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## WHICH ATHLETES HAVE THE BEST — AND WORST — MORAL-REASONING SKILLS

In measurements of college athletes' moral reasoning, players of team sports — and in particular, team contact sports — fare significantly worse than those who play individual sports, according to Sharon K. Stoll, a sports ethicist from the University of Idaho.

She believes that is partly because team-sport athletes often do not make as many decisions during games. In basketball and football, for example, coaches call many of the plays from the sidelines.

Contrast that to, say, golf and tennis, where players are given greater responsibility. In golf, players must mark penalties on their scorecards for certain errors, and in tennis, athletes call their own lines.

When athletes are given more individual responsibility, Ms. Stoll says, they tend to have higher moral-reasoning ability and make better ethical decisions.

Athletes who play sports in which players are allowed to make contact have the lowest moral-reasoning skills, Ms. Stoll says. "When you're allowed to hit someone within the rules, you start to view your opponent as an object and not human," she says.

Contact sports also allow athletes more opportunities to break the rules, she says. For example, football players can hold an opponent's breastplate, or lacrosse players can jab a competitor with a stick.

Not surprisingly therefore, athletes who play lacrosse, ice hockey, and football score, on average, the lowest of all college athletes. Golfers and tennis players fare best.