variety of communication outlets - both traditional and non-traditional - used to reach mass amounts of people. These outlets include newspapers, TV, radio, and social media, to name a few.

These forms of media have a direct impact on an athlete's reputation by exposing affairs, drug scandals, and criminal charges. A personal scandal can destroy an athlete's reputation and sometimes ruin the remainder of their career. In turn, it can dramatically impact the perception of their sport overall (Hughes & Shank, 2005).

Before taking the steps to rebuilding an athlete's reputation, it needs to be determined what exactly a reputation comprises. Reputation is the way the public perceives the overall image of a

person or company. Doorley and Garcia (2011) created a formula to establish what reputation consists of. The formula is: Reputation = (Performance + Behavior + Communication) x Authenticity Factor.

Performance usually refers to productivity and product quality of a company or industry (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). In sports, the performance element of the equation can be seen as the actual skills athletes use while playing in the game. The players are a major part of the sports industry. Without them, the sports industry wouldn't exist. If they play well, the performance aspect of reputation will positively affect the athlete's overall reputation.

Behavior refers to the actions of a person or company (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). The better an athlete behaves (on or off the court), the better reputation they can have. If they act negatively it will damage their reputation.

Communication refers to the how a company or person gets their information across to the public (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). If there is a lack of communication or a league is communicating badly, it can negatively impact the overall reputation of the sport. Same can be said for an athlete. If they're unable to communicate with the public, it will negatively affect them. When a person communicates well, they can get the key messages across, and help the way the public perceives them.

Authenticity factor is the degree to which the organization lives up to what it stands for (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). If the company's actions reflect the image it's trying to showcase the

authenticity factor will be higher, and that will benefit the overall reputation. Same can be said for the sports industry. Each league has standards their athletes and employees need to live up to. When they don't, reputation suffers.

These four elements all work together to create an overall reputation for a person or company. All these elements can be managed on their own, meaning the full reputation can be managed as well. If all aspects of the formula are positive, reputation will be positive. If one of these areas fails or is negative, the overall reputation will be damaged.

It's also important to know what a scandal is. For athletes, a scandal usually starts with the behavioral element of the reputation formula. If they act inappropriately, they'll damage their reputation. As previously mentioned, high profile athletes can be seen as role models, which means they are often held to higher moral standards because they're in the public eye (Summers & Morgan, 2008). When an accusation of a transgression arises that questions the athlete as a role model or questions the general morals of society, a scandal begins (Storm & Wagner, 2011). As the press picks the story up, the scandal continues to grow, whether it's legitimate or not, and impacts the athlete's reputation. It's important to note that if the media does not pick up the accusation of the transgression, a scandal does not occur. If there is no media coverage, there is no scandal.

Once the scandal has occurred, athletes usually turn to lawyers and publicists, but they really should turn to a public relations (PR) strategist (Mallette, 2010). PR professionals are the ones that deal with the media and crisis management more than other business professionals that

athletes work with. Having someone that works specifically on crisis communication and reputation management will help the athlete in the long run more than the lawyers and publicists will. Lawyers are going to focus on the legal side, keeping the athlete from doing anything else that would continue to cause problems, and trying to keep their sentencing down from the maximum punishment. Publicists are going to look at the publicity angle and see how they can make the press coverage work for the athlete. Although the athlete needs these professionals too, neither one of their approaches are going to help restore the athlete's reputation.

PR professionals are the ones that need to rebuild the athlete's reputation when a scandal breaks out. They put the plan in place that gives all the professionals working with the athlete a road map from which to follow. It's important for PR professionals in the sports industry to examine what plans have been taken in the past and determine if there is a best practice or method for doing so in the future.

Scandals and negative events are not new to the world of sports, but it seems as if they occur more today than ever before because of the way media works (Storm & Wagner, 2011). Some stories seen in various forms of media nowadays were only seen in tabloids or gossip magazines in the past because scandals and rumors were what those publications targeted (Jenkins, 2010). The rise of technology enables the media to take a story that might have only been in the gossip magazines or the local paper years ago and broadcast it internationally across a variety of platforms in a matter of minutes (Thornton, Champion, & Ruddell, 2012).

Social media is a perfect example of this change. Following the first game of baseball's 2013 World Series, Tyler Melling, a minor league player for the St. Louis Cardinals, snapped a picture of something inside Boston Red Sox pitcher Jon Lester's glove, and posted it on his Twitter page stating, "Jon Lester using a little Vaseline inside the glove tonight?" (Augustine, 2013).

Melling wasn't the only one to notice it. A user on Vine posted a video showing Lester reaching into his glove and putting his fingers over the spot where Melling pointed out the substance on Lester's glove (Augustine, 2013).

After these posts, speculation occurred across a variety of social media platforms. It raised the question, did this lead to the Red Sox 8-1 win? Despite the tweets and posts about the alleged cheating, Major League Baseball (MLB) stated there were not complaints from the Cardinals or the umpires and it was a non-issue (Augustine, 2013).

Ten-years-ago this accusation could have been made to people sitting around watching the game together, but it wouldn't be as widespread. It may not have even made the news and no one would have heard about it. Today, social media has allowed people to share their thoughts in real time and hit a larger audience with shares and retweets. These changes in media and how it impacts sports can be seen when we look at the history of sporting scandals.

The world of sports first saw the media's impact in 1919 when America's favorite pastime dealt with an event credited as the first sporting scandal. The MLB had a clean image with both the press and public calling it a pure sport. That was until eight Chicago White Sox players were

accused of throwing the World Series game in a gambling scandal. The White Sox lost, meaning the Reds won the World Series. This episode became known as the Black Sox Scandal (Asinof, 1963).

The White Sox had been the favorites to win, so it was surprising when the Reds took the championship in the eighth game of a best of nine series. Chicago-based sports journalist, Hugh Fullerton, was the first to accuse the players of intentionally losing the World Series (Anderson, 2001). The public was quick to dismiss the accusation because baseball had always been a wholesome sport in America and no one believed the players would do such a thing.

The truth didn't come out until gambling rumors surfaced in a game between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Chicago Cubs the following season. When the players in that case went to trial, so did the other Chicago White Sox players suspected of throwing the World Series back in 1919 (Asinof, 1963). When the verdict was in, all accused players were released free of charges, but the MLB had to deal with their tainted image caused by this scandal.

The response from the public and the media negatively impacted the overall image of the MLB. Fans were outraged that the players weren't punished. In response to the crisis, the league hired its first commissioner, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis to help restore the MLB's reputation (Asinof, 1963). The first thing Commissioner Landis did was listen to the public's outcries and he gave each of the eight players a lifetime suspension. With that, the anger from the public and the media subsided and the league implemented a rule prohibiting players and those associated with the organization from betting on games.

Since the Black Sox Scandal, there have been several athletes, teams, and entire leagues that have faced image problems and professionals have been brought in to help rebuild and restore the reputation. Baseball restored its image from the Black Sox Scandal by hiring a commissioner and implementing new rules, but that isn't an option for every scandal a league faces.

Although the MLB's solution can't be applied to every scandal, the way the league dealt with the media's impact helps build a foundation for the sporting industry when they deal with the media's impact overall. Baseball never used to worry about its image because the media always positioned the league in a positive light. There was a mutual benefit between the sport and the newspapers. The newspapers needed baseball to sell papers, and baseball needed the newspapers to spread the word about the games during the season (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007).

Even today, the media relies on sports to help generate interest in their publication or outlet, and sports rely on the media to share news about the league and updates about games to those that can't be there in person (Jarvie & Thornton, 2012). There are even TV channels like ESPN and publications like *Sports Illustrated* that are devoted specifically to sports. They need sports to even exist. Other outlets rely on sports too, but not as heavily. The nightly newscasts and the main newspapers all have sports sections recapping what's been happening with the teams locally and across the country. The media continues to thrive on sports because the public enjoys watching the sports and has an interest in the athletes.

Since there is a heightened interest in the athletes' personal lives, the media focuses on them outside of the game to help generate interest in their news outlet (Summers & Morgan, 2008).

Reporters try to uncover stories about the athlete behind the scenes to show what they're like as a person. Although the media shares stories of athletes when they do something good for the community, what occurs more often are stories showing athletes using performance-enhancing drugs, in violent or corrupt situations, cheating, making racist or homophobic comments, having affairs, and other forms of criminal or immoral behavior (Crabbe, 2000). The media knows that negative or scandalous news is going to generate more interest and more sales than positive news, so that's where they put the focus of their stories.

With the sporting industry in the center of the media, many PR professionals are faced with the task of trying to keep the stories positive (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007); a task that has become much harder with the rise of the Internet and various platforms. Technology has allowed news outlets to get the information out faster resulting in the public tracking their favorite athletes and teams in a matter of minutes. As mentioned before, this is especially true with the rise of social media. Social media has opened doors for information about athletes, whether it's good, bad, exciting, or boring to be exposed at a moment's notice. News is found all over Facebook, Twitter, and other channels and it allows reporters to get a story out almost instantly (Thornton, Champion & Ruddell, 2012).

One example comes following a game during baseball's National League Championship Series. Carlos Beltran of the St. Louis Cardinals, made a few remarks about how Yasiel Puig of the Los Angeles Dodgers celebrated his triple base hit. Beltran stated, "As a player, I just think he doesn't know [how to act]...That's what I think. He really doesn't know. He must think that he's still playing somewhere else...He has a lot of passion, no doubt about that — great ability, great

talent. I think with time, he'll learn that you've got to act with a little bit more calm" (Gaines, 2013). Reporters picked up his comments immediately and tweeted parts of Beltran's quote with a link to the full story of the game. Before social media, the quote would have been reported hours after the game instead of in real time.

Reporters aren't the only ones using social media to get information out about sports. As we know from Tyler Melling, the athletes are doing it too. Social media outlets allow them to connect with their fans like never before (Adelson, 2012). Most high profile athletes have a Twitter account that they use to discuss their sport and aspects of their personal lives. It is one of the most common places to get sporting news. Twitter is where the news breaks, dissects, and advances (Adelson, 2012). Technology has changed the way PR professionals work with athletes to restore a reputation. It's not as simple as it was in the past.

Over the decades there have been many approaches, both successful and unsuccessful, that have been used to repair the reputation of athletes and leagues once the media broadcasts a scandal. It's important to understand what causes a sporting scandal and what actions have been taken as a follow up, especially in the Internet age.

Many athletes that have faced negative accusations have never recovered from them. For example, New England Patriots player, Aaron Hernandez, was a rising football star with a five-year contract worth \$40 million and was a 2011 Pro Bowl selection. He had faced multiple failed drug tests (Breer, 2010) and was caught in a bar fight during his time as a college player (Bachman, 2013). Despite this, Hernandez went on to a short, but successful career in the

National Football League (NFL). It wasn't until this past year he fell from grace when he was charged with murder in the death of a semi-pro football player. If convicted, he could spend life in prison without parole. The Patriots announced two hours after the arrest was made that Hernandez was dropped from the team (Bachman, 2013).

Not all athletes have had their career end due to a scandal. Some that have faced negative events have been suspended, lost endorsements, and experienced damaged images, but in the end recovered and continued their career (Mallette, 2010). Dany Heatley was the second overall National Hockey League (NHL) draft pick in 2000 and was one of the most popular players on the Atlanta Thrashers. In 2003, he lost control of his car while driving intoxicated, yet under the legal limit, and crashed into a wall. He suffered from a broken jaw, bruised lung, and torn ligaments in his knee. He was in better condition than his passenger and teammate Dan Snyder. Snyder was ejected from the car, fracturing his skull and dying five days later. Heatley pled guilty to second-degree vehicular homicide and was given three years probation with no jail time (Glier, 2005).

He was traded to the Ottawa Senators at his own request where he focused on rebuilding his career and leaving behind the tragic accident (Diamos, 2005). Heatley continued his career and went on to be one the league's leading scorers when he was with the San Jose Sharks and is currently playing for the Minnesota Wild.

Why is it that some athletes can be caught in a scandal and recover from it while others can't? Why is it that some athletes damage the overall league's reputation in addition to their own and

others don't? This paper will examine a variety of case study examples and the past methods used when responding to an athletic scandal. It will answer the question; are there common methods used to rebuild and restore athlete's reputation? If so, these methods will be used to determine a set of best practices for PR professionals (and the other professionals they work with) to use when rebuilding an athlete's reputation following a scandal or negative accusation.

## **Chapter 2: Secondary Research**

There are a variety of transgressions a professional athlete can be accused of committing. Some of the most common scandals include performance enhancing drugs, sex scandals, and violence. No sport or league has been completely scandal free. Some leagues experience more scandals than others. Some leagues are more known for certain types scandals than others. Regardless of the type of scandal, every sport faces them at some point.

Scandals are happening in all sports and the media certainly isn't keeping them a secret, so PR professionals need to find the best methods to rebuild an athlete's reputation after a scandal. Most research suggests the best way for athletes to overcome a scandal is to be prepared (Mallette, 2010). That's the key to overcoming any crisis, sports related or not. There should be a plan set in place by communications professionals in the event that an athlete is caught in negative accusations.

Although it's important to have a plan in place, not every business does (Katcher, 2013). Although the public doesn't always see the sports industry as a business, it is, and they need to be prepared for a crisis like every other company. Since crises are not the same every time, that

can cause problems when creating a plan. Taking a lesson from big businesses and experts in crisis communication, a plan does not have to be followed exactly. A crisis plan should be a framework for professionals to follow (Katcher, 2013). The same can be said in the sports. Scandals in the sporting industry vary by league, sport, and event, so it's more important to find methods that can be applied to a variety of scandals and not just one specific example.

To determine this framework, it's important to take a look at the different types of scandals and compare the various past scandals to find out what has been successful. This paper will explore scandals seen in four major league sports (NFL, MLB, NBA, & NHL) and determine the best methods from case study examples from three main types of scandals: performance enhancing drugs scandals, sex scandals, and violence scandals.

### Performance Enhancing Drug Scandals

Performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) are substances used by athletes (both professional and amateur) to improve their athletic ability, not for medicinal or nutritional purposes (Dixon, 2008). PEDs consist of a variety of drugs including, but not limited to, human growth hormone, steroids, stimulants, and painkillers.

PED scandals are a common type scandal seen in almost every sport. There are many reasons why athletes turn to PEDs during the course of their career. Athletes use them to extend the length of their career or to improve from a marginal athlete to an elite athlete (Thornton, Champion, & Ruddell, 2012). By using these types of drugs, athletes can improve their athletic abilities and keep their name on the roster longer than they might have otherwise.

Another common reason for athletes to turn to PEDs is because of the competitive nature sports (Carstairs, 2003). Athletes have the desire to succeed, so some think they can gain a competitive advantage by taking certain drugs. By using specific drugs, they can build muscle mass or perfect their skills, which will help them succeed in their sport.

Even though athletes can improve their performance by using PEDs, it's only an immediate result. Athletes tend to ignore the health risks associated with these drugs because they're more focused on the immediate physical benefits (Crabbe, 2000). They see that PEDs can build muscle mass, improve focus, or limit pain from game play, and decide that's more important than the long-term effects. Another problem is the majority of athletes and trainers lack the pharmaceutical knowledge to understand the long-term risks of these drugs (Dixon, 2008). Without the knowledge of these drugs and their effects, athletes aren't going to stay away from them. PEDs won't lose their appeal because immediate results are what athletes are looking for. By the time an athlete sees the negative results it can be too late.

Athletes need to know ahead of time that PEDs cause harm to their bodies, especially with the added innate stress from the sport (Jarvie & Thornton, 2012). Professional athletes put an extreme amount of physical stress on their bodies to keep up with the level of their sport. PEDs may help maintain their peak physical condition, but further down the road, their body will suffer from damages caused by the drugs.

NFL defensive linesman Lyle Alzado is an example of an athlete who showed the public and other athletes the dangers of PED use. He died at 43-years-old from brain cancer that he

attributed to his steroid use. He began using steroids in 1969, before being drafted by the Denver Broncos in 1971 and continued the use until he retired in 1985. In 1991, when he was diagnosed with cancer, he admitted to using steroids. A year later he passed away. Other forms of cancer including prostate cancer and liver cancer have been linked to steroid use (Stellino, 1992).

Aside from the health risks, sports fans have problems with athletes using PEDs because it can be considered a form of cheating (Crabbe, 2000). The integrity of the sport is questioned when PEDs are present. When athletes use drugs to improve their game, they're focusing on themselves and not the overall integrity of the game. Sports are meant to be a competition between athletes using their natural athletic abilities. PEDs decrease the role of technique, skill, and strategy in a sport because the athlete is using chemically induced strength to succeed.

Sports fans also worry about PEDs because it sets a bad example for younger athletes (Carstairs, 2003). Many professional athletes are seen as role models and if young athletes see their favorite sports figure using drugs to enhance their performance then they're more likely to use these drugs too, and think it's acceptable behavior. Young athletes are unaware of the dangers too. They just seem the professional athletes using them and think it's OK for them to use too.

The business professionals that work with the leagues understand there is a problem with PEDs in sports and hear the concerns from fans. For this reason, all leagues have some type of drug testing. The main reason they test for PEDs is to ensure fair competition (Thornton, Champion, & Ruddell, 2012). The leagues want all athletes to have a level playing field. No player should

have a competitive advantage purely based on the substances they put into their body. The competitive advantages should come from their own athletic ability, strength, and skill.

This wasn't always the case. In a time known as "the steroid era" of baseball from the late 1980's through the early 2000's, MLB executives looked the other way. In 1991, the league banned PEDs but did not implement league-wide testing until 2003. Because of that, many baseball players used PEDs because it was unlikely they'd get caught (ESPN, 2012). The league has since enforced the policy, and drug testing is common of all athletes.

Even though leagues have been working to keep the game fair and ban PEDs, athletes are still using them. Some sports are better known for it than others. For example, hockey has only experienced two PED scandals. In 2005, the NHL put their drug testing policy into place. Since then, only one player has been suspended for the use of banned substances. A second NHL player has been caught using PEDs, but it was through international testing, so the player was only suspended from international play and not NHL games based on a league decision (Richardson, 2013).

Even hockey leagues outside of the NHL have minimal players using PEDs. The most well known case of PED use in Russia's Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) involved New York Ranger prospect Alexei Cherepanov. He died during a league game October 13, 2008 because he suffered from a condition known as myocarditis, where not enough blood gets to the heart. This combined with the steroids found in his system were believed to be the cause of death (ESPN, 2008).

Some minor leagues of hockey like the American Hockey League (AHL) don't currently have a drug testing policy, but under the NHL's new collective bargaining agreement, minor league players will start being tested (Bombulie, 2013).

All this testing may seem unnecessary for hockey because drug use is not common or as beneficial for the athletes in that sport. Hockey players don't benefit from drugs like steroids the way athletes in other sports do. The elite players often play on the Olympic teams, and are subject to strict international testing (that is tougher than U.S. league testing), which also keeps players from turning to drugs. There's no reason to believe that the NHL's drug record is not accurate because of the nature of the sport and the drug testing policies put in place by the leagues (Books, 2013).

On the other end of the spectrum is baseball, possibly because they didn't enforce their drug policy for over a decade. The MLB has had many drug scandals from more historic incidents with Mark McGwire and Barry Bonds to current day incidents involving Ryan Braun and Alex Rodriguez. Many athletes have ruined their reputation after facing a PED scandal, but some extend beyond their own reputation and damage the reputation of their team or league. Again, this is partly due to the lack of consequences players received from the league during the steroid era. The MLB hurt their reputation because they did not address the presence of drug use among players in the league early on.

There are three case study examples that show what a drug scandal can do to both the athlete and the league they represent. By looking at these case study examples, it can be determined if the

athlete damaged their reputation, damaged the league's reputation, and if both were able to recover.

#### *Case Study: Steroids Didn't Break the Home Run Record*

Mark McGwire was a first baseman for the Oakland Athletics and then the St. Louis Cardinals. In 1998, both McGwire and Chicago Cubs outfielder, Sammy Sosa, were on track to break the single-season home run record. The media kept changing focus as to which one would break the record first. On September 8, 1998 McGwire broke the record by hitting his 62<sup>nd</sup> home run and ended the season with a new record of 70 home runs. McGwire ended his career in 2001, with 583 home runs. He also ended his career denying steroid use.

In 2005, McGwire faced a congressional hearing regarding steroid use in the MLB. He denied using steroids during the hearing and stated he advised by his lawyers not answer any questions that could jeopardize the league, teammates, or himself. He even stated, "I'm not going to go into the past or talk about my past. I'm here to make a positive influence on this" (Barrett, 2005).

In January 2010, McGwire came clean and admitted to using steroids intermittently for a decade, including when he broke the home run record. He also stated he did not need the steroids to break the record (ESPN, 2010). He stated that he was given a gift to hit home runs and that steroids would not help the hand-eye coordination needed to hit a home run. Even though he continues to say it was not the drugs, the public still speculates if the steroids had something to do with his record-breaking career.

McGwire also stated, “I wish I’d never played during the steroid era” (ESPN, 2010). Without the temptation of steroids and the widespread popularity of PEDs during the time McGwire played, he claims he wouldn’t have used them.

Following his confession, many people were glad he came clean and admitted to steroid use, while others question his record-setting career. McGwire’s admission led the public to question what kind of baseball player he was. Also, because he wasn’t the only player during the time that admitted to using steroids, it questions the MLB entirely. When there’s a time period in baseball history known as the “steroid era,” the league develops a certain reputation as well.

McGwire is still remembered for his steroid use. Part of this could be because he came clean after he retired and he was unable to prove himself as a great baseball player again. Admitting to using steroids is the one of last thing the public remembers about his career. Another reason could be because he will never be admitted to the Hall of Fame; a decision that was influenced by his confession.

Although McGwire apologized and many forgave him, he’s still associated with steroid use. In an effort to help clean up the MLB and show he’s learned from his actions, McGwire spoke out to other athletes explaining why they should not turn to PEDs. Instead of covering it up like many athletes have tried to do, he’s speaking out about the dangers. This is something that has help restore his image in the public.

He is now back in the league working as the Los Angeles Dodgers hitting instructor, which shows he's had some recovery from the scandal. Although the drug scandal will always be part of his career, McGwire has worked to show fans he knows it was a problem and he hopes the league can change. Just that effort, helps to restore his reputation and overall image.

*Case Study: The Birth of the Merriman Rule*

The NFL has also faced a fair share of PED scandals, but it does not have the same reputation as the MLB. One reason could be the lack of media coverage of NFL players facing PED scandals. There are more stories published about the athletes in the MLB using PEDs compared to those in the NFL. Another reason is because the NFL often has to deals with other scandals bigger than PEDs like Ray Lewis' murder trial or the Miami Dolphins bullying scandal.

This case is unlike any other in the NFL involving PEDs because of the outcome. Shawne Merriman, a linebacker for the San Diego Chargers was named Rookie of the Year in 2005 and has been to the Pro Bowl three times. In 2006, Merriman tested positive for steroids and was suspended for four games (ESPN, 2006). This added to a list of suspensions Merriman had received for other incidents both on and off the field.

Following this event, the league instated a rule that any player who tested positive for PEDs would be ineligible to play in the Pro Bowl that season. This rule is commonly known as the "Merriman Rule." When asked what he thought about the new policy, Merriman stated he embraced the rule and thought it was a good move for the NFL since it ensures players get there on their own merit (Klis, 2007).

Since the incident and implementation of the rule, Merriman has stayed clean of drug use. The league stated that Merriman had tested clean 19 out of 20 times with the one time being his suspension in 2006 (Mortensen, 2007). This announcement was made in an effort to distance Merriman from the new policy put in place, even though that's hard to do when the public knows a policy by a player's name. Even with good intentions, Merriman will always be associated with his one-time steroid use because of the Merriman Rule.

*Case Study: Second Time A-Round*

Alex Rodriguez, "A-Rod," is a third baseman for the New York Yankees, the youngest baseball player to hit 600 home runs, a fourteen-time MLB All Star, and a member of the 2009 World Series Championship team. That same year, Rodriguez came clean saying there was a three-year period where he used steroids and tested positive in 2003 (Thornton, Champion, & Ruddell, 2012). This confession came two years after denying the use of PEDs in an interview with Katie Couric (ESPN, 2009).

Unlike McGwire, Rodriguez's career had not ended when he made his confession, so he had the chance to rebuild his reputation through the game. He apologized for his steroid use saying it was a different time back then and he was under a lot of pressure to perform. He also claimed it would never happen again (ESPN, 2009).

Rodriguez held a press conference with the support of his teammates to answer questions from the media regarding his past steroid use (Kepner, 2009). He admitted he was young, it was a stupid move, and was unsure if he was even using the drugs correctly. He realized fans and the

public may look at him differently, but he was going to work on earning their trust back and playing the game the way it was meant to be played; using natural ability.

After the first incident, Rodriguez was able to rebuild his reputation and has been considered one of baseball's greatest players. The problem is, he was caught in another steroid scandal during the summer of 2013 that involved 12 MLB other players. It was announced on August 5, 2013 that Rodriguez would be suspended until the end of the 2014 season resulting in a 211-game suspension (Brown, 2013). The suspension was broken down to the standard 50-game suspension for a first time offense and increased to 211 games for interfering with the MLB's investigation (Axisa, 2013).

Rodriguez appealed the suspension immediately stating he was not involved and that the documents were fakes. He was the only player involved in the scandal to appeal the league's decision. Rodriguez was able to continue playing for the Yankees until his appeal was heard (Axisa, 2013). This meant Rodriguez continued to play through the conclusion of the 2013 season.

The court case for the appeal of Rodriguez's suspension ended November 21, 2013, but the ruling has not been announced. Arbitrator Frederic Horowitz has 25 days from the conclusion of the trial to declare a verdict, so it will be announced by December 16, 2013 (Axisa, 2013).

The PED case involving Rodriguez is a unique one because he was "forgiven" after the first incident. Fans saw that he was a great player with what seemed like a natural gift. That is

questionable now. This time around, as he pleads his innocence, many fans are unsure of what to believe. In a poll of New York Yankees fans, 37% thought the 211-game suspension was appropriate, 40% thought the suspension was too harsh, and 18% thought the punishment wasn't severe enough (Derespina, 2013).

The mixed survey results also came through at Yankees Stadium. For Rodriguez's first game back following the announcement of the suspension and the appeal, he was greeted with a mix of both cheers and boos. Fans continue to have mixed feelings over Rodriguez as the scandal continues. Fans have also cited that Rodriguez's ego doesn't help their image of him. It's even been said his ego is on steroids (Raissman, 2013). Between that and the denial of drug use, fans are beginning to tire of his case.

It's hard to say what will happen to Rodriguez's reputation as this case moves forward and further develops, especially because of the mix in fan support. Even after his case is settled, his reputation will be damaged and he'll have a lot to do to repair it.

### Sex Scandals

Athletes are caught in negative accusations and scandals outside of the actual sport. PED scandals impact the game itself as opposed to sex scandals that happen off the court and don't pose questions of the integrity of the game. Instead, these scandals question the integrity of the person.

Although an affair may not directly affect the game, sex scandals are almost as common as PED scandals. Some reasons given for why sex scandals are so common include marital problems, feelings of loneliness on road trips, to boost self-esteem or confidence, or because they're in a position of fame and fortune giving them the idea they can do what they want (Hutchins, 2013).

Whatever the reason may be, plenty of professional athletes have been caught in a sex scandal that has made its way into the public by different means. Basketball star Shawn Kemp was the father to seven illegitimate children with six different women, which is a different story from Fred Smoot and 17 other members of the NFL's Minnesota Vikings who rented boats and prostitutes during their bye week in the 2005 season.

The public sees a variety of sex scandals from athletes in many different leagues with a variety of outcomes. Three case studies demonstrate what has happened to athletes and their reputation when a sex scandal surfaces.

#### *Case Study: Football Doesn't Pay the Bills*

Richard Seigler was an NFL linebacker drafted in 2004 by the San Francisco 49ers and was later acquired by the Pittsburgh Steelers playing on the Super Bowl winning team in 2006. Although he's not as well known as other players on the Steelers roster, Seigler made a name for himself another way.

In 2007, Seigler couldn't keep his name out of the news when he was accused of persuading women to become prostitutes and making a living off their earnings. After the arrest, Seigler was

dropped from the Steelers line up (Associated Press, 2007). In 2008, the charges were dropped because the case lacked substantial evidence and the judge saw Seigler wanted to play football again (Associated Press, 2008), but the damage was already done.

Since he wasn't a star-studded player, no team in the NFL was willing to take him after the charges were dropped. Instead, he ended up playing for the Toronto Argonauts in the Canadian Football League (CFL) for two years before taking a job as the defensive line assistant coach at Portland State University, a move that was controversial based on the previous sex scandal. The public was worried what kind of impact this would make on the students since he had been arrested for immoral acts (The Oregonian, 2010).

Seigler never became a big name in football because this scandal ended his professional career before it could really start. The arrest caused him to be dropped from the Steelers and even after the case ended, no team saw a value in adding him to their roster.

What makes this case unique is that Seigler never apologized for anything related to the case. He stated, "the truth will come out" (Associated Press, 2007) and posed the question, why would a professional football player need to use prostitution to make money? Well, based on the way many NFL players spend their money, it's possible one might need to make money on the side to avoid going broke like NFL quarterback, Vince Young.

Although there was no indication that Seigler was having money troubles, the public questions what the purpose of running a prostitution ring would be or if he was even involved. Because

there was no admission or explanation, Seigler's career ended and he has this scandal to thanks for that.

*Case Study: Oops! Big Ben Did it Again*

Ben Roethlisberger, a quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers, is one of the most high profile players in the NFL holding two Super Bowl titles. He has one of the most recognizable names in the NFL based on his awards and record-breaking games. His name is also recognizable because of sexual assault charges filed against him in 2009.

Andrea McNulty filed a civil suit against Roethlisberger stating he raped her during a stay at the hotel she worked at in Lake Tahoe in June 2008. McNulty said she went to Roethlisberger's room to fix his TV and when she turned to leave, he blocked door and then sexually assaulted her (NFL, 2009). She filed the charges against Roethlisberger almost a year after the incident.

McNulty told a different story to a co-worker at the hotel than she did when she filed the charges. The co-worker said McNulty explained it was consensual and was hoping she had become pregnant with a "little Roethlisberger." The co-worker claimed that McNulty had become obsessed with Roethlisberger following the incident. She would fly to Pittsburgh trying to casually bump into him at a Steelers games and looked for his phone number in the hotel records. McNulty's co-worker brought up this conversation so that Roethlisberger wouldn't be charged for something he didn't do (Fuoco, 2009).

This caused rumors to spread that McNulty was only after Roethlisberger's money and attention. To put those rumors to rest, McNulty said she only wanted three things from Roethlisberger: admitting to raping her, an apology, and a \$100,000 donation to the Committee to Aid Abused Women (Bellisle, 2009). The case was eventually settled in January 2012 on a Friday evening to minimize media exposure. It's unknown if Roethlisberger paid McNulty a settlement fee or not as neither side will say anything regarding it (McIntrye, 2012).

This case wouldn't seem so bad for Roethlisberger if it had been his only incident, but a year after the first sexual assault charges, another woman accused him of rape in a bathroom at a club. She stated that Roethlisberger invited her and her friends to the VIP area and ordered them shots before proceeding to take her to a back area and sexually assaulting her (Venezia, 2010).

Roethlisberger denied the claims and stated he had never met the woman. Although there was evidence in the doctor's report that a rape could have occurred, it was inconclusive if it was Roethlisberger. The case was later dropped due to lack of sufficient evidence and the accuser wanting to keep her name out of the public (CNN, 2010).

There were no criminal charges filed against Roethlisberger, but he was suspended for six games for violating the NFL's personal conduct policy. The suspension was later reduced to four games (Paolantonio, 2010).

Roethlisberger may have a reputation of a great football player, but these cases question his reputation off the field. In two years he faced two different sexual assault charges. Either he's an

easy target for sexual assault charges or he's been lucky at getting off without criminal charges. Regardless of which is correct, Roethlisberger has a negative reputation from the sexual assault charges impacting his overall reputation.

Now with a family, Roethlisberger has tried to change his image. He married his wife Ashley in 2011 and they're currently expecting their second child (Associated Press, 2013). The Roethlisberger family is often seen in the media in an effort to distance Ben from the previous sexual assault charges and focus on him as a family man.

#### *Case Study: Personal Foul Off the Court*

Kobe Bryant is a shooting guard for the Los Angeles Lakers, and was drafted right out of high school. He had promoted a clean, respectable lifestyle, which was something different from other players in the National Basketball Association (NBA). That changed in 2003 when a 19-year-old woman from a small town in Colorado claimed Bryant raped her at the hotel she worked at while he was staying there. Bryant came forward admitting to the affair with the woman, but stated that it was consensual, not rape (Associated Press, 2009).

Bryant was arrested on sexual assault charges and could have been sentenced to life in prison if convicted on the charges. As hearings began, both the defense and the prosecution questioned the credibility of the evidence presented (Associated Press, 2003). Some evidence was not solid and both sides had ways to refute it. Also, to help Bryant's case, he chose a female defense attorney to represent him in an effort to limit his image as a sexual predator (Grace, 2003).

Just over a year later, the case was dismissed when accuser informed the court she was unwilling to testify (NBC Sports, 2004). This meant Bryant only had to deal with a civil suit. Once the civil suit was settled it put an end to the case. Bryant apologized to the woman, her family, and everyone involved for the pain he caused over the past year (Associated Press, 2004).

Bryant's wife, Vanessa, stayed by his side during the court case until 2011 when she filed for divorce due to irreconcilable differences. She has since withdrawn the papers because the two of them have been working to overcome their differences (ABC News, 2012).

This case showed that no one is immune to a scandal. Bryant had a great reputation among fans and the media that the scandal came as a surprise to many people. In a survey conducted by ESPN, 55.1% of respondents believed Bryant was innocent and 33.3% said this scandal somewhat tarnished their view of Bryant (Farmer, 2003).

The media didn't do much to help his reputation as he faced this scandal, partly because negative news sells. They took a player that had always been likeable among fans, and attempted to change that view because it made for a better story. A variety of media outlets sided with Bryant's accuser. They ignored pieces of evidence that could have provided Bryant with a verdict of not guilty (Evans, 2003). The media saw Bryant's potential guilty verdict as an appealing news story and chose to take that angle.

The media added to Bryant's tarnished reputation. Since they focused on the negative side, his reputation was damaged even more than the scandal did by itself. On the bright side for Bryant,

the scandal didn't ruin his reputation forever. Because he took responsibility and apologized for his actions, many fans forgave him. He is still considered one of the best players in the NBA.

### Violence Scandals

Athletes can find themselves caught in a violence scandal that can take place during the game or after hours. Violence is prevalent in sports mainly because many sports are aggressive by nature (Thornton, Champion, Ruddell, 2012). Football has tackling, baseball has beanballs, and hockey has fights.

Violence is not a new phenomenon in sports. Blood sports were common among the ancient Greeks and Romans (Sekot, 2009). Sports have always had violence in its roots, partly because fans find the aggression aspect entertaining. Touch football is not nearly as exciting as football with tackling and hockey fights get the crowds standing on their feet cheering.

Although aggression is a part of sports that will never disappear, it can be taken to a violent level. Former NFL receiver Greg Camarillo stated, "It takes a unique human being to go out there on the field for three, four hours and basically beat up on somebody across from you and then just completely turn it off" (Pelissero, 2013). Not being able to "turn off" that aggression can sometimes lead to violent situations or scandals.

Leagues have put rules in place to keep violence at a minimum and maintain the safety of the players. Players will receive penalties or fouls for violent plays or suspensions for extreme acts that pose a danger to other players during the game. The leagues may have some control over

what happens during the game, but sometimes athletes take their violence off the field and into the public. In these cases, athletes can face criminal charges. Being involved in a criminal lawsuit will heavily impact an athlete's reputation. They could go from having a great reputation as an athlete to a horrible reputation over assault or murder charges.

Ray Lewis, former linebacker of the Baltimore Ravens, faced this situation in 2000 after winning the Super Bowl. He faced murder charges along with two of his friends from a fight at a club while celebrating the win. Lewis pled guilty to misdemeanor charges and agreed to testify against the others involved to avoid jail time (Thomas, 2013). He was sentenced to one-year probation.

Lewis recovered from the alleged murder charges and continued to play for the Ravens. The case made its way into the media again when Lewis and the Ravens returned to the Super Bowl in 2013. The public forgot about the good reputation Lewis had as a football player and again focused on the negative reputation from the former assault.

When athletes act in violent ways, it changes the way the public views them. It can also change the way the public views the league. Currently the NFL is facing an image problem because of the Miami Dolphins bullying scandal involving Richie Incognito.

Incognito is accused of bullying rookie teammate Jonathan Martin and using racial slurs against him. Martin left the Dolphins because of it and Incognito has been suspended while the NFL

conducts an investigation. Incognito claims it's just locker room talk or a "friendly fire" and he considers Martin a friend (Bell, 2013).

If this is just considered "locker room culture" the NFL and the Miami Dolphins franchise have to deal with how this impacts their images. If both are allowing this to occur, it questions the integrity of the NFL and the safety of the NFL players.

It's obvious that aggression and violence will not leave the world of sports whether it's on the field, off the field, or in the locker room. There are three case studies that demonstrate how acts of violence can impact an athlete's reputation.

#### *Case Study: Hockey Players Can Hold a Grudge*

Hockey is a sport where violence is arguably a main component of the game. Players can be checked into the boards and it's the only sport where fighting is allowed and considered part of the game. Even though there have been horrific fights in the game like the stick fight in 1969 between Ted Green and Wayne Maki that ultimately ended Green's career, fighting in the NHL has continued.

Since incidents like that, the NHL has worked to ensure player safety. There is acceptable violence and unacceptable violence based on the Collective Bargaining Agreement set in place by the NHL and the NHL Player's Association. In 2004, that line was crossed in an incident between Todd Bertuzzi and Steve Moore, which led to the end of another player's career.

The incident began on February 16, 2004 when Moore, a Colorado Avalanche rookie, injured the Vancouver Canuck's team captain and the league's leading scorer, Markus Näslund, by checking him in the head while Näslund was reaching for the puck. Näslund suffered from a concussion because of the hit. No penalty was given to Moore as it was deemed a legal hit by the referees at the time (Mossman, 2004).

After the game Näslund's teammates voiced their anger of the situation. Brad May stated there would be a bounty out for Moore, and Bertuzzi called him a "piece of shit" (Farber, 2004). These feelings surfaced in a rematch between the two teams a month later. The Avalanche opened the game by scoring five unanswered goals in the first period (ESPN, 2004). With nothing to lose, many Canucks players went after Moore trying to start a fight. Moore dropped the gloves with Matt Cooke in the first, but that wasn't enough to satisfy the rest of the Canucks.

They continued after Moore, but he didn't answer back. During the third period, Bertuzzi tried to start a fight and struck Moore in the back of the head. Moore fell to the ice, Bertuzzi fell on top of him, and other players from both teams piled on top of both of them. As the referees pulled the players off Moore, it became apparent he was seriously hurt. Moore had to be taken off the ice on a stretcher. He suffered from a fractured neck and a concussion, which ultimately lead to the end of his career (Diamos, 2005).

Bertuzzi appeared at a press conference two days later where he issued a tearful apology to Moore, his family, and the Colorado Avalanche franchise. In his apology, Bertuzzi stated, "I don't play the game that way, because I'm not a mean spirited person" (CBC News, 2004).

The following day Bertuzzi received a suspension with no apparent end. The suspension lasted for the remainder of the season, which cost him 13 regular season games and seven playoff games. It continued through the 2004-2005 season lock out. The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) also suspended Bertuzzi from international play, so he was unable to join many of the NHL players overseas while the league was locked out (Bloomberg News, 2004).

On August 8, 2005, Commissioner Gary Bettman announced that Bertuzzi would be reinstated for the 2005-2006 season. Commissioner Bettman felt that Bertuzzi had paid the price for his actions, and this was the best result for the sport (Diamos, 2005).

The suspension was not the only punishment Bertuzzi faced for the attack. Bertuzzi was charged with assault. He pled guilty to the charges, receiving probation and community service as opposed to a year and a half in prison. Since that lawsuit, Moore has attempted to sue Bertuzzi in many different court systems for the physical injuries he experienced and the emotional damage the attack did to his parents. The lawsuit has been continually pushed back and changed, and is now scheduled to take place in 2014, ten years after the hit occurred (Frei, 2013).

Despite the suspension and lawsuit, Bertuzzi has remained a strong player in the NHL. He currently plays for the Detroit Red Wings, and has not faced another incident like the one in 2004. Even though he will participate in the occasional on-ice scrap, his fighting is within the NHL rules. Most fans have forgotten about incident and only know Bertuzzi for his impeccable hockey skills. Even though the lawsuit is still underway, there has been little media coverage of

it, so the public doesn't have the reminder of the incident. Instead, the coverage Bertuzzi receives is around his performance in games.

#### *Case Study: Malice at the Palace*

Sometimes violence extends from what is seen during the game to after the game, and can even spread to the audience. On November 19, 2004 "the most infamous brawl in NBA history" (Abrams, 2012) started on the court and ended in the stands. The Detroit Pistons were hosting the Indiana Pacers at the Palace of Auburn Hills. With 45.9 seconds left in the game, Pistons forward, Ben Wallace, was fouled by Pacers forward, Ron Artest, during a layup attempt. Wallace shoved Artest because of the foul, which lead to a fight between the two of them and several other players from their teams (ESPN, 2004).

When the fight was broken up, Artest went to lie down on the scorer's table and calm himself down. While lying there, a spectator tossed a full Diet Coke on Artest from the stands. He quickly jumped into the stands and began throwing punches at fans as he tried to figure out who hit him with the drink (ESPN, 2004). Artest's teammate, Stephen Jackson, also entered the stands throwing punches as Pistons fans continued to toss items onto the court at Pacers players. The fight escalated even more as other teammates from the Pacers joined the fight (Peters & Robbins, 2004). When security and Auburn Hills Police finally broke up the fight, there were nine injured spectators, two of which were taken to a nearby hospital (ESPN, 2004).

In the locker room, Artest asked Jackson if he thought the players would be in trouble for what transpired. Jackson replied, "we'll be lucky if we have a freaking job" (Abrams, 2012). Both the

league and the court system punished the players involved in the brawl. Artest was suspended for the season and lost almost \$5 million of his salary. Artest and Jackson, along with two other Pacers players, Jermaine O'Neal and Anthony Johnson, received one year's probation, community service, and anger management therapy (ESPN, 2004). The spectator that threw the Diet Coke on Artest also faced criminal charges of misdemeanor assault and battery and was sentenced to 30 days in jail with two years probation (Abrams, 2012). The spectator was the only person involved in the fight that actually served jail time, which questions if the athletes received special treatment because of their fame.

Upon Artest's return the following season, he requested to be traded to another team. Many of his teammates felt betrayed because they put their careers on the line for him when they had his back during the fight (Abrams, 2012). The trade didn't help. Many basketball fans still booed Artest in different arenas the team traveled to, so he legally changed his name to Metta World Peace (Bolch, 2011).

The name change was done for professional reasons and is supposed to be meaningful, inspirational, and to inspire youth around the world. He may have spread that message if his bad reputation had ended instead of continued as his career progressed.

World Peace has tackled Boston Celtics player Rajon Rondo, elbowed Oklahoma City Thunder player James Harden in the head, smacked Houston Rockets player Jeremy Lin, punched Pistons player Brandon Knight. Even with a name like "Metta World Peace," actions speak louder than

words. The way he acts is what keeps his negative reputation over what his name is. As long as he continues to play the game in an aggressive way, his reputation will also be negative.

#### *Case Study: Topping the List*

Michael Vick is currently a quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles, was the first overall draft pick by the Atlanta Falcons in 2001, and played in the Pro Bowl four times. In addition to those impressive aspects of his career, Vick has also topped of Forbes 2013 list of Most Disliked Athletes (Forbes, 2013).

Since 2004, Vick had faced multiple controversies including drug scandals, sex scandals, and violence scandals. In 2007, he faced the biggest scandal of his career when federal authorities charged him a felony of operating an illegal dog fighting ring (Associated Press, 2007).

During a drug investigation, police searched a home owned by Vick where his cousin lived. They ended up finding 66 dogs and a variety of equipment associated with dog fighting. There were traces of blood found in a room in the garage and some dogs had scarring consistent with dog fighting (Associated Press, 2007). At the start of the investigation evidence was lacking to link Vick. Eventually an anonymous source involved in dog fights came forward calling Vick a “heavyweight” in the dog fighting community (Naqi, 2007). Following the information from the confidential source, the case began to gain momentum and the police were able to gain substantial evidence to charge Vick and three others (Pasquarelli, 2007). This evidence provided information that Vick wasn’t just running the dog fights, but tortured or killed the dogs that didn’t perform well (Kruse, 2009).

Vick was accused of financing the ring and participating in dog fights and executions. Vick apologized, took a plea deal, and stated he was going to take full responsibility for his actions (Associated Press, 2007). He pleaded guilty to "conspiracy to travel in interstate commerce in aid of unlawful activities and to sponsor a dog in an animal fighting venture" (Dormin, 2007) and was sentenced to 23 months in prison (CNN, 2007). Aside from criminal charges, he was also suspended from the NFL indefinitely and lost all his endorsements (Kruse, 2009).

What separated this case from most is that it involved animals, a territory that's not typical in athletic scandals. It was also the first time any athlete faced a scandal like this, which sticks in people's memories.

After being released from prison, Vick had an uphill battle. Vick stated he was going to redeem himself, but there's a lot he was going to have to do to achieve that. The public was extremely upset for what happened, partly because we're a society that loves animals. The Tampa Bay Times reported, "Americans love second chances. But, maybe not as much as they love dogs. We live in a country, after all, that last year spent more than \$43 billion on pet supplies" (Kruse, 2009). When people are so concerned about animals and pets, this case sits center stage.

Realizing this, Vick was determined to prove he had changed. First and foremost, he made a heartfelt, sincere apology. The apology was so good, one New York Times blogger questioned if he had hired an apology coach for it (Collins & Ross, 2009). Vick also partnered with the Humane Society of the United States because he felt he could educate people on the dangers of dog fighting and work toward ending it (Kruse, 2009).

Since Vick began rebuilding his reputation and worked toward showing the public he change, the NFL reinstated him and he signed a contract the Philadelphia Eagles. There were very mixed feelings about Vick being allowed to play again because the public felt like it sent a negative message. Others agreed that everyone makes mistakes and Vick's life and career shouldn't end because of this one scandal (Mortensen, Paolantonio, & Pasquarelli, 2009).

Vick did a lot of things right to move past the unlawful dog fighting ring. He apologized, took responsibility for his actions, and tried to make it right. Those are all elements that help an athlete trying to rebuild their reputation. Even though he did the right things, it wasn't enough to make the majority of the public forgive and forget as he tops the "Most Disliked Professional Athletes" list for another year (Forbes, 2013). He continues the battle to overcome this controversial scandal as he continues his career.

### Case Study Take-Aways

Through these case studies it can be determined that some athletes can recover from a scandal and others can't. These are due to a variety of factors like admitting and apologizing for what they did, taking responsibility, and being aware of their actions moving forward. These examples can provide insight to the framework that will help athlete's rebuild their reputation following a scandal.

What's obvious from these cases is that the athlete needs to apologize if they want to move forward. Before anyone can forgive the athlete for what they've done, a sincere apology needs to be given. It doesn't matter the scandal, the sport, or the athlete, an apology must occur. If the

public doesn't believe the athlete regrets their actions, then his or her reputation will never be restored.

Another commonality with athletes that have successfully rebuilt their reputation is they've learned from their mistake and changed their behavior. As explained above, Kobe Bryant redeemed himself and worked on his marriage. The public may remember his transgression, but the media attention he gets now is for his skills as a basketball player. The athletes that have kept their image clean since the transgression show they've learned from their mistake and made an effort moving forward to avoid repeating it.

Those that haven't learned from the scandal, often face an additional one, which can damage their reputation even more. Ben Roethlisberger faced two sexual assault charges, making it harder to recover. The public is willing to forgive once, but reoccurring behavior is harder to forgive. Roethlisberger showed he did not learn from his mistake the first time around when the second incident happened.

These are just a couple aspects that have worked for athletes that have rebuilt their reputation. Between these methods and the guidance from PR professionals, athletes can overcome a scandal, restore their reputation, and succeed in their sport.

### **Chapter 3: Primary Research**

There have been a variety of cases with athletes that have or have not overcome a scandal. What isn't reported on is what their PR strategists have done to help them. The public sees the athlete's

statements, apologies, and actions following the scandal, but that's it. Most of the time, the athlete is taking these actions because they've gotten advice from an expert in crisis communication and reputation management.

To determine what PR executives do for these athletes, one must take a look at the behind the scenes work. Almost everything the athlete does when trying to overcome a scandal is based on advice from their PR adviser. At most, the public hears the names of the professionals helping, but not their work. And even if their name is in the public, it doesn't mean people know who they are or what they've done in the past. Only the big names in crisis communication like Judy Smith resonate with the public.

It's not enough to know what the executives are doing though. They can do all the work in the world for an athlete, but it won't rebuild the athlete's reputation if the public doesn't accept it. Again, in order to find out how the public responds to the tactics an athlete uses when rebuilding their reputation, research had to be done.

Interviews and a survey were conducted to provide insight into athletic reputation management. The interviews show various strategies and tactics used in the face of a crisis. The survey examines how the public reacts to athletic scandals and what athletes can do to earn forgiveness.

### Interviews

Three interviews were conducted with communication professionals in the sports industry to discover what some of the major professional sports leagues have done to handle an athletic

scandal and how they prepared their athletes. The executives interviewed work for either a specific major league sport or an outside agency with a particular league as their client. Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes and the questions that were asked can be found in Appendix A.

Each interview presented information that was consistent with prior secondary research and introduced new information regarding what is done to help athletes build, maintain, or restore a positive reputation. These executives also gave insight into what has been done in the past to rebuild an athlete's reputation when they've faced a scandal.

Before an athlete can rebuild their reputation, they have to come clean about what has happened. Brian McIntyre, Senior Communications Advisor to the Commissioner of the NBA shared that athletes cannot hide the truth. "It's the biggest mistake an athlete can make," he said (B. McIntyre, personal communication, October 15, 2013). When an athlete hides the truth, it questions their credibility. Any statement they make after the truth finally comes out will be less believable because they've lied in the past.

Greg Aiello, Senior Vice President of Public Relations for the NFL also mentioned the truth needs to come out. He stated the first thing the league does when rumors of a scandal start is to get the facts from athlete, team, agent, and other parties at stake (G. Aiello, personal communication, October 17, 2013). When the league has all the information they can take the proper steps to help the athlete overcome the negative event that has transpired.

Once all the facts are determined, the athlete needs to come clean to the public. Kevin Sullivan, Founder of Kevin Sullivan Communications, a firm specializing in crisis communication, stated an athlete facing a scandal needs to “tell it first, tell it yourself, and tell it all” (K. Sullivan, personal communication, October 31, 2013). He also mentioned that one of the best ways to do this is to get the athlete a full-length, tell-all interview with someone like Oprah Winfrey or Robin Roberts. This allows the athlete to explain their side of the story and give detailed facts. Although this type of interview can’t always be done immediately following the news of a scandal, the athlete still needs to tell the story. Making a statement to the media or going on *The Today Show* or *Good Morning America* for a short segment is an easy way to do this. When the athlete gets the news out first, they’re more in control of where it goes.

When telling the story, the athlete needs to have some type of message that is consistently told to each media outlet (G. Aiello, personal communication, October 17, 2013). The story can’t be different from one to another. When multiple news sources have different information, it hurts the athlete because the public doesn’t know what is true and what is not. When the same information is presented to everyone, it builds the athlete’s credibility as they face the scandal.

The message also needs to be simple. A simple message is more easily understood and gets to the point an athlete needs to make regarding the situation (B. McIntyre, personal communication, October 15, 2013). Everyone helping the athlete will use the simple, consistent message to ensure nothing is misconstrued.

Besides telling their story and getting the message out quickly, the athlete needs to also apologize for their actions. Staying consistent with previous research, all the executives interviewed stated that apologizing is the best thing an athlete can do when trying to rebuild their reputation. More importantly, the apology must be sincere. An athlete can't give a half-hearted apology; because the public will see through it.

A problem that occurs among athletes is they don't want to apologize because they don't want to admit they've made a mistake (B. McIntrye, personal communication, October 15, 2013). However, they won't be able to move forward unless they apologize. "People are quick to forgive and forget, because we all make mistakes," said McIntrye (personal communication, October 15, 2013).

Following the apology, an athlete needs to make a dedicated effort to change their actions. The words of an apology will start the recovery process, but the public won't forgive an athlete if the statements made are not acted upon.

Sullivan shared an example of this with the Michael Vick case. Vick planned to help the Humane Society end dog fighting. When the Humane Society was interviewed, they stated they were going to give Vick a chance to see what he could do. This helped boost Vick's reputation after the scandal because it was a third-party endorsement (K. Sullivan, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

Aiello also shared his insight on Vick's case. He stated, “[Vick] overcame one of the worst scandals possible. He acknowledged it, suffered the consequences, and once he was able to prove himself again, the commissioner gave him a chance to come back” (G. Aiello, personal communication, October 17, 2013).

Vick did exactly what the professionals say needs to be done to rebuild a reputation. He admitted and apologized for what he had done. He took his punishment, which resulted in jail time and when he was released, he showed he was committed to changing his actions.

Sullivan gives a lot of credit to Vick's advisor, Judy Smith, for his ability to overcome the scandal. He said she did a really good job with this case and set Vick up with the right opportunities to show his willingness to change. Not only did she advise him and provide him with opportunities to overcome it, he took her advice and acted upon it (K. Sullivan, personal communication, October 31, 2013). By showing he was willing to take Smith's advice he showed the public he wanted to move on and was starting to overcome the scandal.

Not all athletes are willing to take the advice of PR professionals like Vick though. Sometimes athletes think they know better and will disregard what the experts say. These athletes will end up doing their own thing, which can ultimately hurt their reputation in the long run.

Sullivan shared an example of this with regard to former baseball star Mark McGwire. As mentioned in the case study, McGwire stated in his tell-all interview with Bob Costas that steroids were not the reason he broke the home run record. McGwire was told not to say that by

his PR advisor, but McGwire disregarded the advice and said it anyway. After the interview, Costas was asked how he thought it went. Costas replied by saying McGwire was no better off now than he was before the interview started (K. Sullivan, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Although cases like this have happened, McIntyre said most of the athletes that disregard PR advice come back and admit they should have listened to begin with (B. McIntyre, personal communication, October 15, 2013).

The NFL has faced this as well. One thing they do to help this problem have an in-house PR team for each football team in the league. Not to say other leagues don't do this, but Aiello cited this as a benefit for players.

Because there's a PR office for each team, they are able to provide media training and advice for the players at the stadium at almost any time. When the players have been working with the same PR professionals, they're going to be more willing to trust their advice. (G. Aiello, personal communication, October 17, 2013). Long-standing relationships are key in building trust, and that's important to have when an athlete is trying to move past a scandal. If they don't trust the person, they're less likely to take the advice, which could hurt them in the end.

The relationship between the PR professionals and an athlete isn't the only important relationship that needs to be considered during a scandal. The relationship between the league, the athlete, and the media is also an important one.

McIntyre stated, “The league and PR counsels must have a relationship with the media because they play a major role in the perception of a scandal” (B. McIntyre, personal communication, October 15, 2013). The media can both help and hurt an athlete’s reputation. They will broadcast the negative side of the story since bad news “sells.” However, they will also show positive attributes as the athlete moves through the rebuilding process.

In order to get the media on the athlete’s side, the athlete needs to be available for the media to speak to them. Accessibility is important. Even if the athlete doesn’t want to face the media and admit to the scandal, it will help them in the long run. The league will do their best to encourage the athlete to be available during the scandal so that facts and messages are coming from source and not the speculation the media creates (G. Aiello, personal communication, October 17, 2013).

After the athlete has addressed the media and faced the scandal head on, they can move forward. “Shift to the future when possible,” stated Sullivan, “Always deal with the bad first, and then shift to the positive” (personal communication, October 31, 2013).

As the media sees the athlete move toward the future by changing their actions to reflect a better reputation, the media will start to shift the story. The media is not going to continue to tell the same story if there isn’t new information present. They’ll move on to something else. It could be a positive story for the athlete or it may be something completely different. That’s why it’s important to consider the relationship with the media before, during, and after a scandal.

Leagues must build a relationship and work with the media when a scandal isn't taking place. If there's a relationship with reporters of key media outlets, then they'll be more inclined to report the positive side of the story when a scandal occurs.

McIntyre shared that he would often take the NBA players to the offices of certain publications to meet the reporters that cover the basketball games and the sporting industry in general (B. McIntyre, October 15, 2013). The NFL does a similar thing and will give press passes to key reporters to cover the games and meet the players in the locker rooms afterwards (G. Aeillo, personal communication, October 17, 2013).

The leagues will also pitch stories to the reporters regarding community relations. NBA Cares is one example of this. The organization helps the league's overall image in addition to the image of the athletes. NBA players are required to put in a certain number of community service hours with NBA Cares per year and most of them exceed the minimum requirement. McIntyre stated, "Sports have the ability to make a difference in the world" (personal communication, October, 15, 2013). Besides NBA Cares, he shared an example of the basketball players working to rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. "The athletes that helped didn't have to be forced. They just did it," said McIntyre (personal communication, October 15, 2013).

Just because these athletes have fame and fortune, doesn't mean they're not willing to help out. When the public sees the athletes giving back to the community, they develop a positive image of the athletes. Regardless of whether or not athletes are facing a scandal, this kind of publicity helps them build and maintain a positive reputation.

Besides giving back to the community, there are plenty of things an athlete can do to create and maintain a good reputation. Preparation doesn't begin when a scandal occurs. The leagues do their best to prepare their athletes for the fame of being a professional athlete from the start.

The NBA has a rookie-training program that all their athletes are required to go through after they've been drafted. This program teaches them how to be a professional in the public eye and learn the culture of the NBA. There are also follow-up programs that address these topics and remind the athletes of proper behavior as they continue their career (B. McIntyre, personal communication, October 15, 2013).

The NFL has similar programs for their rookies and veterans. They also work directly with colleges to help athletes before entering the league so they know what they're getting into (G. Aiello, personal communication, October 17, 2013). These programs serve as a basis for athletes to learn about what their career holds and what the sport industry really consists of.

The leagues take an interest in their players from the start. They do the best they can to prepare athletes for fame, and help them if a problem does occur. As long as an athlete follows the advice of the PR professionals and wants to have a good reputation again, they'll be able to do it.

### Survey

A survey of sports fans was conducted to determine how the athletes that have faced a scandal are viewed and if the leagues do enough to train or rehab their athletes. The survey consisted of 26 questions both multiple choice and open-ended. There were a total of 137 participants, 85

males and 52 females, who took the survey. Of them, 121 qualified to complete the survey by stating they consider themselves a “sports fan.” The survey questions and responses can be found in Appendix B.

The objective of the survey was to determine how sports fans perceive the overall image of the four most popular major league sports (NFL, NBA, MLB, & NHL) and if they think these leagues prepare the athletes for being in the public eye. It also examines if athletes can overcome a scandal and why sports fans are willing to forgive for a transgression.

### *Views of the Leagues*

Participants were asked to rank the leagues in order from the one with the best reputation to the one with the worst reputation. The most common pattern ranked the leagues in this order: (1) NHL, (2) MLB, (3) NFL, (4) NBA. Although the survey results showed that NBA had the worst reputation, the results also showed the majority of participants thought the NFL had the most athletes facing a crisis. The NHL had the least amount of athletes facing a crisis, which correlates with results that participants think the NHL does the best job of preparing their athletes for being in the public eye (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). Some participants shared their thoughts about the leagues as to why some have better reputations than others.

One survey respondent shared his thoughts on why the NHL has a fewer number of scandals than other leagues, “Hockey is an expensive sport with a higher degree of time commitment from an early age. The process of becoming an elite level hockey player focuses more on character, intelligence, coachability and [competition] level rather than raw skill. This helps weed out

players with less positive attributes and therefore results in NHL players having far less social issues" (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013).

Another participant agreed that the NHL had the least amount of scandals but also noted many of the players are Canadian and European, and thought the cultural difference may attribute to why the hockey experiences fewer scandals than other leagues (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). This participant raised a very interesting point. Many NHL players do come from other countries and are in the league for the love of the sport. They're not as focused on the fame of being a professional athlete. They are focused on the sport, which means they are less likely to be caught in a transgression because they'd risk their position on the team.

Another common thought was that players in the NHL usually spend time on a minor league team before moving to a major league team. The same can be said for baseball. The MLB ranked second for the best reputation on the list and some respondents attributed that success to the minor leagues. In fact, 60% of respondents thought the athletes that come through the minor league were better prepared for fame than those drafted and immediately placed on a major league team (M. Lavens, survey, November 6, 2013).

One participant stated, "I believe Major League Baseball best prepares its athletes for the public eye because many times [players] are not drafted immediately onto a major league team. [They] must work [their] way through the minors" (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013).

Even though many survey respondents thought the NHL and the MLB gave their athletes some preparation for the fame they receive as a professional, 36% thought all four leagues in general did not do enough to prepare their athletes. Only 7% of participants think professional athletes are prepared for fame (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). After speaking with the professionals in the field, it's clear that the leagues are preparing their athletes, it's just something of which the public is unaware.

Overall, sports fans seem to believe most leagues lack the preparation and training for their athletes to deal with fame. Those that thought the leagues prepared their athletes attributed it to the minor leagues seen in baseball and hockey, which is why these leagues are viewed as having better reputations than football or basketball.

### *Athletes Overcoming Scandals*

Sports fans were asked if their favorite athlete had ever faced a scandal and 14% said yes. Of those respondents, 75% said they forgave the athlete for the transgression. Those that forgave the athlete said the main reason was because the athlete admitted to the scandal and apologized (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013).

Even the participants whose favorite athletes have not faced a scandal stated an athlete facing a scandal needs to apologize for the transgression. When asked what an athlete can do to rebuild their reputation after a scandal, many participants said admit to the scandal and apologize (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). As seen from the case study examples and the information provided by the experts in the field, athletes that have faced a scandal head on and apologized for

what they've done often rebuilt their reputation. Fans are the ones that have to forgive the athlete in order for their reputation to be restored. If fans want an admission or an apology, that's what the athlete will have to give.

Another common response was to change the way they acted after the scandal. Some participants thought athletes could volunteer for a charitable cause, while others said the athlete needs to show they're making an effort to "discontinue the behavior that landed them in the situation" (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). Again, this is consistent with the information the executives provided in their interviews. Overall, there was a general consensus that an athlete trying to rebuild their reputation needs to apologize and take actions moving forward to show they've changed.

Sports fans were asked to name an athlete they thought overcame a scandal and rebuilt their reputation. Kobe Bryant was a popular response for a lot of participants. As seen in the case study, he did a lot to rebuild his reputation and maintain it once it was positive again. Other athletes that were popular choices include Tiger Woods, Ray Lewis, Michael Vick, and Jhonny Peralta (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013).

Fans were also asked to name an athlete that has not been able to rebuild their reputation following a scandal. Alex Rodriguez was a common answer most likely because he is now facing a steroid scandal for the second time and has not admitted to using drugs this time. Other common answers were Pete Rose, Lance Armstrong, and again, Michael Vick (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013).

Vick was not the only athlete whose name showed up as an answer to both questions, but his was the most common. It shows that Vick has done some work to rebuild his reputation, but not enough to make it go away in the participants' opinion. Another reason could be because he faced scrutiny from animal rights groups like PETA. This could explain why he topped the list of most disliked athletes.

That's very different from Bryant, whose name only appeared on the list of athletes that rebuilt their reputation and not on the list of those that did in the participants' opinion (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). This goes to show that the public is willing to forgive and forget based on the type of scandal, how an athlete handles it from the beginning, and what the athlete is advised to do.

Sports fans understand athletes are human too, and that everyone makes mistakes (M. Lavens, survey, November 8, 2013). As long as an athlete acts appropriately in the situation and works to move on from their prior actions, fans are willing to forgive. It's when they hide the truth or fail to learn from their actions, fans are more unwilling to forgive regardless of what type of scandal.

#### **Chapter 4: Contribution to the Field - A Set of Best Practices**

As seen in the case study examples and the research conducted, there are certain steps an athlete must take to rebuild their reputation. Based on the information from secondary research and data collected, it can be determined that there are four things athletes need to do when restoring their reputation after a scandal. These best practices include:

- An admission to the facts
- A consistent message

- A sincere apology
- A commitment to changing their actions.

### Best Practice 1: Give Us The Facts

The communication professionals in the sports industry agree that the truth will always come out. Kevin Sullivan took it a step further to say that the story needs to come from athlete, not any random person involved. By doing this the athlete can have better control of the story and take responsibility for their actions.

The survey also showed that sports fans want athletes to admit what they've done. The public is not going to forgive an athlete if they're trying to cover the truth. As mentioned before, fans are forgiving when an athlete owns up to their actions because they understand everyone makes mistakes.

The athletes that admit to what they did are more often forgiven than the athletes that deny everything. Looking back at the case studies, former NFL player Shawne Merriman and NBA player Kobe Bryant both recovered from their transgression because they took ownership for what they did.

Merriman admitted to using performance enhancing drugs (PEDs). He supported the policy that was put in place following his scandal that stated an athlete can't attend a Pro Bowl if they've tested positive for PED use during the season. Merriman didn't deny the steroid use and didn't try to make a case against the NFL. Instead he admitted to using PEDs, accepted his punishment, and has continued with his career until he retired in March 2013. The only thing that still

connects him to PEDs is the policy often referred to as the “Merriman Rule.” This may cause fans to remember he once used PEDs, but since he stayed clean during the remainder of his career and is no longer playing, he less he’ll be associated with the policy.

Bryant also admitted to his scandal when he was accused of rape. He admitted to having an affair, but stated it was consensual. He got his side of the story out and told the facts on what happened. He was quick at getting the facts, which helped him gain control over the story. Because he was willing to admit he had an affair instead of trying to hide it, Bryant’s reputation recovered.

These two athletes show how important it is to admit to the scandal and share the facts. MLB player Alex Rodriguez and NFL player Ben Roethlisberger are two that did not admit to their charges, and it has negatively impacted them.

Rodriguez lied about using PEDs multiple times, but then came clean saying there was a three-year period he used them. He also said he would never use them again. Had the story ended there he would have been able to move on with his career and be a success story like Bryant and Merriman. Rodriguez didn’t keep that promise and is currently caught in another PED scandal. Again, he’s denied the usage and is stating the league is trying to ruin his career. Even though there is evidence to show he did you PEDs, he continues to deny it. Fans are not responding well to his denials because they’ve seen him deny this before and it’s damaging to his overall reputation.

Roethlisberger also denied the charges against him. Both times that he faced sexual assault charges he denied it. The first time it's possible for the athlete to be wrongfully charged if a crazed fan is looking for money or publicity, but with the second incident, fans become suspicious of a pattern. Roethlisberger's reputation has suffered because he has faced sexual assault charges twice and has denied them both times. Even though he's cleaned up his act and is married with kids, many people still associate him with the rape charges.

These cases show how important admission is to fan forgiveness and reputation restoration. Without admitting to the scandal and presenting the public with the facts, an athlete has a more difficult time rebuilding their reputation.

### Best Practice 2: Consistent Messaging

In addition to presenting the facts, an athlete must also use a consistent message when informing the public of the situation. An athlete can't take a message to one person and then something different to another. If they do, no one knows what the real story is and rumors start, which could hurt the athlete's reputation even more. This is why the communication executives in the sports industry say the message an athlete gives to the press and the public has to be consistent.

The PED scandals are an example of this. With Merriman's admission, he stated that he used steroids, it was wrong, and he accepted the league's decision to suspend him. That message was reported in all the media outlets covering the story. It's a different story when it comes to Rodriguez. In fact, he did the opposite.

Rodriguez did not keep his story consistent. Although this happened over a longer period of time, there were different reports. He told Katie Couric during an interview he never used PEDs, and then two years later admitted he had and had previously lied about it. He stated he would never use them again, but today he's faced with the same scandal. He did not keep a consistent message when asked about using PEDs. He had the opportunity to come clean, but decided not to. Then he goes to a different media outlet later on and admits it. When he did admit it, many articles cited the Couric interview and how he denied it back then. This adds to why the public is less inclined to believe him now that he faces this a second time and they are less likely to forgive him.

Keeping a consistent message is key because it leaves limited room for the public to question the statement. If the message changes, no one knows what's true and what isn't.

If the public can't find the truth, they won't forgive.

### Best Practice 3: The Apology

One of the most important parts of rebuilding an athlete's reputation is the apology. No one wants to forgive someone who is not apologetic for the wrongful action they did. The public needs to hear a sincere apology from the athlete before they can forgive. All the executives interviewed said it is key for an athlete trying to rebuild their reputation. The majority of the sports fans surveyed stated that athletes needed to apologize to earn forgiveness.

Former NFL player Richard Seigler was the only athlete of the case study examples that didn't apologize for his actions. No admission and no apology mean the athlete can earn the public's forgiveness. His NFL career ended following the scandal.

NHL player Todd Bertuzzi, on the other hand, made a sincere apology and overcame the scandal he was faced with. Bertuzzi stated he was disappointed in himself for letting the violence on the ice get out of hand and that he wasn't a mean spirited person. He apologized to Steve Moore, the entire Colorado Avalanche franchise, and all others affected by the incident. Their apology was sincere, heartfelt, and emotional. Seeing an apology like that shows Bertuzzi wasn't just taking PR advice and trying to win back fans, it showed he was truly sorry for what happened to Moore. That's what makes all the difference.

Fans want to see that the athlete knows they were wrong and they feel bad about what they did. An apology showing that is more likely to earn forgiveness and help the athlete's reputation.

#### Best Practice 4: Future Actions

The apology gets the athlete on the right track for rebuilding their reputation and it will earn forgiveness from the fans, but it won't fully restore the athlete's reputation. The athlete must show they're willing to make a change and not repeat the actions that got them in trouble in the first case.

Although the communication professionals said the apology is the most important component, they also stated the appropriate actions have to follow the apology for a reputation to actually be

restored. Actions speak louder than words, and that's what an athlete needs to do to rebuild their reputation.

The majority of the sports fans surveyed also stated they wanted to see the athlete change their actions or give back to the community. The athletes that have done exactly that are the ones that have restored their reputation and their scandal has basically been forgotten. Bryant and Bertuzzi are great examples.

Bryant faced the sexual assault charge head on and did what he needed to do to show the public he was committed to changing. Following the resolution of the lawsuit, he focused on playing basketball and working on his marriage. By doing those two things he showed the public he made a mistake, knew it was a mistake, and was committed to changing. The scandal is rarely brought up anymore. Now when the media talks about him it's about his basketball ability.

Bertuzzi is another example of an athlete that changed his behavior. After he saw what the fight did to Moore, he cleaned up his act by focusing on playing a smart game. He's not going to risk losing the game or his reputation by getting into a violent fight. He'll occasionally drop the gloves, but it's always within the NHL's rules for fighting and it's only when the fight won't jeopardize the game for his team.

The athletes that don't change their behavior often face a scandal again. As stated before, Rodriguez and Roethlisberger both repeated the actions that landed them in a scandal the first time. Another example of an athlete that didn't change his behavior is NBA player Ron Artest.

Artest (currently known as Metta World Peace) is an example of an athlete that hasn't learned from his past mistakes, either. The brawl at the Palace of Auburn Hills when he went into the stands fighting spectators may have given him a negative reputation, but the multiple fights after that have not helped him turn things around. His reputation has been negatively impacted because he continues to engage in aggressive behavior. Unless that changes, his reputation will remain the same.

These case studies are not the only incidents that show how these best practices can be applied to rebuilding an athlete's reputation. There is an abundance of other athletic scandals that show how well these methods work for an athlete rebuilding their reputation. It's important to use these examples, the information provided by communication executives, and input from sports fans to help athletes that run into these issues in the future. By using these methods, an athlete has a better chance of rebuilding their reputation and being seen in a positive light again.

Scandals are not going away because people make mistakes. It's just human nature. That means PR professionals need to know how to help an athlete that's facing a crisis or scandal. These practices can help PR professionals achieve that goal and can help athletes have a good reputation again.

### Future Considerations

Although the experts in the field all mentioned these elements in their interviews, there is always more information that can add to this framework. Three communication professionals in the sports industry were interviewed, but widening the research and interviewing more executives

could provide a more in-depth look at reputation management. The four steps listed above create a basic framework, but there could potentially be more. In future studies, this is something to be considered.

Another aspect of research that needs to be considered is a potential bias in the survey results. As seen in the Appendix B, the results showed there were more hockey fans than other sports. This means the sample size is not representative of the general public since football is considered the most popular sport in America (Harris Interactive, 2013). In future studies, it would be interesting to see if there would be a change in league rankings for their overall reputation with a more generalized sample.

Although the sample size does not represent the general public, the information that aided in creating a set of best practices does not rely on which sport is the most popular. The information that was most important from the survey results focused on what an athlete needs to do to earn fan forgiveness. The majority of sports fans wanted an apology and actions to follow that apology. This information was consistent regardless of what the participant considered their favorite sport.

Moving forward, the two things that should be considered when expanding on this study would be speaking with more executives in the field and getting a more representative sample size. This would add to the current framework created in this study and solidify the best practices in rebuilding an athlete's reputation following a scandal.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

From 1919, with the “Black Sox” Scandal, to today with the current Miami Dolphins bullying scandal, there have been various situations involving athletes caught in wrongdoings. Some of these athletes have overcome the scandals and rebuilt their reputation. Others have not.

It can take years to build a good reputation, and only one incident to ruin it. For athletes always in the spotlight, a scandal cannot only ruin their reputation, but it could potentially cost them their career. Luckily, athletes have PR professionals to turn to for help in restoring their reputation after a scandal.

As mentioned previously, reputation is influenced by performance, behavior, and communication. These elements all work together to determine an individual’s, a company’s, or an industry’s reputation. When there’s a problem with one, reputation suffers.

In sports, most athletes with a damaged reputation have a problem with the behavior aspect of the reputation formula. Behavioral issues can take place on or off the court. As previously addressed, some of the most common behavioral scandals include performance enhancing drugs, sex scandals, and violence.

An in-depth look at these types of scandals were showcased throughout the various case studies. Mark McGwire, Shawne Merriman, and Alex Rodriguez all faced PED scandals and each had a different outcome. Richard Seigler, Ben Roethlisberger, and Kobe Bryant are some athletes that faced sex scandals. Again, the end result of each case varied from the scandal ending their career

to being back on top of their sport. Then there's Todd Bertuzzi, Ron Artest, and Michael Vick that have faced violence scandals, again all resulting in different outcomes.

The media also plays an important role in reputation management. This is especially true when it comes to professional athletes. The media broadcasts everything from athletes setting records, to player suspension, to the underdog team winning a championship game, and of course, any and all scandals. If the media doesn't share the transgression, the public doesn't know about the events that happened, so no scandal occurs. A scandal only happens when an accusation is made and a story comes out. And in the world of professional sports, the story will always come out.

Once the story comes out, an athlete needs to enlist the help of a PR professional to assist in rebuilding their reputation. From the research conducted, it's clear that there are key tactics, tried and true, that help an athlete rebuild their reputation. The professionals in the field have provided information on these tactics that can be used to create a framework of best practices to aid in reputation recovery. The elements include: telling the facts, keeping a consistent message, apologizing for their actions, and evidence of change moving forward.

Having the athlete tell us all the facts is important because it gives them more control over the story. Remaining quiet opens the media and the public up to speculation. Speculation will make it harder for the athlete to move past a scandal because misinformation can occur with the story and the public is likely to believe it. This is the same for a having consistent message. It leaves less room for speculation and builds credibility.

The athlete needs to apologize for their actions as well. Fans are significantly more likely to forgive if the person feels bad for what they've done as opposed to someone who does not. The athlete also needs to act upon the apology and change their behavior moving forward. From the research it is clear that these four steps are critical for an athlete to rebuild their reputation following a scandal.

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### **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

What is done immediately following rumors of a scandal?

Are there plans set in place for these types of crises?

Do plans change based on the types of crises?

Are there methods that have worked best? Haven't worked?

What's the best thing an athlete has done to rebuild their reputation following a scandal?

Does an athlete's scandal change a sports image?

How big of an impact does a scandal have on the athlete's reputation? Does the type of scandal change the level of impact?

Is there a correlation between the sport's image and the athlete's image?

Do athletes ever disregard PR advice? Do they come back for addition help later on or attempt to handle it on their own?

Do the way athlete's act impact the public's perception of the sport?

What kind of impact does the media have on the public's perception of the athlete following a scandal?

How do you approach the media when trying to rebuild an athlete's reputation?

The media can help or hurt the athlete facing a scandal; are there methods used to try and keep the media on the athlete's side?

## Appendix B: Survey

### 1. What is your age?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	18-24	25	18%
2	25-34	22	16%
3	35-44	13	10%
4	45-54	17	13%
5	55-64	20	15%
6	65 or older	39	29%
	Total	136	100%

### 2. What is your gender?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Male	85	62%
2	Female	52	38%
	Total	137	100%

### 3. Do you consider yourself a sports fan?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	121	89%
2	No	15	11%
	Total	136	100%

### 4. What is your favorite major league sport?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Football	37	32%
2	Baseball	32	28%
3	Basketball	2	2%
4	Hockey	40	35%
5	Other	4	3%
	Total	115	100%

**5. Please rank the following sports based on their overall reputation from best reputation to worst reputation. (Drag and drop in order of 1 being the best reputation, 4 being the worst reputation)**

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	Total Responses
1	Football	18	30	39	24	111
2	Baseball	26	46	25	14	111
3	Basketball	5	23	27	56	111
4	Hockey	62	12	20	17	111
	Total	111	111	111	111	-

**6. Which major league sport do you think has the most athletes facing a crisis or scandal?**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Football	59	52%
2	Baseball	28	25%
3	Basketball	26	23%
4	Hockey	1	1%
	Total	114	100%

**7. Which scandal do you think is the easiest for an athlete to overcome?**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Performance Enhancing Drugs	19	17%
2	Violence	5	4%
3	Sex Scandal	28	25%
4	Gambling	60	54%
	Total	112	100%

## 8. Which scandal do you think is the hardest for an athlete to overcome?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Performance Enhancing Drugs	37	32%
2	Violence	56	49%
3	Sex Scandal	17	15%
4	Gambling	5	4%
	Total	115	100%

## 9. Do you think athletes are prepared for the fame they receive as a professional athlete when they're drafted into the major leagues?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	8	7%
2	No	107	93%
	Total	115	100%

## 10. Do you think athletes drafted immediately after college realize the consequences of their actions when they're in the public eye so often?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	10	9%
2	No	104	91%
	Total	114	100%

## 11. Do you think athletes that are drafted and placed on a minor league team before being placed on a major league team are aware of the consequences of their actions when they're in the public eye so often?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	69	60%
2	No	46	40%
	Total	115	100%

**12. Do you think major league athletes that come from farm leagues are better at avoiding scandals than athletes drafted immediately out of college?**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	85	74%
2	No	30	26%
	Total	115	100%

**13. In your opinion, what league does the best job at preparing the athletes for being in the public eye?**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	National Football League	6	5%
2	Major League Baseball	17	15%
3	National Basketball Association	4	3%
4	National Hockey League	47	41%
5	I don't think they prepare their athletes at all	42	36%
	Total	116	100%

## 14. Why?

### Text Response

They have a media training kit for the players

I feel like this league has had the most exposure for the longest time, and as such has more experience dealing with it. That's not to say they don't have any scandals, but rather, they are more experienced with dealing with them.

Given the popularity of the NBA, the number of scandals that are reported seems relatively low.

I just don't see any preparation from any sports program from high school to pros  
 Hockey is an expensive sport with a higher degree of time commitment from an early age.  
 The process of becoming an elite level hockey player focuses more on character, intelligence, coachability and compete level rather than raw skill. This helps weed out players with less positive attributes and therefore results in NHL players having far less social issues.

there are fewer players in the NHL (I think) compared to other leagues so it's a more competitive field to get in the big leagues. the better behaved, the better their chances for being drafted.

BECAUSE I HAVE NEVER HEARD OR READ THIS. IF THEY DO, IT IS NOT PUBLIZED ENOUGH.

Least mentioned in the news

Hockey players as a whole don't have the issues the other leagues have.

MLB and NHL are the only leagues where it is standard, no matter the skill of the athlete, that they spend some time on a "farm team".

The minors are a great training/preparation, and very few players don't go through there.

Fewest public scandals

not many poor minorities in sport

I am not aware of any programs that prepare new recruits for handling fame. Even if these programs were available for athletes, I doubt the athletes would attend--unless they were mandatory.

They're only interested in performance

Tend to draft older players. Younger draftees spend more time in the lower leagues.

Normally when they come up they are brought up for a short period and sent back. They get a small taste of the big time and then they appreciate it when they finally make it.

longer season with more games

I don't hear of as many scandals outside of the field of play in this league.

Not as high profile for hockey players as some of the other pro sports.

Get in less trouble

I don't hear about as many scandals in this league.

Dress codes

I think it is a result in getting paid so much money.

Baseball is our national pastime and wishes to continue being so

I think the Hockey players are more intelligent

The owners and managers are of the same stock as the young athletes.

Seems to hockey players are on the whole a better type of kid

respectful, tolerant

Canadian and skandinavian society better than ours

Athletes are overcome with their fame and fortune. No amount of preparation can impact their attitude. Their salaries are so much. Money changes people especially if they never had it before.

Most are very articulate when they speak to the media.

well i think they do some but not enough but the actions of a few overshines the actions of the majority

The NHL does not seem to have the same number of incidents and players involved  
Preparation comes from earlier home, school and social development. By the time these athletes reach the pros (in their early 20's) their behavior patterns and perspectives of life become skewed with the obscene amounts of money and adulation they suddenly receive.  
A handbook or classes (NFL) on behavior doesn't have the effect that fame and fortune does.

education, curfews, roommates

-

Players often spend a lot of time in the minor leagues, and they make starts, then are sent back down. They rarely become a day to day starter immediately.

It is not very often that hockey players are involved in scandals, at least to my knowledge.

More serious about the sport

Fewest scandals that I'm aware of

They seem to present themselves the best out of all the options

It seems to most closely mimic a family structure.

Most don't immediately go into the big leagues

they don't seem to get involved with anything other than enhancing drugs.

Because the players come from stable families.

Many, maybe most athletes are just like regular people and do not need special preparation. Those that do "scandalous" things after they become famous would have done so even if they had not become famous. This latter group would pay little attention to preventive preparation.

The preparation isn't working very well.

I haven't heard of any programs by the leagues re: training their athletes in re: finances, interviews, personal life carrying over, etc.

It has the most spending power.

Hockey isn't as widely popular as the other sports, so their players aren't in the public eye nearly as much

Just looking at how many athletes get in trouble, it doesn't look like they are prepared at all.

NHL has the least scandals. I believe this is because of not what the league does in preparing the athletes but in that most NHL athletes come from better homes on average than the other three leagues.

It isn't a priority.

They seem well spoken and incidents seem limited, although it could just be less interest by the public so less reporting

higher standards for behavior

You rarely see NHL players in scandals of any sort.

Baseball doesn't seem as huge of a sport so it isn't overwhelming the NCCA has strict guidelines for them to follow and they have to be a junior to leave school.

Athletes are consistently rewarded socially and financially in spite of their less than respectable behavior.

Each league has had issues, but I think they are all stepping up with media training and working on reputation

There seems to be more of a team attitude and their actions would hurt the team Parent control of manners throughout minor league participation.

???????

baseball has more intellectual aspects than other sports which are more physical seems as tho less hockey players get involved in negative situations.

?

it just might be my naive insight into Hockey, but I feel like Hockey players are more disciplined to understand the consequences fame, fortune and disrupting the two with scandals of any kind. I personally don't hear much about Hockey players testing positive for PEDs or getting into scandals. Hence my view with them being more disciplined to control the spotlight.

Because they come from stable families.

a lot of athletes have \$ signs in front of their eyes and don't worry about the consequences of their actions.

they usually play for years before hitting it big

Minors prepare them.

You never really hear about NHL problems.

I think everyone knows who they should act in the public eye but they make the decision no matter what resources are given to them before hand

I believe major league baseball best prepared its athletes for the public eye, because many times you are not drafted immediately onto a major league baseball team. You must work your way through the minors, A, AA, or AAA. If you are drafted to the majors right away then you most likely do not have the opportunity to start immediately. You may during your time on the bench see the scrutiny that other athletes undergo.

We would see less if they did.

I've never heard of a major hockey scandal. I've heard of football, baseball, and basketball scandals regarding drugs, violence, etc.

Too much money too fast.

## 15. As a fan, has your favorite athlete faced a scandal?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	16	14%
2	No	99	86%
	Total	115	100%

## 16. Did you forgive the athlete for the transgression?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	12	75%
2	No	4	25%
	Total	16	100%

## 17. What did the athlete do that earned your forgiveness?

### Text Response

Nothing. I appreciate athletes for what they do on the field of play, as athletes, not role models. Not my place to judge their actions off of the field of play.

Continued to perform at a high level

cleaned up his act.

He kept playing well throughout his "scandal".

Admitted the transgression openly.

peds

Admit their mistakes

Admitted, worked on and was open.

Appologized to the person and fans, earnestly. Acknowledged their wrong-doing.

It was a minor matter. He just apologized.

Apologized and continued wining.

## 18. What did the athlete do that didn't earn your forgiveness?

### Text Response

Nothing. I appreciate athletes for what they do on the field of play, as athletes, not role models. Not my place to judge their actions off of the field of play.

Adultery and Gambling

I felt that the transgression was overblown in the first place.

Lied prior to confession.

Performance drugs.

murder/domestic violence

Used illegal substances

N/A

Performance enhancing drugs

Nothing in particular, just don't agree with the choices the athlete made

spousal abuse

## 19. Do you think an athlete with a good reputation prior to a scandal can rebuild their reputation after a scandal?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	97	90%
2	No	11	10%
	Total	108	100%

## 20. In your opinion, what can an athlete do to rebuild their reputation after a scandal?

### Text Response

Face it and move on

Actually show that they are sorry for their actions. Too often it seems that they apologize because that is what their agent or coach has advised them to do, but not necessarily because they are. Sincerity is the best mode to rebuild a reputation.

Show sincere remorse and accept responsibility at the first available opportunity. Baseball players like Alex Rodriguez and Ryan Braun have tarnished their reputations by trying to deceive the public into believing their innocence. Accepting guilt and taking steps to do better are important in rebuilding a reputation.

Applause and mean it. Get help - support groups or professional help Mentor other younger athletes

Rebuild their reputation through time by giving back (i.e. actions speak louder than words). Donate time and resources into the community especially in the area in which the scandal occurred (i.e. domestic violence, substance abuse, etc.).

Play to the same level played prior to scandal

Apologize and act appropriately wherever they are.

REALIZE THEY ARE BEING MONITORED BY THE LEAGUE AND BY THE PUBLIC. THEY MUST BE ON BETTER BEHAVIOR THAN THE REGULAR PLAYERS DUE TO THEIR REPUTATION, I.E. SUE OF THE DETROIT LIONS.

Publicly admit it, ask for forgiveness, and move on.

The answer isn't Yes or No, it's not that simple. It depends on the issue and there is two sides to every story and then there is the truth. Then there are the powers with in a league that may not let it drop.

Discontinue the behavior that landed them in the situation in which they find themselves.

Be contrite and admit fault.

Improve how they are perceived off the "field" and improve their performance on the "field".

Public contrition; then a few years of very good behavior, including public service, appearances at charity and kids' functions, and other charitable work.

Get out of the public eye for a while

help in community

Perform and shut up.

Participate in a charitable cause like a commercial about bullying, staying in school, being a mentor, etc. Show humility when in public--no showboating. Apologize if the public backlash is big enough.

Nothing

1. Admit what they did with no excuses and apologize. 2. Show they are getting some type of help. 3. Grow up and stop whatever the bad actions were.

It would probably depend on the type of scandal, but overall they could just apologize, try to fix/correct what they have done and move forward making good decisions.

Admit the scandal

Take all the necessary steps in order to repair themselves or the situation off of the field while maintaining a high level of play on the field.

Apologize, appear contrite, get involved in a "do good charity" and get PR for that. And of course never have a repeated scandal.

Back up their words with actions

Confess, apologize, try and do something to prove they realize their actions were wrong.

Depends on the nature of the scandal, but an open and contrite admission is always best.

Play Well

Nothing really. They will always have an asterisk next to their name.

Admit he had a problem and promises to overcome it

Sincerely Apologize and don't keep repeating the same.

Come clean, own up and work to regain trust. Perform well and give back.

Admit responsibility (if indeed guilty), and take proactive steps to eliminate the underlying cause of the action, then stay clean

Be humble and take the high road by working with youths to instruct them and interact with them in a professional and humble way.

Be honest and up front/

Tell the truth

Accept responsibility

Keep their mouth shut. Give back to the community

Be contrite and be a positive example through outreach to the community.

Stay straight

Stop their addiction whether it is alcohol, drugs, or lewd behavior. show good faith and example to others.

Be contrite.

come clean apologize then do treatment or things that save face charity donations kids programs it may just be a show but it helps then you have micheal vick whos rehab is all for show and he is just bad

retire and go to jail

charity work

Typically, fans want their teams to win, their idols to succeed and to find an association with these fans will overlook many transgressions. The athlete only needs to be immediately remorseful, admit without explanation, maybe perform community work and all is forgiven. especially if he continues to help the team win!

Depending on the scandal be contrite, do volunteer work, stay out of the limelight.

Accept the punishment for his/her actions and community work

Admit the mistake, take the consequences and move on without being public about it.

Engage in activities that make them look good such as community services and other acts of kindness.

Play well.

Do good deeds, apologize, correct the problem

No matter how hard they try, it is really hard for an athlete to do this because people constantly will have that major event/scandal stuck in their head, regardless of what the athlete does to make it better/right.

Admit they were wrong and face the consequences without complaint or a fight

Don't lie about it. Make a public apology. Time will make it better because (and the media) forget and move on to someone else.

Community work
little they can do
Stay out of trouble and add value to the team. Be a leader in the clubhouse.
Honesty, openness, show the steps to resolution.
apologize & change his life, keeping the public informed.
Shut up and do their jobs
be honest about it and say they are seeking help.
Tell the public he will take responsibility for his actions.
They can do what non-athletic wealthy people do in those circumstances: Live a clean life (some cannot); use their wealth to benefit those who have little and need some help to rise above their poverty; be humble about their ability -- acknowledge that their talent is a random accident of their birth and lucky circumstances.
Get professional help, and let their behavior show how well they have changed not just their words.
Lay low for awhile, don't do anything wrong for a long time. Eventually your true fans will forgive you.
Publicly admit their mistake(s) without blaming anyone else, express genuine remorse, announce they will begin a rehabilitation process, give periodic public updates and also engage in some type of charitable or other community work (not just donations of \$).
Show they regret what they've done and help make a positive impact in their league beyond the field.
Make a public statement/apology -- take ownership for his or her actions, stay out of the spotlight for a while (lay low, so to speak), and focus on the game
Change their ways.
Do activities that help charity and their communities.
Prove that they are a changed person, admit to their mistakes.
Not repeat the action, seem genuinely remorseful, do public service
demonstrate positive behavior
Unfortunately, if the athlete produces good results in their respective sport they will be accepted.
Publicly apologize and try to amend the situation
Community service and admit they were into the wrong.
Depending on the severity of the scandal, the athlete can make a positive change that proves his or her remorse
depends on the offense, but not relapse is the biggest one, but if they want to go above and beyond they can give back, really turn around and do the opposite of what they were doing before
Apologize and show the fans and public that they are truly sorry, not just saying it. Whatever the scandal was, work with the community to fight against that or go to classes/rehab to work toward not doing it again.
Apologize, take ownership, deal with the public questions, then do the right thing, conduct charity work, and stay out of trouble.
Become an example both in professional and personal life
Community service, philanthropy, media visits
Receive professional assistance.

be honest and straightforward. put it all out there in one big interview. then just concentrate on playing their sport well. maybe get involved in a charity that combats whatever their scandal involved

sorry.....

i think it truly depends on the athlete, their Public Relations teams and the athlete's strong desire to want to change the circumstances surrounding him in the midst of a scandal. If they take their sports career seriously and understand that they are a role model for young child athletes, they'll make the most out of changing the course of events. Whether it be staying out of the limelight for awhile, doing community service, etc. people can forgive/forget in my opinion.

be sorry, ask for forgiveness. right the wrong. Take responsibility for the actions.

Charity work.

apologize, own the mistake and learn from it.

I think it is simple and just an apology is needed.

Show progress, admit guilt and actively act against it.

I really don't think there is a way possible. Look at Tiger Woods, it's been years since he cheated on his wife and when I hear his name I still think of him as a cheater first.

It is possible but I think it is challenging and depends on how they responded to the scandal.

Apologize, show their fans and teammates that the behavior won't be repeated by taking necessary actions (therapy, rehab, community service, etc)

Talking with younger athletes about what they did would help some.

Seek counseling.

## 21. What athlete(s) comes to mind that has overcome a scandal and restored their reputation?

Text Response

Kobe Bryant

I would actually say Tiger Woods, right now. He is still in the process of reforming his image, but has come a long way since the initial scandal broke. He is attracting more sponsors, winning more games, and continuing his comeback. What he did will not be forgotten, but fans are starting to get past it.

Michael Vick, Kobe Bryant.

Not many Maybe Tiger Williams - A little

Michael Jordan (gambling).

N/A

PEROLTA OF THE DETROIT TIGERS. ACCEPTED HIS PUNISHMENT WITH OUT COMMENT OR COMPLAINT. HENCE HE WAS MORE ACCEPTED BY HIS TEAM MATES AND THE DETROIT FANS.

Tiger Woods

I am not that big a fan, if they hurt their reputation for the money they paid. Then they weren't bright enough to keep the cash flowing and don't deserve a come back.

Tiger Woods

Lebron James, Kobe Bryant, Miguel Cabrera, Ben Rothlesberger, Josh Hamilton, Tiger

Woods...the list could go on

Michael Vick

Michael Jordan Jhonny Peralta

migeal cabera

Can't think of one...

Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan

None

Peralta - Tigers - performance enh drugs. No one even cares now. He kept quite and did his time. Koby Bryant - cheated on wife - jury is still out but he was able to keep out of the public eye and may still have a marriage.

Tiger Woods.

Tiger woods

Tiger Woods and Kobe Bryant.

Can't think of one - sorry.

Ray Lewis

Ray Lewis

Their reputations are not necessarily "restored", but Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, even Tiger Woods, spring to mind.

Tiger Woods

Mike Vick

Jhonny Peralta

Michael Vick

Jason Giambi, MLB. Andy Pettitte, MLB. Ray Lewis, NFL.

Tiger Woods?

None come to mind. However ther have been some, not many.

Jhonny Peralta

Andy Pettite

one

Jhonny Peralta

Kobe Bryant

they really don't total forgiveness I always look and them for what they did they are marked and just making a living

none

Paul Hornung

Recently, Jhonny Peralta with the Detroit Tigers. PEDs, 50 game suspension, came back, no explanations, hit the ball well and everybody forgave and forgot.

Tiger Woods

Michael Vick

Cris Carter

Michael Vic.

Tiger Woods

Brett Favre

Tiger Woods

Cabrera

Reggie Bush. Tiger Woods. Kobe Bryant. Magic Johnson.

Miguel Cabrera
baseball players
Miguel Cabrera
Jonny Peralta
Tiger Woods
I thought Ray Lewis had gotten away with it but after his retirement it came out that a lot of people hadn't forgotten. So no one comes to mind.
Johnny Peralta
No one I can think of.
Mark McGuire
none
Jhonny Peralta (steroids), Michael Vick (dog fighting), Miguel Cabrera (alcohol problems)
Not sure I can name anyone.
Tiger Woods
Kobe Bryant, Shaq, most of the ones that faced a scandal and were able to restore their reputation are slipping my mind because they did a great job at bouncing back.
Miguel Cabrera
Jhonny Peralta
Luis Suarez
Tiger Woods (to some extent), Michael Vick (to some extent)
michael vick
Kobe Bryant
Adrian Peterson, Kobe Bryant
Ray Lewis
jason giambi
Michael Vick - I personally can not stand him, but he is working hard to be better in the public eye. Michael Phelps has come back strong from his stupidity. He has worked to rebuild his reputation and credibility.
Mike Tyson Andy Pettitte Todd Bertuzzi
Andy Pettit
Chris Carter
Michael Vick
do not think any "fully" restored their reputation. tiger woods and reggie bush and kobe bryant come to mind as kinda restored. derek jeter always overcomes bad press, not sure his sex/photo exploits count as scandals.
clemens
Former Baltimore Ravens player, Ray Lewis automatically come to mind.
Kobe.
Michael Vick
I cant think of any at this time
Without doing any research there aren't any players in my mind that have restored their reputation.
T. Woods
Michael Vick

## 22. What athlete(s) comes to mind that has not rebuilt their reputation or has ended their career because of a scandal?

### Text Response

A-Rod

Pete Rose. He tried after the gambling scandal, but could never overcome this. This completely ruined his career and Hall of Fame spot, despite his excellency at the game.

Alex Rodriguez, Pete Rose.

Mendendez - Murder investigation, A-Rod, Pete Rose, Lance Armstrong

I personally do not follow these types of issues, however, Michael Vick, Ray Lewis and Alan Iverson first come to mind. I have no idea how they're perceived today.

Michael Vick?

A-ROD, PETE ROSE

Pete Rose - repeat offender, Michael Vick

Pete Rose black balled from the baseball hall of fame, because of the powers to be. However home run hitters taking drugs are allowed into the hall of shame.

Alex Rodriguez

Pete Rose and Lance Armstrong

Pete Rose, Jose Canseco, Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod)

Jose Canseco Roger Clemens

a rod

Mark McGuire, Sammy Sosa... soon Alex Rodriguez

Michael Vick, Lance Armstrong, Nick Young

Mark McGwire - his records are all in question by fans because of his admitted steroid use. In his case, admitting he used was no help. Tiger Woods - his fall from the top left many of his fans searching for a new start. He still has his following though.

Tiger Woods

Micheal Vick

Lance Armstrong, Pete Rose, and Alex Rodriguez.

Lance Armstrong

Alex Rodriguez

Tiki Barber

Pete Rose, Michael Vick, Lance Armstrong.

Pete Rose

?

Dennis Rodman

Pete Rose, MLB. Alex Rodriguez, MLB. Adam Pacman Jones, NFL.

Lance Armstrong

The bicycle racer (name eludes me).

The football QB who was involved with the dog fighting.

Pete Rose. Mark McGuire

Most

Reggie Rodgers

Titus Young

O.J. Simpson

Lance Armstrong, Pete Rose, Alex Rodriguez

barry bonds roger Clemens ken caminetti died patriots tight end  
too many to mention

Pete Rose

Rodriguez with the Yankees and Woods in golf. Their reputations are still crappy in the eyes of many. However, Yankee fans will forgive quicker because of team support. the same with Woods. Golf fans want to associate with a winner, so he's been forgiven more so by the golf fan than the non-golf community. Also, note the arrogance of each - no public apology, no community work, only a continuation of their sacrosanct lifestyles.

Adam Packman Jones

Aaron Hernandez, Ryan Leaf

Sammy Sosa

Lance Armstrong

Aaron Hernandez

Aaron Hernandez.

Lance Armstrong

baseball players

Dennis Rodman

Barry Bonds

Lance Armstrong

Non comes to mind.

Berry Bonds.

Sammy Sosa

Pete Rose, Alan Iverson, Charles Rogers - Det. Lions, Denny McClain - Det. Tigers, Maurice Clarette - Ohio Stsate

Aaron Hernandez

Pete Rose, Jose Canseco, Tiger Woods.

Ben Roethlisberger

Michael Vick, Mark McGuire, Ben Rothlesberger (or however you spell it),

Michael Vick

Tiger Woods

Michael Vick

Lance Armstrong

oj simpson

Tiger Woods

Mike Vick

Aaron Herendez

OJ Simpson, pete Rose, lance Armstrong, alex Rodriguez

ben rothelsberger

Mark McGwire

Ryan Braun Tiger Woods Adam Jones

Barry Bonds

Barry Bonds, Lance Armstrong

Lance Armstrong

barry bonds. jerry sandusky - though not athlete at the time. lance armstrong. mcgwire, clemens, and all the others.

armstron
Former Cincinnati Bengals and Miami Dolphins football player, Chad Ocho Cinco.
Alex Rodrigues
Tiger Woods
Aaron Hernandez
tiger woods
Tiger Woods
Lance Armstrong
Tiger Woods, Alex Rodriguez, and of course OJ Simpson.
O. J. Simpson

### 23. Do you consider professional athletes role models?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	50	47%
2	No	57	53%
	Total	107	100%

### 24. Do you think they lose the “role model” image when they do something negative or cause a scandal?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	43	81%
2	No	10	19%
	Total	53	100%

### 25. Can an athlete be seen as a role model again after rebuilding their reputation?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	46	87%
2	No	7	13%
	Total	53	100%

## 26. Are there any thoughts you'd like to share about an athlete's reputation when faced with a scandal?

Text Response

no

I feel that a majority of the time, athletes are insincere. They cover stuff up, and that leads to the overall problems we see. It is not necessarily the scandal itself, but more how they handle it that leads to the overall public perception that follows.

When faced with a scandal, the 24/7 sports media amplify any negativity surrounding the athlete. Even before guilt is proven, sometimes athlete's reputations have been irreparably damaged by news reports. A prime example of this is the Duke men's lacrosse team accused of rape. Many of these men had their reputations so far damaged, that when the truth came out of their innocence, it was too late.

Get help. Be truly sorry.

I think the survey did a good job of inferring part of the problem with troubled athletes by asking questions about their preparedness coming out of school (if they even finished or were properly prepared to their last grade level). The simple answer is they are often vastly ill-equipped to handle the fame and money which generally leads to poor decision making and potential scandals. Our society today places way to much emphasis and importance on the athlete. We expect them to be good role models for kids but then give them every temptation (money, fame, cars, women, etc.) and then wonder why they failed and question their ability to be a good role model. Its illogical at best. All that said, we're a very forgiving society. We love to root for the underdog. So when an athlete fails in some way there are many out there that root for the guy to have a great comeback and overcome his problems. In the end, the reputation can be fixed ... for that guy at some point in the future. The troubling thing is we repeat the exact same process when the next guy fails ... and the next ....

Regardless of what an athlete does to repair their reputation, their inappropriate actions will follow them for the rest of their career.

THEY SHOULD ACCEPT THEIR PUNISHMENT WITHOUT APPEALING AND DENYING THEIR INVOLVEMENT. IT JUST MAKES IT WORTH.

They chose to be there; Live every minute as if under a microscope. Consequences from misconduct are always more damaging, then those not in the public eye.

None worth the time to wright about.

Reputation is a result of prior actions, so they have to be dealt with.

We need to educate our kids that pro athletes are businessmen with a different skill set, but still human. Athletes need to learn that kids look up to them, they are in the public eye, and they owe the public better behavior. Reputations take years to develop and moments to ruin.

Do something good for fans, the needy, your community - a gesture really, but \$\$ is also good

No

Most athletes that make it to the professional ranks have been pampered and praised since 6th or 7th grade. By the time they hit college they actually believe that they are better than everyone else and that the rules don't apply to them like they do to others. We ingrain this into their young brains then we wonder why they fail as human beings.

I think it is rare and very tough to do, but I believe it is possible for an athlete to be seen as a role model after rebuilding their reputation.

Good luck

"Scandals" only become "Scandals" when the person gets caught. Many people that have gotten away with some of the same actions will crucify the athlete that gets caught.

You're human too. Fess up.

Role Model for kids. Most of the time because there are stupid. They don't give IQ test to make a team

Be honest and fess up

Listen to experts. Get over yourself. Put your ego aside.

Most are too immature to accept their responsibility as a visual adult and role model. They are interested in the money and fame with no regard to the idols that they inspire. Also the owners lack leadership in the castigation of their "property".

Be humble and sorry.

No

If you come clean and lead a clean life after that the public will accept and forgive you. Just think if Pete Rose would have come clean he would be in the Hall Of Fame by now"!

No thoughts to provide at this time.

Athletes are people and make mistakes, but because of their high visibility and the fact that some view them as role models there are under unusual pressure to be "perfect". They have to realize their new role when they become famous and adjust their life style accordingly.

They should be removed from their team. The owners of a team need to try and replace an athlete that is "out of line." They should be good examples to young people and try and turn their life around.

None

they are human so will make mistakes

for most of them if they were not a "star" they would be looked upon as a thug and go to jail quietly never to be seen or heard of again

They must be honest if they want any chance of moving past the scandal. The ones that lie are the ones that never recover and it becomes a game to catch them in their lies. They almost always lose that game. i.e. Lance Armstrong and Ryan Braun

They probably worry more about the financial and career effect that MAY occur when facing a scandal. "Go Kobe, Go L.T., Go James Worthy". Fans forgave them almost immediately. Remorse, apology, moral responsibility are characteristics that seem to be beyond an athlete's persona.

Need to realize everything in their lives is under a microscope

No

Like I previously stated, no matter what an athlete does to rebuild their reputation, I don't think it puts them in the clear with everyone. There will always be those people who have that scandal stuck in their mind whenever they hear that athlete's name. When an athlete ruins their reputation, it sticks with them for a long time.

It is how they handle the situation that matters, not hiding behind their money

Don't lie about it! I think the athletes who admit it up front are forgiven more quickly.

Johnny Peralta did the crime... then paid his fine. He was suspended and didn't squawk

about it. He played well in the playoffs. Scandal will be forgotten next year. Not so much with A-Rod

Taking personal responsibility is the key to restoring a positive reputation. We are all capable of making bad choices. How we choose to address the error and move on is the best defense of a future reputation.

He needs to admit it, if true. If not true, he needs to defend himself(actually, he's being forced to) and, most importantly, he needs to be honest with the fans.

Even with their reputation impacted, in most cases their income usually isn't No, but be honest.

No

No.

Overcoming a scandal can give positive reinforcement to the hopes of others who have overcome bad habits or behavior.

One mistake usually won't do permanent damage to an athlete. If they straighten out and apologize for their wrongdoing(s), they will usually be forgiven.

Just as above in re: my recommendations for possible public "redemption".

They can be an even bigger role model after they recover from a scandal.

n/a

Learn from it and be a good athlete and citizen thereafter.

Honesty is the best policy. People are usually more forgiving if the truth is told in the first place, own up to your mistakes.

Depending on the scandal, I feel bad for them sometimes, because I think they're unprepared to deal with all of the attention. If it's sports-related cheating though, their reputation deserves the hit.

I think athletes are no more susceptible to scandalous behavior than anyone else. They are in the spotlight.

Honesty is policy! They need to apologize first thing and work with their rep to end it before the scandal gets to big to handle.

Be honest

Vick came clean whilst Armstrong didn't as an example.

Everyone has a time in their life that they screw up, get back up and try to do what is right. Stay strong brother.

It can be honest or a bold-faced lie, but once a rumor is out there the athlete is facing a losing battle. It doesn't matter whether the athlete actually did it or not, what matters is that the accusation is out in the public now. It will be debated, and there will always be people who believe the athlete is guilty and those who believe the athlete is innocent.

Many of them think they are too rich and famous to have to face any consequences.