Just a few weeks ago, Miami Heat player Terry Rozier and Portland Trail Blazers coach Chauncey Billups, along with over thirty others, were arrested for being involved in a separate federal investigation into illegal sports betting. Right now, the world of professional basketball is facing one of its most serious scandals in years. To gain a better understanding of the case's implications, I spoke with someone with impressive knowledge of this topic. Patrick Kelly, a Professor of Accountancy and the Director of the Ethics in Business Education Program here at Providence College, has long studied issues of integrity in business and sports. He told me he was not surprised this happened, noting that the current structure of legalized sports betting in the U.S. is essentially setting itself up for abuse.

In 2018, the Supreme Court struck down the federal ban on sports betting, and since then, it has grown at an unbelievably rapid pace. In just seven years, forty states have legalized some form of sports betting. Professor Kelly explained how troubling this is, considering that legalized casino gambling first began almost a century ago, in 1931, and is far from being a fully mature or problem-free industry. For sports betting to grow so quickly in a significantly shorter amount of time is a huge concern. Through blatant inconsistency with state regulations and age restrictions, it's no secret that oversight just hasn't kept up. Professor Kelly made it clear that state-by-state regulation is not the right way to approach this, and it ultimately creates a jagged system that allows for loopholes.

Professor Kelly also spoke about the rise of prop bets—bets on specific in-game events rather than the final outcome. Bettors can place wagers on anything from who will score the first basket to who will/won't be playing, as well as certain statistics like number of points, rebounds, assists, or fouls. These bets do have the potential to increase athletic engagement and revenue, but they also create opportunities for illegal "spot-fixing", another term Professor Kelly discussed, where people can manipulate a specific, small moment during games for betting purposes. This type of betting lies at the heart of the NBA's current problem.

However, Professor Kelly emphasized that the real problem here that sets this scandal apart from others is the fact that there is involvement of an active player and coach. This isn't only about people who used to be in the NBA or have ties to it; this concerns an active player and an active coach, and not just any coach, but a Hall of Famer. He suggests that we are losing any kind of integrity of the game. For background, Billups was arrested on federal charges of money laundering and wire fraud, having ties to an underground, Mafia-backed poker ring that supposedly used his fame status to bring wealthy bettors into rigged games. The FBI claims that he, along with former NBA player and assistant coach Damon Jones, helped with these games. Rozier, on the other hand, was arrested on federal charges of money laundering and conspiracy to commit wire fraud after allegedly giving up confidential information about his health and team information to bettors that placed large prop bets on him. The FBI found suspicious betting patterns based on games where Rozier left early, raising some questions about whether he may

have purposely performed a certain way for money. The investigation into Rozier, Professor Kelly notes, is a bit different as it has been ongoing for months. A few months before his arrest, the NBA reportedly executed its own investigation into Rozier but found nothing. This obviously raised questions about the league's ability to internally monitor its players and coaches.

When concluding my interview with Professor Kelly, he told me the main thing to remember is still innocent until proven guilty. As of now, these are all allegations, and it is incredibly important to let the legal system operate accordingly. However, Professor Kelly did not stutter when he told me that “all the sports leagues have to be very concerned with what just happened”.