

Pop fly



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Eli Robert got under a fly ball during Legion baseball practice Tuesday. The team heads to a tournament in Garden City this weekend.

Former Barton County coach:
Time sheet signatures were forged

WICHITA (AP) — Former track coach Lyles Lashley testified Thursday he and his former boss, Lance Brauman, would fill out and sign student time sheets based on the number of work hours track athletes need to pay for their schooling at Barton County Community College.

Lashley — who replaced Lance Brauman at the school after Brauman took a job as assistant track and field coach at the University of Arkansas — has pleaded guilty to theft of a federal program for signing time sheets for work he knew was not performed. As part of his deal with federal prosecutors, he agreed to testify against Brauman and former Barton County Community College athletic director Neil Elliott.

Brauman's case is the first to go to trial in the Barton County athletics scandal that spawned charges against seven coaches and Elliott and led to the firing of the school's president.

Brauman, now assistant track and field coach at the University of Arkansas, is charged in U.S. District Court with eight counts, including embezzlement, theft and mail fraud, for allegedly participating in a scheme at the Kansas community college to get athletes work-study funds and campus jobs that paid them for work they did not do and for allegedly causing false academic credentials to be sent to other schools on athletes' behalf.

Lashley told jurors he and Brauman had different people sign students' names to the time sheets and even used different pens and pencils to make it more difficult to

detect the forgeries.

He testified that he sometimes even forged Brauman's signature to save time. While on the stand, he said he could no longer distinguish which time sheets were actually signed by Brauman.

Under cross examination, Lashley acknowledged that he and Brauman tried to persuade their students to work for the work-study money they were getting but said the track athletes knew students on the men's basketball team were not working at all. "It created some tension," Lashley said.

The defense contends Lashley has lied throughout the federal investigation into the athletic program.

U.S. District Judge Monti Belot told attorneys, while jurors were outside the courtroom, that Lashley's credibility in the case is very important: "I think the jury has

already figured out there is a lot of lying by a lot of people in this case."

Lashley's sentencing has been delayed so prosecutors can determine whether he provides substantial assistance before making their sentencing recommendations, and U.S. Attorney Eric Melgren was in the courtroom for his testimony. Lashley's sentence could range from probation to 10 years in prison.

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NCAA turns down 128-team proposal

From the Houston Chronicle
INDIANAPOLIS - The NCAA's men's basketball committee on Thursday rejected a coaches' proposal to nearly double the size of the NCAA Tournament field from 65 to 128, calling expansion unnecessary and not imminent. It also voted down a more mod-

est offer that would have added fewer than eight teams to the bracket and increasing the number of opening-round games in Dayton, Ohio.

"In the interest of sustaining the quality of the tournament, the committee has decided to maintain the current structure," Craig Littlepage,

chairman of the men's basketball committee, said in a statement.

Men's committee members considered information about the quality of competition, logistics, television ratings and the overall popularity of the event. The 10 committee members determined the tournament would remain at 65 teams.

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