

We live in a time when a smart phone and two fast-working thumbs are all an athlete needs to instantly post comments, videos, or pictures online for millions to see. It is a time when being the first to tweet on a subject is desirable and having videos go “viral” on YouTube can even become lucrative. However, this instant access to a hungry audience of millions comes with significant risk and a potential for severe regret.

Some college coaches are reacting to this potential for inappropriate postings from their athletes by banning their athletes’ use of social media altogether or disciplining athletes for their social media postings. The purpose of this article is to address whether it is legally defensible to limit or restrict the use of social media by college athletes, or to discipline athletes for their social media activity, and to suggest best practices for avoiding a valid First Amendment claim.