

As the team prepares to take the field or court before an athletic competition, the players may grasp hands and bow their heads while standing in a circle, or they may take a knee together in a locker room in preparation, not for words of wisdom or instruction from the coach, but for prayer. Pre-game prayer is a familiar tradition in a great number of public colleges and universities across the country. Despite the frequency of such prayers and other religious practices in college sports and the validity of concerns about First Amendment violations, few objections are raised and the issue is hardly ever litigated. This Note examines how courts, colleges, and universities have balanced the First Amendment concerns about the establishment and free exercise of religion and how they have dealt with the specific issue of religion and prayer in college athletics. It advocates for a judicial approach to locker room prayer that is vigorously protective of student-athletes and their right to be free from state-sponsored religious activity.