

CONFIDENTIAL

December 8, 1988

It was during a one hour conversation to Simeon basketball recruit Deon Thomas that I first became aware of any NCAA rules violations being committed by the University of Illinois.

Deon told me that Assistant Basketball Coach, Jimmy Collins, offered him and his grandmother, Bernice McGary, the opportunity to move to a nicer building or apartment. They would finance the move and take care of the additional expense of a more comfortable place.

According to Deon, he told Jimmy Collins that his grandmother did not want to move. Jimmy then offered to have her place at 1837 W. Washburn fixed up so it would be nicer and most importantly, more secure. Deon would then be able to leave his grandmother in Chicago, attend the University of Illinois in Champaign and not worry about her well being. Taking care of his grandmother was very important to Deon. He loves his grandmother very much. She has taken care of him for the last several years when no one else would.

I asked Deon how he felt about the offer and also why he was telling me. He said that at first he was insulted. He prides himself on being honest and religious. However, the idea of helping his grandmother very much appealed to him.

I asked him if he would rather go to the University of Illinois and have his grandmother's place fixed up by them or come to the University of Iowa and fix it up himself. He asked for some clarification. I told him that if he came to Iowa, we would make sure he had a good summer job, from both the financial, as well as the experience side of things. He could then, little by little, send her some money to make home improvements. He was talking about food, clothing, house

paint and roof shingles. We both decided at that time it would be better if he earned the money himself rather than having it given to him. Deon was dead set against being bought. He indicated to me that he didn't want to have a reputation like Marcus Liberty. I asked what that meant and he answered \$75,000 and a car.

As far as why Deon confided in me, I think there are a couple of explanations:

1. Deon has been telling me over the phone since his sophomore year he wanted to be a Hawkeye.
2. I think Deon wanted to hear what I was willing to offer in the way of helping his grandmother - that was his only financial concern. He seemed satisfied he could get the job done with good summer employment.
3. I had talked to Deon on a couple of occasions about illegal recruiting tactics. I instilled in his mind that he could get in as much trouble as the school who was cheating.

As soon as I hung up the phone with Deon, I called Coach Davis at his home and informed him. He told me to write this down and keep a record of everything. This conversation with Deon was the first of a four month dialogue outlining and detailing recruiting violations being committed by the University of Illinois.

February 1, 1989

Without question the most serious of all NCAA violations committed by the University of Illinois took place on the weekend of January 28 in Champaign. To my knowledge, this was Deon's third visit to the Illinois campus since the fall of his senior year. He attended the Illinois/Washington State football game on Saturday, September 3 and

one other I'm not exactly sure on. In both cases he spent the weekend with Illinois players and provided his own transportation through former high school teammates Irvin Small and Nick Anderson. His third weekend visit was to the Illinois/Indiana basketball game. I believe this was his official visit, but I am not certain. He may have again gone down on his own.

On Wednesday evening, February 1, Deon told me over the phone that a member of the University of Illinois coaching staff offered him \$80,000 and a brand new Blazer if he would sign their letter of intent to attend the University of Illinois. He said the offer took place during this weekend visit. The only other details Deon offered was that it was the most Illinois had ever offered to pay for a recruit's signature. Marcus Liberty of archrival Martin Luther King in Chicago had been offered only \$75,000 and a new car when he decided to choose Illinois at the last minute over Syracuse.

I didn't understand Deon as to exactly where this offer took place but he did indicate it was a one on one conversation. I could tell he was not comfortable telling me exactly who made the offer so I asked him this question - "You mean Coach Henson took you aside and offered you \$80,000 to play for him?" Deon responded, "It wasn't Lou, it was his boy." I asked who he was referring to and he said Jimmy. I asked Deon if he thought Coach Henson knew about it and he said he would have to know.

Over a period of three months, February through April, many people became aware of the offer. Some of these people include:

Everett and Joanna Johnson - stepfather and mother

Bernice McNary - grandmother

Latisha Scott (senior at Julian H.S.) - girlfriend

Avery Stallings, Antoine Johnson, Jackie Crawford and others - teammates

Renaldo Kyles - best friend

Deon told me and all these people about the illegal recruiting tactics of Illinois because up until one week before the signing period, he had no interest in attending Illinois. He was both amazed and turned off by the offer to buy his services. At the time this action by Illinois made him feel even stronger about coming to play for us at Iowa.

With the exception of his girlfriend, Latisha Scott, I have personally had conversations with each and every one of these people regarding the \$80,000 and a Blazer.

At the conclusion of this February conversation with Deon, I again made Coach Davis aware of the situation.

February 19, 1989

According to Deon, Jimmy Collins shook hands with him after the East St. Louis game and visited for a brief period of time. I was not present.

February 28, 1989

According to Deon's best friend, Renaldo Kyles, Jimmy Collins visited Deon at his grandmother's house on February 28 some time after 8:00 p.m. This was during a non-contact period. According to Renaldo, Antoine Johnson, one of Deon's teammates, was also at the house and should be able to verify this illegal contact.

According to Renaldo, Deon told him that Jimmy gave Deon \$300 on this date.

March 9, 1989

After Simeon's semi-final city championship victory over Dunbar at the UIC Pavillion, I witnessed Illinois Assistant Basketball Coach, Jimmy Collins, along with two of his players, Nick Anderson and Irvin Small, talking to Deon after the game outside the locker room door. Jimmy was present during the conversation for several minutes before leaving his players and Deon alone.

Current Illinois basketball players, and former Simeon stars Nick Anderson and Irvin Small, were in attendance for at least five Simeon basketball games and made several school visits with the intent of recruiting Deon to Illinois. I realize this is not a violation of NCAA rules, but due to the number of contacts and the reasoning behind the visits, it does prompt one to ask the question "when exactly are these players in class."

On March 13, 1989, I had a series of conversations with Deon regarding Jimmy Collins' illegal contact of March 9. Deon was upset with Jimmy because according to Deon, on March 6th or 7th he told Jimmy in a phone conversation that he was not interested in attending the University of Illinois. Deon said nothing about where he wanted to go, but Coach Collins must have assumed it was Iowa. On Wednesday morning, March 9, the day of the city semi-finals at the UIC Pavillion, Taylor Bell reported that Deon told Jimmy he was going to Iowa.

According to Deon, Jimmy pressed the issue of where he was going hard and asked Deon not to give him the run-around. He asked Deon to tell him straight so he could start recruiting another Big Man. Deon, being a long time friend of Coach Collins, obliged.

When the Sun Times reported the conversation, Deon was very unhappy with Illinois and Jimmy in particular, for violating his confidence.

From that moment forward, however, the University of Iowa's recruitment of Deon Thomas went down hill so to speak. Our good relationship with Deon's high school coach, Bob Hambric, went completely sour to the point where Coach Hambric made me and the public immediately aware that he did not want Deon to go to the University of Iowa. He pulled me and Jimmy Collins aside at the UIC Pavillion on Thursday,

March 9, and told us he was going to do everything he could to prevent Deon from going to either school because of the Sun Times article and what he perceived to be a complete circumvention of his authority.

April 4, 1989

Despite the difficulties we were experiencing with Bob Hambric and the pressures Deon was receiving to play at Illinois from the people in the State, Deon was still verbally committed to us. On April 4 he arrived home from a two week trip to Amsterdam. His mother, Joanna Johnson, picked him up at the O'Hare Airport and asked what his collegiate plans were. He told her that he was visiting the University of Iowa campus on April 7, 8 and 9 and signing a National Letter of Intent with the University of Iowa on April 12. We made arrangements for Deon and his parents to visit campus that weekend. Deon's commitment to Iowa at this moment in time could be confirmed by more than 20 people. What took place between April 4 and 7 changed all this.

April 6, 1989

Jimmy Collins made a morning visit with Deon at Simeon High School. Just after noon, Nick Anderson came into school and visited with Deon, one on one, for over an hour. Deon told me, in person on April 7, that the gist of Nick's conversation was that Illinois could take better care of him and his grandmother than Iowa could.

April 7, 1989

Lou Henson made a morning visit with Deon at Simeon High School and went to lunch at noon with Coach Bob Hambric. This is two school contacts in the same week and a violation of NCAA rules. It was, however, worth the risk of being caught because Deon had finally changed his mind about Iowa. Deon never visited the University of Iowa campus.

April 13, 1989

Deon and his grandmother went out to dinner with Bob Hambric, Illinois Head Basketball Coach Lou Henson, and Assistant Coach Jimmy Collins. They had dinner at the Homewood Inn on 119th Street. This is not a legal contact location.

April 23, 1989

Deon returned from the McDonald's All-American game and notified me that he had signed with the University of Illinois on April 18. He said his grandmother was the reason he chose Illinois over Iowa. He also told me that his girlfriend, Latisha Scott, a senior at Julian High School, was going to be accepted at Illinois after earlier receiving word she was denied admission. This was something Jimmy Collins was going to be able to do, along with getting them an apartment to live in.

April 24, 1989

According to Renaldo Kyles, Deon received \$5,000 of the now promised \$85,000 from Jimmy Collins either the evening of April 23 or the morning of April 24. Jimmy delivered the money personally.

On April 24, Deon and his girlfriend, Latisha Scott, went to the Evergreen Plaza and went shopping. They made purchases at Carson Prairie Scott, Footlocker Shoes, with the most extravagant being a \$400 gold rope bracelet at Reflections Jewelers. He put the bracelet on lay-away with the balance due on April 26.

April 25, 1989

According to Renaldo, Deon gave him \$50. He was also taking teammates out to lunch and sparing no expense with his girlfriend.

May 5, 1989

Latisha Scott's father rented a Budget car for Deon to take to the University of Illinois for the weekend. Deon paid for the car upon his return on May 8 with cash.

On Friday, May 5, Deon rented a room at the Zanzibar Hotel, 81st and Stoney Island.

On Saturday, May 6, Deon rented a room at the Days Inn in Champaign. It is possible the payment was taken care of by Jimmy Collins, but I am not sure. Deon was accompanied by teammates Antoine Johnson and Avery Stallings, along with his girlfriend, Latisha Scott.

May 12, 1989

Deon again rented a room at the Zanzibar Hotel.

#### Conclusion

Deon Thomas is human. He and his grandmother live on or below the poverty line. He comes from a broken home. He turned down Illinois' offer of cash and a car on many occasions but could not hold out at the end. I personally do not blame him and I definitely do not hold any animosity toward him.

The University of Illinois basketball program has committed several technical and philosophical violations in the recruitment of Deon Thomas. If found guilty of these charges, in the name of fairness, they must be punished.

## Strategy

1. Notify the NCAA soon, prior to mid June when Deon arrives at summer school in Champaign. Chances of having the truth come out are better if the investigation takes place in Chicago.
2. Work with someone in Enforcement that we know personally. For example, I graduated from Boston College with Rich Hilliard and we have stayed in touch.
3. Can we discuss some "conditions" with the NCAA prior to turning over evidence.
  - a) The University of Iowa must remain nameless or we'll lose any chance of Deon coming to Iowa.
  - b) Renaldo Kyles, Deon's best friend who has worked with me, must also not be named in the investigation for exactly the same reason.
  - c) Allow us the opportunity to advise them on the best way to get at the truth. That being simply this: There are several people who knew about the offers of cash prior to Deon's commitment. Many of these same people have been with Deon when he's made some purchases that prior to signing with Illinois he would not have been able to. Those most likely to tell the truth are Deon's teammates, Jackie Crawford, Antoine Johnson and Avery Stallings. These young men are going to junior college and might tell the truth about what they know if their eligibility at an NCAA school is put in question. Also Deon's girlfriend, Latisha Scott, whom I've never met or talked to, might be willing to tell the truth if she could be convinced we're not trying to hurt Deon.

4. The object of this action is to punish the University of Illinois and prevent them from doing it again. We cannot be placed in an uncompetitive situation with anyone in our conference.
5. Finally and most importantly, if this all can be done without destroying Deon Thomas, I'm in favor, but if the NCAA cannot adequately protect Deon and treat him as a victim also, then I would not feel the same way about this course of action.