

EQUIPPING COACHES AND STUDENT ATHLETES TO  
THRIVE IN OUR RACIALLY DIVERSE WORLD



# MELD

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THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR'S  
GAME PLAN  
FOR CRITICAL FIRST STEPS  
FOR RACE-BASED INCIDENTS

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## Picture this

Your head coach soccer coach texts you:  
**Can U get here ASAP???**

You run over to the field. Her five-star recruit has just run off the field in the middle of the match. Coach tells you fans for the opposing team were chanting "Wrong sport, homie! The track is over there!" every time she touched the ball. She's Black. The fans are all white.

## Or this:

It's 2 in the morning, May 6th. The doorbell interrupts your sound sleep. Two local police tell you seven players on the basketball team—including the starting five—are in jail. They crashed the Latino Students Association Cinco de Mayo celebration—wearing sombreros and necklaces strung with Taco Bell hot sauce packets singing a jingle they wrote about undocumented immigrants.

## Or this:

The local beat reporter calls you. "I've got three players here who tell me they've been bullied by their strength and conditioning coach." You hang up and slump in your chair. The coach is Asian. The players are all white.

**When Someone on Your Staff or Team Does Something Racist...**  
*Million Dollar Lawsuits? Probation? Expulsions? Firings? Bad Press?*

**What Can You Do Within the First 45 Minutes to Get in Front of It?**

## 1. Establish your resources on the ground NOW... before something breaks.

If you have to act immediately—what resources are at your disposal and can be activated in the first 45 minutes? What do you need to do well ahead of time to make sure they can be activated in those critical 45 minutes?

**Fill out this short checklist of your resources on the ground NOW.**

- ☐ If you have to act immediately—what resources are at your disposal and can be activated in the first 45 minutes?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ What do you need to do well ahead of time to make sure they can be activated in those critical 45 minutes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ What Trusted Associate can you loop in immediately and can join you for the first meetings (see below) primarily to give you candid feedback and input? Ask this person to document the meetings so you have an accurate accounting of the key things said or done.  
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- ☐ Who is the legal counsel that you might need to bring in at a moment's notice? Have them on your speed dial.  
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- ☐ Have campus security (or the like) on your speed dial.  
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- ☐ Have a social media person/team trained and in place to monitor what might be going viral and a plan to engage it, if needed.

- ☐ Have your school's policies that pertain to emergencies in an easy-to-get -to Word doc or the like.

- ☐ Read the NCAA's policies to be up-to-speed on their expectations.

## 2. "It's Happening!"

Find a quiet space. Alone. Take deep breaths. Recalibrate until you are calm enough to provide decisive, clear-headed leadership. You're being counted on. Don't skip this step.

## 3. Those first critical 45 minutes after "it happens": First, get the 30,000-foot view.

- ☐ Don't jump to conclusions based on what you hear first—then act immediately after hearing it. You need more information. Corroboration is key.
- ☐ What has happened in the past 24 hours (or less)? What are the root causes?
- ☐ Who are the key players?
- ☐ What, if anything, is anyone asking for?
- ☐ What damage has been done so far?
- ☐ From your short checklist above (#1), who do you need to bring in the loop immediately?
- ☐ Your 45 minutes are up! Is there anything you need to do right now—if

**This should get you through the first 45 minutes. For the next 45 hours, #4-10--available in MELD's Athletic Director's Emergency Tool Kit will continue to guide you through your race-based crisis. To purchase it, please go to our website.**

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