



MENTAL APPROACH: UNLV ADDS RECRUITING TOOL

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTING FIRM HELPS SCHOOL LEARN ABOUT INTANGIBLE TRAITS

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WHEN COLLEGE COACHES RECRUIT ATHLETES, THEY RARELY HAVE TROUBLE DETERMINING PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF SIZE, SPEED AND STRENGTH.

The difficulty is determining the intangibles, such as whether the athlete is self-motivated, a team player, or listens to coaching and applies what is said.

"In the recruiting process, the rules prohibit you from getting to the point where you really know the player," UNLV athletic director and football coach John Robinson said. "You just don't have enough contact. The incoming college student has so many adjustments and things to go through, some sort of an indication about the various facets of their personality is really helpful."

Robinson hired a psychological consulting firm to administer tests to incoming and veteran athletes, as well as coaches.

Caliper, which is based in Princeton, N.J., is a 41-year-old firm that broke into sports in 1983 with the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers and the NHL's Minnesota North Stars (now Dallas Stars). Caliper is involved with 23 professional sports teams, including nine in the NBA and eight in Major League Baseball.

The company is getting more involved in college athletics, and administered some tests at Southern California when Robinson coached there.

"I was very impressed with it," Robinson said. "I think it gives coaches a real clue about somebody, particularly when they first come into the program."

Caliper's 150-question, six-section test takes about two hours to complete.

Some sections ask test takers to choose which statements or groups of words are most or least like them. Another section gets at a person's problem-solving skills.

A consultant from Caliper also talks to each person for about 30 minutes and writes a psychological profile based on the results of the exam and the interview.

"It definitely confirmed some things," baseball coach Jim Schlossnagle said. "We did it after our fall practice, so I already had a little bit of a feel for the players. I think we had 17 guys take it. I would say 15 or 16 of

program. Athletes were tested to see what careers might suit them should pro sports not work out.

"There are 20,000 kids playing college basketball," Greenberg said. "Less than 200 are looked at in the draft. And from that, about 70 are either drafted or signed as free agents. You can be a pretty damn good college player, and the odds are still against making it in the pros.

"So, it's just realistic to think about alternatives. Not that an eighteen-year-old has to decide immediately what to do if his athletic dreams don't work out, but it's important to think about realistic options for the future."

ACCORDING TO CALIPER, NBA PLAYERS THEY RECOMMENDED SCORED 909 POINTS A SEASON COMPARED TO 376 POINTS SCORED BY THOSE WHO RECEIVED NEGATIVE REPORTS. THE REBOUNDS WERE 320 TO 160, ASSISTS 207 TO 91 AND MINUTES PLAYED 1,919 TO 1,004.

the 17 tests were just dead-on in terms of the players' work habits, their personalities, likes, dislikes, that kind of thing."

But is there a way to truly quantify what all this means?

According to Caliper, NBA players they recommended scored 909 points a season compared to 376 points scored by those who received negative reports. The rebounds were 320 to 160, assists 207 to 91 and minutes played 1,919 to 1,004.

"A kid can be playing in high school and be a superstar," said Herb Greenberg, president and CEO of Caliper. "Suddenly, he's up at the next level and he's playing against somebody at least as big, at least as strong, at least as talented as he is. The issue then is can he rise to that level, reach down and go beyond the talent? And very many can't."

And very many can't go on to earn millions in pro sports, and that's another part of this

UNLV's athletic department spent about \$22,000 for Caliper's tests, which was a reduced rate, and Robinson said he would like to bring Caliper back in every year.

"If I can afford it," Robinson said. "I've got to raise the money for it. It's the first step in trying to really upgrade our academic and career planning involvement with players. We can't afford to test everybody, but if we do one class each year, in four years you've got everybody."

Greenberg will introduce Robinson as the speaker at Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal's luncheon in New York.

Caliper has helped professional and college sports teams select the best players, develop the potential of athletes, and build winning teams. To find out more about how Caliper's personality testing has assisted the Chicago Cubs, the Orlando Magic and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, call (609) 924-3800.