

Paying college athletes

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Persuasive Speech Nearly two weeks ago, over 700 men and women signed on to play in the largest post-season tournament in professional sports, or should I say, amateur sports. The athletes in March Madness, the post-season basketball tournament, practice multiple times per day, all year round, and even on the weekends. When they aren't busy between practice and traveling around the country, they are watching film to make themselves even better. That sounds a lot like a professional athlete to me. The only thing that isn't professional about their lives is their pay check.

The networks that host March Madness rake in millions of dollars through commercials. The schools rake in money through merchandise and ticket sales. The athletes rake in, well, nothing. Other than experience and exposure, these athletes aren't allowed to make any money or even accept rewards for their accomplishments. The money generated by March Madness rivals the money earned from the post season of nearly every professional sports league in the world. At \$613 million, the NCAA is earning over 40 percent more ad revenue than the entire NBA playoffs and over 60 percent more ad revenue than the entire post season for Major League Baseball.

Given that professional basketball and baseball players bring home millions to their families every year, one has to wonder: What is the NCAA doing with all that money? The money doesn't disappear just because the players' families don't get it. Instead, we see coaches signing blockbuster deals worth tens of millions of dollars. It's time to let the players have a piece of the pie. You can't possibly convince me that head coach Gene Chizik was worth more to Auburn's championship football than their quarterback Cam Newton.

Plus, kids in Alabama aren't buying Chizik jerseys from the university. Still, we somehow expect that a kid from the inner city should be happy with ascholarship. The truth is that almost none of us would accept a scholarship over a job that generates tens of millions of dollars. That's why we see kids like Kobe Bryant and LeBron James coming straight out of high school and to the NBA. Now, for them, that move paid off. However, there have been plenty of talentedhigh school studentswho were lured by the money of professional sports but were never able to make it.

Now they're stuck without a job or aneducation. As Americans, should we be encouraging this risky behavior? Those who oppose paying college athletes say that a full ride scholarship with free room and board should be enough, and the kids should get used to the idea of working hard in school and not worrying about money. However, kids are only guaranteed these scholarships one year at a time. Meaning that if a kid sustains a careeror season ending injury, now he's left at school without a scholarship. Now he can't pay for his classes.

Now he can't pay for room and board. Most college athletes can't pay the fees their school charges, so why not help them out if they get hurt? Others also say that athletes can go out like any other citizen and find a job if they need to support theirfamilywhile in college. The reality is no college athlete can possibly hold a job while being part of a team. Between traveling half the season, suffering through day long practices, sitting through night classes, these kids can't find any time to fit in a job.

Like I said, this dilemma encourages many to skip college and enter the pros, sometimes, without enough experience and no college education. Allowing the payment of athletes would end the lying and cheating that all but criminalizes big-time college sports. All the rumors and finger pointing, often times without any evidence, only creates dark clouds around universities. When SMU was convicted of rewarding their football players with cars and other material items, the football program was given “ the death sentence” for one year, and it destroyed their reputation.

Without distractions in the media, kids would be allowed to focus and not worry about the safety of their programs. The current system is practically like slavery. These kids work their hearts out and play through injuries in fear of losing their scholarship. Meanwhile, their families are left at home, struggling without their kids’ help. Keeping athletes and their families in poverty while coaches and administrators get rich is not only un-American; it is an embarrassment to us all.