

REGIONAL / NATIONAL

'Nobody said anything because they feared being benched' – how abuse is baked into American sports

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As someone who has been researching, writing and teaching about women's and girls sports for the past 15 years, I wasn't surprised by the recent revelations of sexual and verbal abuse by National Women's Soccer League coaches.

There's a tendency to explain such horrific behavior in strictly individualistic terms – as a sign of personality disorders or moral deficiencies. But this kind of response misses the larger picture of how organized sports itself contributes to abusive and even sadistic behavior.

My book on the hypercommercialization of girls' sports identified many instances of verbal and physical abuse of girls and young women at both the youth and college levels.

More recently, some colleagues and I have been exploring the structural causes of college athlete stress and anxiety. A pilot study of several hundred athletes (of all genders) at both large and small schools has revealed troubling examples of abusive coaching behavior. These examples were identified more frequently in

women's sports and were present in both large and small colleges.

'It's like being in the Army'

Our study – which involved over 600 surveys and 40 interviews – has not explicitly uncovered any cases of sexual abuse.

The findings, though, suggest that abusive behavior can take several forms short of sexual assault. The surveys we administered did not ask about abuse in any form. We discovered examples of abuse only during interviews. Most of these examples were offered without direct prompting but when "coaching behavior" was discussed more generically.

We found that there is often overt denigration of an athlete's other college responsibilities. In the survey portion of our study, 80% of athletes reported spending far more than 20 hours per week on their sport. That violates NCAA bylaw 17.1.7, which sets limits on weekly and daily sports participation.

One woman in a small college program told us, "Coach was clear that if I missed 'voluntary' conditioning to finish a lab report I could forget about playing next season." Another athlete in a larger program said, "The 20-hour rule is a joke;



Fans hoist a banner in support of players after a report was released documenting systemic abuse in the National Women's Soccer League. Matthew Ashton/AMA via Getty Images

they think our whole lives should be about [the sport]. Them preaching balance is a load of bulls— for parents and recruits."

A second form of abuse concerns the facilitation of authoritarian behavior. Sociologist Sarah Hatteberg has written on college sports as a "total institution" not unlike prison or the military.

As Hatteberg argues, in total institutions, those in charge have complete control of subordinates and have the power to set stringent rules and the freedom to mete out punishments. My colleagues and I believe this "militarized" aspect of organized sports encourages and legitimates abusive coaching behavior by reinforcing authoritarianism.

Our interviews regularly uncovered elements of militarization.

"The coaches tell us when to eat, when to sleep, when to s—, what to wear, what classes we take," one football player told us. "It's like being in the f—ing Army." A softball player remarked, "When I asked why we had 6 a.m. practice during finals even though the field is always available, [the coach] shouted, 'because I said so; toughen up or get lost.'"

Blaming bad apples

The final thread of abuse we uncovered is the most straightforward: emotional abuse or nonsexual physical abuse.

Emotional abuse consists of ridicule, embarrassment and demoralization, usu-

NEWS YOU CAN USE: Finding free tax return preparation

A limited number of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (VITA/TCE) program sites remain open and available to help eligible taxpayers get their tax returns prepared and filed for free by IRS trained and certified volunteers. Low- and moderate-income taxpayers as well as those age 60 and above can check to see if there is an available site in or near their community by using the VITA/TCE Site Locator.

IRS Free File available until Nov. 17 to help more people receive credits

The IRS Free File program, available only through IRS.gov and offered in partnership with the tax software industry's Free File Alliance, offers eligible taxpayers brand-name tax preparation software to use at no cost. The software does all the work of finding deductions, credits and exemptions for which the taxpayer qualifies. It's free for most individual filers who earned \$73,000 or less in 2021. Some of the Free File packages also offer free state tax returns to those who qualify. Taxpayers who earned more than \$73,000 in 2021 and are comfortable preparing their own taxes can use Free File Fillable Forms. This electronic version of paper IRS tax forms is also used to file tax returns online.

To help more people claim a variety of tax credits and benefits, Free File will remain open for an extra month this year, until Nov. 17, 2022.

The IRS is sending letters to more than 9 million individuals and families who appear to qualify for a variety of key tax benefits but did not claim them by filing a 2021 federal income tax return. Many in this group may be eligible to claim some or all of the 2021 Recovery Rebate Credit, the Child Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax credits depending on their personal and family situation. The special reminder letters, which will be arriving in mailboxes over the next few weeks, are being sent to people who appear to qualify for the Child Tax Credit, Recovery Rebate Credit (RRC) or Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) but haven't yet filed a 2021 return

to claim them. The letter, printed in both English and Spanish, provides a brief overview of each of these three credits.

These and other tax benefits were expanded under last year's American Rescue Plan Act and other recent legislation. Even so, the only way to get the valuable benefits is to file a 2021 tax return. Often, individuals and families can get these expanded tax benefits, even if they have little or no income from a job, business or other source. This means that many people who don't normally need to file a tax return should do so this year, even if they haven't been required to file in recent years.

People can file a tax return even if they haven't yet received their letter. The IRS reminds people that there's no penalty for a refund claimed on a tax return filed after the regular April 2022 tax deadline. The fastest and easiest way to get a refund is to file an accurate return electronically and choose direct deposit.

Do You Know How Student Loan Forgiveness Affects You?

Understand the changes and important dates that impact your student loan repayment.

- Over the last few years, there has been a pause on student loan repayment due to the pandemic. To make the repayment process smoother, there is a final pause until December 31, 2022. Repayment will begin on January 1, 2023.

- October 31, 2022 is an important date for public servants. Public servants have until then to receive credit for past payments that previously didn't qualify for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). Eligible borrowers have until the same day to apply to have all their student loans forgiven through PSLF.

- The U.S. Department of Education will provide up to \$20,000 in debt relief to federal Pell Grant recipients. Non-Pell Grant recipients will also receive up to \$10,000 in debt relief. Your individual or household income determines your eligibility. You qualify if it is less than \$125,000 for individuals or \$250,000 for

households. An online form to apply will be available in October 2022. Apply by Dec. 31, 2023.

Grandparents and other relatives with eligible dependents can qualify for 2021 Child Tax Credit

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service reminded families today that some taxpayers who claim at least one child as their dependent on their tax return may not realize they could be eligible to benefit from the Child Tax Credit (CTC).

Eligible taxpayers who received advance Child Tax Credit payments last year should file a 2021 tax return to receive the second half of the credit. Eligible taxpayers who did not receive advance Child Tax Credit payments last year can claim the full credit by filing a 2021 tax return.

The IRS urges grandparents, foster parents or people caring for siblings or other relatives to check their eligibility to receive the 2021 Child Tax Credit. It's important for people who might qualify for this credit to review the eligibility rules to make sure they still qualify. Taxpayers can use the Interactive Tax Assistant to check eligibility. Taxpayers who haven't qualified in the past should also check because they may now be able to claim the credit. To receive it, eligible individuals must file a 2021 federal tax return.

What is the Child Tax Credit expansion?

The Child Tax Credit expansion, which is a part of the American Rescue Plan, increased the amount of money per child families can receive and expanded who can receive the payments.

The American Rescue Plan increased the Child Tax Credit from \$2,000 to \$3,600 per child for children under the age of six, from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for children over the age of 6 and raised the age limit from 16 to 17 years old.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 expanded the Child Tax Credit for tax year 2021 only.

Who qualifies for the Child Tax Credit?

Taxpayers can claim the Child Tax Credit for each qualifying child who has a Social Security number that is valid for employment in the United States and issued by the Social Security Administration before the due date of their tax return (including an extension if the extension was requested by the due date).

To be a qualifying child for the 2021 tax year, the dependent generally must:

- Be under age 18 at the end of the year.
- Be their son, daughter, stepchild, eligible foster child, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, half-sister or a descendant of one of these (for example, a grandchild, niece, or nephew).
- Provide no more than half of their own financial support during the year.
- Have lived with the taxpayer for more than half the year.
- Be properly claimed as their dependent on their tax return.
- Not file a joint return with their spouse for the tax year or file it only to claim a refund of withheld income tax or estimated tax paid.
- Have been a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or U.S. resident alien.

What are the eligibility factors?

Individuals qualify for the full amount of the 2021 Child Tax Credit for each qualifying child if they meet all eligibility factors and their annual income is not more than:

- \$150,000 if they're married and filing a joint return, or if they're filing as a qualifying widow or widower.
- \$112,500 if they're filing as a head of household.
- \$75,000 if they're a single filer or are married and filing a separate return.

Parents and guardians with higher incomes may be eligible to claim a partial credit. Claiming these benefits can result in tax refunds for many individuals. Individuals should file electronically and choose direct deposit to avoid delays and receive their refund faster. (IR-2022-181, Oct. 17, 2022)

Social Security Checks Increase in January 2023

If you receive a Social Security check in 2023, expect it to be 8.7% more than checks issued to recipients in 2022. You're getting a raise!

The annual cost of living adjustment, or COLA, is calculated each October using the Consumer Price Index on a subset of workers for the months of July, August, and September. Last year's COLA was a 5.9% increase, which was the largest increase since 1980 when the inflation rate averaged 10.32%. That mark was surpassed with the increase in the monthly payment to seniors due to the ongoing recession with higher prices on all goods and services, ranging from housing, gas, transportation, food, energy, everything.

Just as American workers have had wage increases of just under 4% in 2022 compared to 2021 due to inflationary pressures and the responding labor market, seniors whose income is fixed due to retirement have become dependent on the government's process.

Working Americans, when wages are adjusted for the 40-year record-breaking inflation, have actually had a 4.4% reduction or a payout of \$3400 per employee. Social Security income is adjusted based on prices of a certain "basket" of products and services monitored over a window of

time. But, just as workers are seeing, the month-by-month price increases on top of price increases erode any benefit of wage and benefit increases.

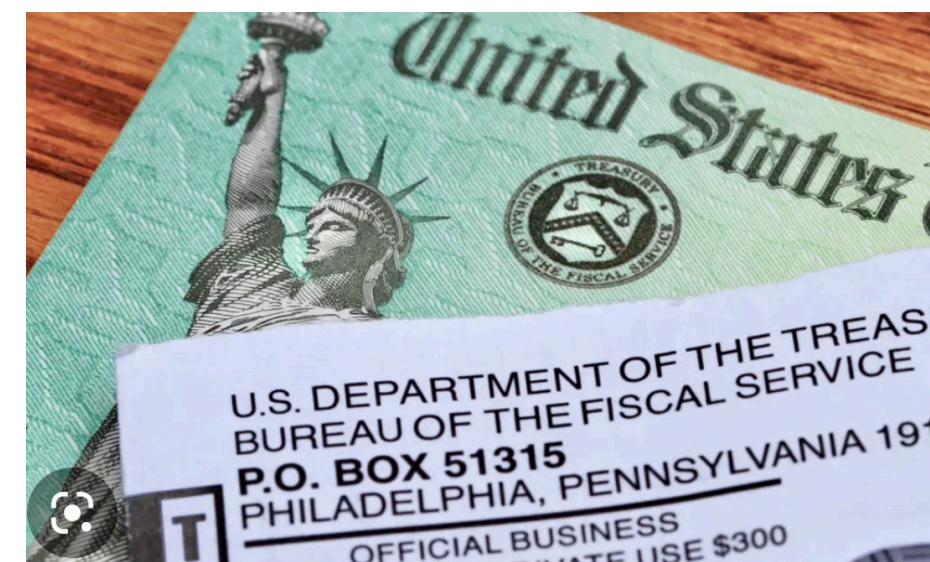
The Social Security Administration projects the average check will increase by around \$140 monthly when recipients receive their January payment. The relief will be appreciated, even if the benefit actually falls short of keeping up with the price increases that accompany inflation and recession.

If you're reading this and expect to draw your Social Security check, funded through payroll deductions of working Americans, at the age of 65 years old in 2034 or later, you need a serious backup plan for retirement.

According to financial planners, Social Security is designed to replace only 40% of the average salary after an individual retires. Research shows that 20% of retired couples and 45% of single retirees rely almost exclusively on Social Security income.

Will you be able to retire and live on less than half of your income?

The funding for the Social Security Administration faces a projected shortfall beginning in 2034 due to the practice of politicians not balancing the US Gov-



ernment budget and "borrowing" money from the Social Security Trust Fund. The money from your paycheck for your Social Security check has long ago been spent, meaning, there's no such thing as a Social Security Trust Fund.

Almost \$3 trillion is owed to the Social Security program from the practice of our government spending money that it does not have. So, in 2034, there

will only be enough workers, whose paychecks fund another person's Social Security, estimated pay 80% of the amount each beneficiary is due.

Current retirees, enjoy the enhanced payment to survive the recession. Younger workers, start saving and investing. The Social Security program we know today can't exist without change for too much longer. – CNC Staff