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## Personal threats becoming unfortunate reality in girls hoops

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The deterioration of sportsmanship throughout our sporting world is evident and not just in major sports such as college basketball, where a big time prospect like [Kevin Love](#) (and his family) of UCLA had to endure rabid fans from his home state of Oregon when his team plays in The Pit. The badgering and harassment of athletes is unmistakable even in high school girls basketball.

Taylor Hill, Minneapolis South High School's star junior guard and ranked No. 12 in the 2009 class by HoopGurlz.com, should have been resting the night before her team played St. Paul Central in the Minnesota Class 4A championship game. Instead she was on the receiving end of threats of violence against her.

"She received some threatening phone calls late Friday night, early Saturday morning that were graphic and violent in nature," South athletic director Mark Sanders told HoopGurlz.com.

Minneapolis Police are investigating calls made to Hill's cell phone, from a 651 area code, which is home to Central Minnesota and the St. Paul area. The calls started late Friday night with threats of breaking her legs before the game.

"They called back at 4 a.m. (Saturday) and said that they're about to kill me and shoot me," Hill told KSTP, an ABC news affiliate in Minnesota.

The two teams, South and Central, are state rivals and in this case things certainly got out of hand. This incident brings up the issue of how far fans take their fanaticism.

In La Jolla, Calif., Gizelle Studevent had been harassed and threatened by someone or some persons in the community over her participation in La Jolla Country Day School basketball team for years. The hatred and harassment followed her even after she transferred to the Bishop School, another La Jolla private school.

According to the Bishop School's head basketball coach, Marlon Wells, the harassment wasn't just aimed at Studevent but also at Austrian exchange student Inga Orekhova. According to Wells at the two teams' second game against one-another this season at Country Day, the student section waived American flags and held up signs aimed at both Orekhova and Studevent.



Kevin Love endured death threats and extreme taunting from overzealous Oregon fans in his return to his home state.

Wells noted signs such as "Go Home," "We want you," "We don't miss you," "You play like a man," "Go Home" and more. The San Diego Tribune in its online addition (<http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/>) ran a photo showing a fan with a painted face holding a sign that read "No 1 Likes U". The story noted school officials did remove at least one of the signs and quoted school athletic director Jeff Hutzler that the fans were addressed prior the game about proper conduct.

The harassment for Studevent began when she was an eighth grader at Country Day. While on a basketball trip with the team in the San Francisco Bay Area someone slipped a letter into her suitcase. A copy of the letter was provided to HoopGurlz.com by Studevent's father, Ray Studevent. The letter is with laced expletives, racial slurs and references to her recent visit to Stanford.

More letters would pile in over the next two years, several which came after visits to colleges she was considering attending with remarks in the letters that she isn't good enough, although she has verbally committed to Penn State. There were pornographic photos with her name printed on them and references to websites to see more. After the police got involved many of the references were removed but the damage was done.



Taylor Hill received death threats before her game against St. Paul Central.

"As a parent you can see how it affects her," Ray Studevent said.

He also said the competitiveness in her led her to hide the pain or say nothing was bothering her. As a reminder she kept the first anonymous letter in her sock during the first game against Country Day.

Among the many questions these two stories raise is when did harassing the opponent become acceptable? There is a culture in sports that home fans can create a home-court or home-field advantage with their energy and noise but when did ridicule, humiliation, violence and intimidation become acceptable?

"These are 17, 18year old girls, they might say they're alright but I know it affects them," Wells said. "The administrators and basketball coaches, we can take care of a lot of it, stopping the game, throwing people out, getting on the PA system."

Notes

**Shenise Johnson** of Rush-Henrietta High School (New York) was named New York Miss Basketball 2008. Johnson is ranked as the No. 16 player in the country by HoopGurlz.com.

**Anne Marie Armstrong** of Wesleyan High School (Norcross, Ga.) was named Georgia Miss Basketball 2008.

**Brittany Rayburn**, a Purdue-bound senior guard, was named Indianapolis Star's Miss Basketball 2008. She was the state's leading scorer at 28.7 per game while averaging 8.2 rebounds and 3.2 assists this season. In her career she helped in compiling 70 wins and three sectional titles in four seasons. Since 1976 she is just the second player from class A, the state's smallest classification, to win the award.

