

Hoops Spartans forced to forfeit

TWU men's team admits one of its players was ineligible, gives up three wins

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

The Trinity Western Spartans men's basketball team has forfeited three wins after the school revealed on Monday that they'd discovered one of the athletes on the team was ineligible under CIS rules.

Fourth-year Spartans forward Lucas Goltz played eight games with the Spartans this season, three of which—against Thompson Rivers, Lethbridge, and Fraser Valley—ended in victories. Those scores have been overturned, with the wins being retroactively awarded to the teams that lost.

By playing Goltz, the Spartans violated CIS academic eligibility rules. The school is claiming that the infraction was due to an "inadvertent administrative error." A transfer student from the Royal Military College of Canada, Goltz didn't fulfill CIS academic requirements in his previous year.

"When you use a year of eligibility, you have to maintain a certain academic credit standard—18 credits passed successfully," Canada West executive director Val Schneider said. "To make a long story short, [Goltz] was not a student in good academic standing at his last university."

CIS regulations dictate that any transferring student-athlete must sit out for one calendar year before he or she can play for their new school. Trinity Western abided by this rule, not putting Goltz in the lineup until 2 November, 2007. However, no one at the school realized that Goltz hadn't finished the required number of credits in his last year at RMC.

When the athletics department discovered the oversight, they immediately told both Canada West and CIS



FILE PHOTO: KATIE MOONEY

I AM FORFEIT! The Trinity Western Spartans, seen here playing the Bears earlier in January, have forfeited three wins because of an eligibility violation.

officials and made a compassionate appeal, which was denied. They then voluntarily forfeited the games, bringing their record to 3–17 this season.

The matter is now being investigated at the CIS level, and the school may be further disciplined. However, TWU's prompt admission of the violation will likely count in their favour.

"They self-disclosed the situation," Schneider said. "Obviously when there's a case of self-disclosure, that's taken into consideration."

Neither CIS nor Canada West generally monitor the eligibility of transfer student-athletes themselves, instead relying on the player's school to keep track and watch for violations.

"The onus rests within the institution where that individual's

competing," Schneider admitted. "We may not have [found out]. Someone could have reported it, I suppose, but we may not otherwise have discovered it."

The forfeited games have changed the standings in the Pacific division and possibly affected the playoff picture. The Spartans were in fourth place in the division, and if they could have won their next four games—and had Fraser Valley lost the rest of theirs—TWU would have made it into the postseason. Now, TWU is in last place. Goltz will be eligible to play for the Spartans again after he has satisfactorily completed 18 credits at TWU.

The TWU athletics department didn't return interview requests as of press time.

Don't overreact; Brady's foot will be fine

Instead of panicking over inconclusive paparazzi photos, New England fans should focus on the real threat: that the Giants will stop his passing game



PAUL OWEN

Sports
Commentary

Last week, the *Boston Herald* discovered that the easiest way to give their city a collective heart attack was to publish photos of their star quarterback in a cast.

The photos of New England Patriots pivot Tom Brady strolling through New York with flowers for his supermodel girlfriend and a walking cast on his right foot set off a firestorm in both the Boston and national sports media. Pats fans' panic escalated further when Brady missed a few practices before the team left Massachusetts for Tempe, Arizona, site of this year's Super Bowl.

All of this died down earlier this week when Brady declared himself good to go and began practicing again, but the fact remains that it never should have been as big of a story as it was. Between the Boston fans—a group that identifies more with their superstars than any other in sports—and their fear-mongering media, Brady's situation was blown completely out of proportion.

A perfect example of how out of control the story got in Boston is the city's CBS affiliate, which, on its local news program, took the published

photo of Brady to an expert at Boston College to try to determine what type of injury it might be and how much it could affect him.

The most ridiculous part of the Brady saga was that he didn't miss a snap—nor was he taken out of the game—in the preceding weekend's victory over the San Diego Chargers. There was no reason to believe he was seriously hurt and that this was anything other than simply a nagging injury that he had already proven he could play through.

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The second absurdity to come out of Brady's situation was how many people began to postulate that this injury may have been responsible for his poor performance against the Chargers, when he threw three interceptions.

What makes no sense about this is that those picks were largely due

to poor decision-making on Brady's behalf—as well as the athleticism, closing speed, and recognition skills of the San Diego backfield. None of that would have been affected by Brady's bum ankle.

Beantown's fears shouldn't be that Brady won't play, or that if he does, he'll be throwing picks like he did against San Diego; instead, they should be worried that he will play, and that his mobility will be limited. New England's Super Bowl opponent, the New York Giants, led the NFL in sacks with 53 this season, and if Brady is without his ability to avoid the blind-side pass rush—a skill that led to only 21 sacks on Brady on the year, good for fifth-lowest in the league—then New England's passing game will in turn be held in check. If Brady is unable to buy himself time in the pocket, it takes away his ability to look for the deep routes that have made New England the best offence in history this season.

So instead of Bostonians clutching their chests in fear for the past week, they needed to realize that Brady not only had two weeks to rest his ankle, but also that the injury couldn't have been that bad in the first place; if it was, we would have seen back-up Matt Cassel at some point since week eleven against Buffalo. Brady will be fine and will probably lead his team to the second undefeated season in NFL history come Sunday. After all, everything else has gone right for him this season.

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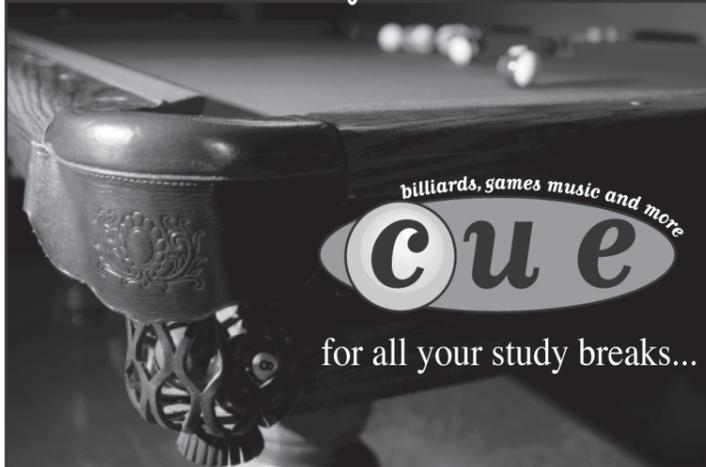
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