

The Salt Lake Tribune

College Sports

Texting college recruits could soon be history

By Chhun Sun

The Salt Lake Tribune

College coaches know it takes longer to text an athlete than to sit down, dial the person's phone number and have a conversation.

But since the NCAA limits coaches to only one phone per month to eligible recruits, they're happy using their fingers to send text messages.

As of today, there are no rules prohibiting them from texting.

That form of recruiting, however, would no longer be available for eager coaches, under a rule change backed by an NCAA panel. During a meeting this week, the NCAA's Division I management council voted in favor of a text-messaging ban. The change will be considered for final approval by the Div. I Board of Directors in a meeting on April 26.

"In this day and age, there's no different in a phone call and text messaging," Judge Memorial football coach James Cordova said. "Kids text each other all the time. That's just a way of communication. Some kids text as much as they call. Some actually even text more often. If you're going to ban one, absolutely you have to ban the other."

Text messaging has always been viewed as a loophole of sorts for college coaches. One way coaches use them is to ask a prospective player to call them, since recruits have no limit to how many times they can call a college. It's one way of bending the rules, and coaches have been accused of abusing the access it provides.

"A highly recruited kid, any time of year, can get 20-30 texts a day," Utah football assistant coach Gary Anderson told The Salt Lake Tribune last summer. "It's more time-consuming on a kid and it makes their life harder earlier."

College coaches have been known to send out mass e-mails to recruits, which, Cordova said, gives "kids false information about where they sit and what priority they are."

Division I student-athletic advisory council chairwoman Anna Chappell, who played basketball at Arizona and is a graduate student at Oregon, said athletes backed the ban.

"It's intruding on their lives and creating inappropriate relationships with coaches," Chappell said. "If you don't stop it now, what roads are you going to have to cross later on?"