

## **Athletes & the law**

*By Jane Slusark - The Daily Iowan*

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Former Hawkeye basketball star Pierre Pierce will stand in front of a judge today in his criminal sentencing. Iowa cornerback Antwan Allen was captured in newsprint doing the perp walk in September.

Though the names of Hawkeye basketball and football players have appeared in headlines in nearly every news outlet in the state, the high-profile teams actually house fewer petty criminals than do other less-scrutinized squads.

In a Daily Iowan investigation, the names of 562 Hawkeye athletes were run through the Iowa courts online database during the week of Sept. 6. Of those names, 10.8 percent had been convicted of at least a simple misdemeanor in the state.

The DI conducted a similar investigation in 2002, and results at the time showed that 10 percent of athletes had at least a simple misdemeanor conviction on their record.

The Hawkeye wrestling squad had the highest percentage of Iowa defendants - 25 percent, nine out of the 36 men.

Iowa wrestling coach Jim Zalesky said he "can't explain" why the grapplers have the highest percentage of offenders.

"You teach kids, and you talk about it all the time that the most important time for our team is between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.," he said. "We talk about how we want to be a championship team, and after practice is over and the next morning is when you have to make your own personal choices. What you do then affects the team."

Men's swimming and diving, men's gymnastics, and rowing followed the wrestlers with at least 20 percent of their athletes having criminal records.

Men's basketball and football, possibly two of the most examined sports for athlete behavior, tallied only 5.3 percent and 8.2 percent respectively.

Iowa Athletics Director Bob Bowsby said those two sports are generally more in the spotlight than other teams. "We say to [them], there are a lot of people who know you who you don't know or can recognize you," he said. The department and coaches warn players that media attention will likely be higher if athletes are caught committing a crime.

Not a single men's team had a clean criminal record. Meanwhile, players on five women's sports teams never received more than a traffic citation.

Iowa women's basketball head coach Lisa Bluder said she expects her players to be role models off the court. "Your reputation is the team's," she said. "When you're out and about in the community, to carry that responsibility is a hard situation to be in, but it's part of being a student-athlete."

Overall, male athletes were getting caught by the cops more frequently - 13.1 percent of men, compared with 7.3 percent of women.

The investigation did have its limitations. Research was conducted using the most recent rosters, and some spring and winter sports had not been updated. Many student-athletes are from outside the state, and the court records revealed only Iowa offenses.

Most of the convictions were for simple misdemeanors, such as public intoxication or possession of alcohol under the legal age, and also for operating while intoxicated charges.

The Office of Student Life also tracks the annual arrest rates of UI students. In the 2004-05 school year, student-athlete arrest rates were lower than overall UI students, according to the office.

Four and a half percent of undergraduate females were charged that year, compared with 3.8 percent of female athletes. About 10 percent of undergraduate males were charged, compared with 8.5 percent of male athletes.

Under UI athletics policy, the athlete must report any citations or arrests to his or her respective coach.

"We sometimes come by the information by other ways," said Bowsby, who requires athletes in legal trouble to notify their coach within 48 hours of the incident. "We are going to find out about it, one way or another."

The athletics department uses a three-strike system for lesser crimes, such as public intoxication or possession of alcohol under the legal age.

Bowsby handles felonies on a case-by-case basis. An athlete charged with a felony is suspended until it is resolved in the courtroom.