

# Paying student athletes

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Imagine this; Mr. Perfect, a highly successful college football student-athlete, is shattering every record once held in the sport. He is on the cover of ESPN and SI magazine. His face is plastered on televisions nationwide. Everyone knows his face and name. He has all the fame that he dreamed of, but he has no money. NCAA rules state that no student-athlete can obtain a job. His full ride scholarship, after classes and books, barely leaves him with money to take care of necessities. An alumna of the school and huge fan helps him out and gives him \$500 as a gift.

The NCAA finds out and Bam! The school is hit with fines and can't compete in any bowl games for two years, so much for the undefeated season. Also, he is banned from the sport in any NCAA regulated school. Mr. Perfect, being a sophomore, has one year left before he can enter the draft. Now, instead of being a sure shot first round draft, he may drop to third round at best. That's millions of dollars lost because of a \$500 gift. The team suffers, the school suffers, and he suffers. Incidents, such as the one above, happens every now and again in college sports.

College athletes are not allowed to accept gifts, obtain jobs during the school year, or use their image and likeness in any way for monetary gain. This leaves many student athletes well known, yet well broke. Many student-athletes, especially those who play sports that generate millions of dollars in revenue, wonder why they can't be compensated for their efforts. Student athletes should be compensated to help support their living expenses while attending college. College football and basketball produces the most revenue than any other college sport.

According to Gibson (2013), “ College basketball and football together generate more than \$6 billion in annual revenue...two years ago, the NCAA and CBS/Turner Sports agreed on a \$10. 8 billion deal to broadcast March Madness basketball games until 2024. ” With all the monies that are generated from these sports, not one cent has been paid out to the student-athlete. Montopoli (2013), reports that the top university’s athletes are being denied \$6. 2 billion from 2011-2015 and that combined the athletes had a fair market value of roughly \$2 million above their college scholarships.

That is highway robbery and unfair to the athletes who risk everything on the football field or basketball court. College coaches, some of which are averaging about three to four million per year, are making more than the athletic director and even the president of the university while the student-athletes are putting their health and safety on the line with nothing in return. Imagine struggling to buy clothes and shoes, walking to practice, to see Coach Richman pulling up in a Bentley.

With the revenue that’s being generated, many injured student-athletes could use a part of it to help pay for treatment. While the NCAA requires the student-athletes to have some type of insurance, unclear standards and confusion as to the conditions of the insurance, leaves the student-athlete responsible for most, if not all of the medical bills (Peterson, 2009). Some colleges, mostly the major division 1 colleges, pay for injuries while the student-athlete is attending college. After college, the athlete is left fending for his/her self.

An injury to the student-athlete can void their scholarship as well.

Scholarships are renewed year to year. Therefore if an athlete is injured severely, his/her scholarship may not be renewed, leaving the student with unpaid tuition and medical bills. Also, colleges input loopholes so the medical payout is not detrimental. There are documented cases in which the college labeled the conditions an “ illness” and not a sports-related injury, which left the student-athlete in debt with medical bills. A similar case like this happened to a Colgate University crew member (Peterson, 2009).

Ignorance to the consent forms being signed has proved detrimental to the student as well. Now imagine that injured student-athlete at home with a pile of medical bills, no longer attending the university that he once adored, playing a video game that’s using his image and likeness. He wonders why he can’t receive a share of the monies profited from the sell of the game. He’s not alone. Many student-athletes do not know that they sign away their right to profit from their image or likeness when they enter into NCAA sports.

In fact, the very same rights that the student-athlete releases are now owned by the NCAA and its licensees. Meaning, the NCAA and its licensees can do whatever it feels with your image and likeness to turn a profit for them. Former college athletes recently put together a federal class-action lawsuit against the NCAA stating that the use of their image or likeness is infringing their rights. Also, stating that the NCAA forces the athletes to sign away their rights in order to play college sports.

This happens year after year due to the fact that college athlete are not properly informed of their legal rights. A survey was taken and according to

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Wolverton (2011), 97 percent of respondents liked being featured in video games, and two-thirds believed that the way the NCAA and video-game companies used their image or likeness was fair. But only 33 percent believed that their athletic scholarship was sufficient payment for the use of their image or likeness. If these student-athletes don't know what they are signing the outcome could be critical.

Now the college athlete can't be in a commercial, sell any memorabilia, be paid to attend or speak at functions or anything that would result in the athlete earning a little cash to make ends meet during the academic year. He/she has basically become a slave to the NCAA. These student 'slaves' are being misguided under the 'free ride' scholarship. As a matter of fact, a Division 1 athlete winds up having to pay about \$3,000 in school related expenses not covered by grants-in-aid, Associated Press (2010).

That is just school related expenses, now factor in personal expenses and the number could easily double. With room and board, parking fees, etc. being covered by the student-athlete, the result of this can lead to multiple athletes risking everything to obtain money from anywhere they can. Sports agents feed off of this urge and capitalize on the opportunity to have a star student-athlete in their pocket. In conclusion, paying the student-athletes a small amount of the profit can have a huge benefit. Athletes will be able to take care of personal and school expenses.

Also, they will be hesitant to accept monies from an outside source which can result in suspensions or infractions. If an agreement can't be reached with student-athletes receiving a stipend, the athletes should be able to

market themselves through commercials or in any other way that they can benefit from the use of their image or likeness that's not negative. With the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that these student-athletes invest into their sport, some form of financial compensation should be awarded to them.