"The football field is a battlefield. There's an extraordinary price for victory at Oregrove High. It is paid on-and off-the football field. And it claims its victims without mercy—including the most innocent bystanders.

When a violent, steroid-infused, ever-escalating prank war has devastating consequences, an unlikely friendship between a talented but emotionally damaged fullback and a promising gymnast might hold the key to a school's salvation.

Told in alternating voices and with unapologetic truth, *Leverage* illuminates the fierce loyalty, flawed justice, and hard-won optimism of two young athletes."

- Summary from Amazon

Alan Brown, Wake Forest University  
brownma@wfu.edu

Joshua C. Cohen, Penguin/Dutton  
http://www.leveragethebook.com/

Kelli Sowerbrower, Georgia State University  
ksowerbrower1@student.gsu.edu

*For more information on bullying in sports young adult literature, check out Alan Brown’s Sports Literacy Blog: [http://sportsliteracy.wordpress.com/](http://sportsliteracy.wordpress.com/)*

November 23, 2013  
Boston, MA
Harassment

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) defines harassment as “more of an annoyance and generally involves unwanted advances or contact.”

Hazing

NFHS defines hazing as “any act expected of someone being part of a group that humiliates, degrades, or risks emotional and/or physical harm regardless of the person’s willingness to participate.”

Hazing involves practices that can result in serious bodily harm or death: tattooing, piercing, head-shaving, branding, sleep deprivation, physical punishment, kidnapping, consumption of dangerous food or beverages, being deprived of personal hygiene, and/or inappropriate sexual behavior, including sexual assault and/or rape.

Bullying

NFHS defines bullying as “more aggressive in nature [than harassment] and can include physical and verbal acts of aggression including intimidation and social alienation.”

All school systems should have an anti-bullying and harassment policy. Teachers and coaches should spend time with their student-athletes examining the policy and what it means in the overall school culture as well as each school’s culture of sports.

Direct bullying includes: verbal aggression, intimidation, and social alienation.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (North Carolina) describes bullying as follows:

“To view the WSFCS policy, check out this link: http://wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/40049
Selected Tips for Teachers, Coaches, and Advisors *(NFHS)*

- Understand your school district’s anti-hazing policy
- Create an environment of trust, respect, and sincere concern
- Explain your position on hazing and identify potential consequences for students
- Define any special privileges that upperclassmen receive on a team or group
- Generate positive strategies for building group unity and team pride
- Establish new traditions involving positive results based on hard work and unity

Potential Strategies for Curbing Bullying and Hazing *(NFHS & Alan Brown)*

- Discuss the culture of sports in comparison to general societal expectations
- Discuss relevant topics about bullying and hazing in class and team meetings
- Incorporate reflective writing about important sports-related topics
- Begin a literacy program built around the topic of sports
- Make service learning a central part of team bonding
- Connect athletes and non-athletes in community service projects
- Create a school mentoring/buddy system between older and younger student-athletes

Ways to Counter a Bully *(kidshealth.org & wikihow.com)*

- Stand tall and tell him/her to stop
- Stand up for yourself
- Feel good about yourself
- Get a buddy (and be a buddy)
- Outsmart or ignore him/her
- Don’t bully back or become a bully yourself
- Show little reaction to the bully
- Tell someone (an authority figure) what is happening.
Bullying in Sports

Out of Bounds by Robert Kolker (New York Magazine)

*Inspiration for Joshua C. Cohen’s (2012) novel Leverage


The Miami Dolphins and Everything that Will Never Make Sense (Grantland)


Miami Dolphins Incidents Shine Light on Bullying, Hazing (The Denver Post)


No Place for Bullying in NFL (ESPN Video)


NBA Memo: Bullying not Tolerated (ESPN.com)


Sports Teams Take Stand against LGBT Bullying, Face Backlash (CBS Pittsburgh)

http://bit.ly/PittsLGBTbullying

Major League Baseball Joins the Nationwide Support of #SpiritDay for LGBT Youth (GLAAD)


Middle School Football Team Conspires for Touching Touchdown (CBS News)


Other Bullying Resources

Themed Issue of English Journal (July 2012, volume 101, number 6): Preventing Bullying Behaviors

Bullying Prevention Resource Guide: Extending your Positive School Climate to Athletic Activities: www.bullyingprevention.org

Be More Than a Bystander: www.stopbullying.gov
What role should leadership play in this discussion of bullying in school and sports?