

Stipends for college athletes

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It's about time: Stipends for College Athletes Imagine being a college football star and finding out that a jersey representing your school with your name and number on the back is not only selling for \$110 in stores nationally, but it is profiting higher than some professional sports jerseys. Now, imagine that you as that student-athlete will not be making a single penny off your institution using your name for monetary profit. Why you ask? Because according to the governing body of collegiate sports, the National Collegiate Athletic Association or NCAA, this would be considered an act that would bring an athlete out of his amateur status.

Yet, it is okay to exploit that athlete's talents as if he or she were a professional athlete and not compensate him or her. The NCAA started off as a small organization whose first objective was to solve an injury crisis in college football. However, with a growing governing power came more change. In 1852, Collegiate competition or "sport" made its debut in the form of a regatta race between Harvard and Yale ("Intercollegiate History of NCAA" 1). Soon after came the establishment of baseball and collegiate football.

In the beginning, competition and funding was organized through student-run campaigns, and school officials had very little control over the intercollegiate sports movement. However, in 1905, after a number of deaths and serious injuries occurred to students playing collegiate football, a group of school officials were summoned together to make a series of rules that would emphasize safety within the sport. Just five years later in 1910, this group became established and came to be known as the NCAA ("History of Intercollegiate Athletics" 1).

As the years progressed, the NCAA established sanctions not just for football but all sports. Most notably in 1950, the NCAA established that “ Students could be awarded scholarships based on their athletic ability, but the funds had to be administered by the financial aid office, not the athletic department. The amount was limited to tuition and fees, and payments from sources outside the university (e. g. , alumni boosters) were banned. ” (qtd in “ History of Intercollegiate Athletics” 2).

NCAA officials wanted to stress that there was a clear line that needed to be drawn between a student athlete’s main goal of pursuit towards higher education and the distracting blue elephant in the room of their college sports teams operating like that of a professional organization. Hence, the term “ amateurism”. On amateurism, the NCAA stated that “ student-athletes shall be amateurs ... and should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises,” (“ 2011-12 NCAA Division I Manual” 1).

Although the original intentions of this bylaw were to make sure professionalism in sport didn’t deter athletes away from higher education, too much has changed within intercollegiate sports for the same standards to apply today. The NCAA’s goal was to make sure these young players continued along their famous “ amateurism” tagline, but we see them featured as unstoppable super heroes throwing down monstrous one handed dunks or making bone crushing tackles in commercials advertising for games as if they were professionals. The very organization controlling college sports has in itself become the exploiter of athletes in its own commercial pursuits. With this exploitation comes a very large elephant

in the room spraying water at the American public from its trunk. The huge discrepancy between the monetary value of a scholarship the NCAA provides players with and the actual profits it generates from the player's efforts is astounding. Although the profit rapidly increases with college sports popularity, the benefits student athletes receive stay constant.

The largest financial rewards a student athlete can receive for their athletic contributions are the benefits of free room and board, tuition, and a food plan. If we take the cost of these factors over the student athletes' time at their institution, compared to the hundreds of billions of dollars generated in revenue from the NCAA we see something similar to Nike and their illegal sweatshop industry. It's time for change to take place, college athletes should be rewarded like the professionals in the NCAA and conferences across the country market them to be.

College athletes should receive stipends because there is a large discrepancy between what college athletes are worth and how much they are given, because athletic scholarships do not cover the full cost of living, and because the operation, money, and industry associated with college athletics is too great to still be titled "amateur". The popularity of college sports and its value to entertainment is skyrocketing. The NCAA is the head organization in control of a hundred billion dollar industry.

The disgusting disparity arrives at the difference between what college athletes are rewarded with and the actual revenues the NCAA is collecting. For this discrepancy college athletes need to be rewarded for their effort and should be given stipends. Television broadcasting contracts, shoe and apparel deals, and commercial advertising rake in billions of dollars for

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the NCAA because of the participation of college students in sports. Last year alone, the NCAA's total revenue was \$777 million.

Although the NCAA claims that 98 cents to every dollar is redistributed back into schools athletic programs for things like student services for athletes and athletic funding, it just so happens that there was a \$29 million surplus which was claimed by the NCAA as "reserve" in 2010 ("Expenses vs. Revenue" 1). Apparently, saving up your change is beneficial. I never knew two-cent increments could lead to tens of millions of dollars. Such revenue comes from things like its newly acquired 14 year/\$11 billion dollar deal with CBS-Turner over broadcasting rights for the NCAA tournament (O'Toole 1).

It is kind of like a major motion picture company producing one of the highest generating films in history and letting its actors know that they won't be receiving a financial reward for their contributions, but the work experience they are receiving should suffice. In no other industry or job field in this country would such a compensation to revenue ratio be considered acceptable. They serve the title "amateurism" to American college athletes on a big plate of propaganda.

In 2008, the NCAA teamed up with IMG College to lease its rights out to video game king Electronic Arts, making games such as NCAA Football and NCAA Basketball using the likeness of players they sold over 2.5 million copies (Branch 1). The student athletes that were featured on these games had their Kastel 5 numbers reflected accurately, their physical attributes like race, hair style, and even their athletic prowess such as their speed, strength, passing/blocking/catching abilities all accurately associated with their real abilities in order to ensure players of the video games could

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maneuver round the field like their favorite college superstar. There isn't anything "amateur" about exploiting college student athlete's likeliness in a video game for profit; the double standard is disgusting. However, the NCAA isn't the only one caught with their arm elbow deep in the cookie jar. Such conferences such as the SEC, ACC, and the BIG 10 are generating billion dollar contracts for individual television networks while student-athletes are being kept in the dark for their contributions.

For instance, the SEC conference will be earning \$55 million over 15 years from a CBS deal, and a 15 year deal with ESPN that cashes out to \$150 million ("Winners and Losers" 1). Despite the players being the ones who are generating the audiences, none of these profits from the NCAA or the conferences are being returned back to the students directly. In fact, if we were to try to mathematically calculate the value of how much an athletes room and board fees come out to divided by the amount of time they actually put into being an athlete most are living just above, if not below, the povertyline.

For example, a recent study found Duke University basketball players based upon their generated revenue for the school to be worth \$1, 025, 650 . Yet, after calculation (scholarship value / number of hours each puts in) they were found to be living just \$732 above the poverty line ("Research-NCPA" 1). After being worth over one million dollars to their university, they are only rewarded approximately a \$200, 000 education. Kastel 6 Current college athletes and those from the past are starting to realize this exploitation more and more especially as profit from television deals and sponsorships become more lucrative.

Almost every month the American public is presented with a new story of how a college athlete unfairly received either a monetary reward or a free service because of his athletic talents. We get mad at the young athletes and criticize them for such actions but can we really blame them? They are superstars generating attention, money, and huge popularity to their institutions and they aren't receiving anything different than the kid slapping together the cymbals after every touchdown.

College athletes are taking gifts and money because they are becoming aware of the NCAA's exploitation and on top of that most of their scholarships don't even cover their full cost of living. In the perfect world, when watching our favorite college athletes on TV we like to imagine that they came from strong households with parents who paid for their training and had all the opportunities to be successful. We would like to think the tattooed face of a little girl on our favorite college point guard's arm is just his little sister not his daughter who he thinks about trying to send enough money too every week.

Fact of the matter is, college athletes across the country have a variety of circumstances that consume any opportunities for extra money. Things like coming from broken home families, having children at home, or coming from a low economic neighborhoods cause many student athletes to stress over where their next dollar could come from. Things like clothes, gas, toiletries, amenities, fun activities, extra food for the room, or a meal away from dining hall are all things that college athletes are essential to have money for in college.

However, college athletes can only be awarded a scholarship. It bewilders America when we hear of cases of college athletes accepting sums of money

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under the table in what is becoming an increasingly large black market. However, this happens all the time. We only hear about the ones who get caught. Yet, the players aren't the ones to blame. According to a study conducted by Drexel University Department of Sport Management, the average scholarship shortfall, or what the average student athlete had to spend out of his own pocket in 2010-11, was approximately \$3, 222 ("Research-NCPA" 2).

When the scholarships we have don't cover the student-athletes full cost of living how do we expect them to be able to pay for the necessities of living? If a player has been out of gas for three weeks and is out of toiletries can we really blame him from accepting cash in a handshake from a booster? College athletes' time is consumed by their sports. According to a survey conducted with 21, 000 Division I, II, and III athletes, "Football players in the NCAA's Division I Bowl Subdivision (formerly known as Division I-A) said they spent an average of 44. hours a week on their sport — playing games, practicing, training and in the training room — compared with a little less than 40 hours on academics" (qtd. in Wieberg 1). This staggering statistic reveals that college athletes are actually spending more of their time on their sport than their actual school work. It is even more staggering when the NCAA's bylaw requires that student athletes only spend 20 hours a week on their sport. With these types of time commitments and dedication to their sports, college athletes don't have time to have a job. This dilemma intensifies the problem of Kastel 8 aving a scholarship shortfall. If there are necessary things to pay for and athletes don't have the necessary time to work where is the money supposed to come from? College athletes should

receive a stipend of \$2, 500 a semester to ensure that any necessary cost outside of their scholarship can be covered. By introducing this stipend the number of NCAA infractions relating to athletes taking money will dramatically decrease due to the fact that they won't need to anymore. One might say that this would anger regular students who do not receive such benefits.

However, according to one statistical survey taken by 458 college students, 58% of them believed that college athletes deserved to receive stipends ("College Students Perceptions" 1). This study demonstrates that not only would regular students not be upset by college athletes receiving the reward they deserve, but in fact they recognize the need for it. By offering something to college athletes (scholarship) which still requires them to spend such a large sum out of their own pockets we are basically tempting them to fall into the illegal activities of the black market and potentially jeopardize their academic futures.

Stipends must be rewarded and reform is necessary now. The NCAA cannot expect a player with a hungry child at home to refuse money from a booster, just as it cannot place the term "amateurism" around an industry it exploited to be so focused around money. The NCAA suggests that if we were to provide college student athletes with stipends it would take away the "wholeness" that college sports still represent by replacing their "amateur" title with that of "professionalism". However, college sports which once symbolized the unselfish competitive spirit of America and were once run by student led organizations with no influence from school officials or corrupt institutions have already become a capital venture. This is not

because of the introduction of a stipend reward system, but rather because the money, operation, and industry the NCAA created around college sports has made it too professional in its financial pursuits to be considered “amateur”. The term “amateurism” is no longer fit to represent college sports but rather a propaganda add by the NCAA to allow them to continue their exploitive efforts.

One of the largest indications of the pursuit of this commercial enterprise is the unbelievable amount of money that college coaches are being paid. In 2010, Alabama coach Nick Saban committed to a contract that would pay him \$4 million dollars a season (Low 1). Most FBS Division 1 institutions athletic departments have a hard time generating any profit at all, but the NCAA allows schools to present astonishing contracts to coaches in order to point their team in the right direction. Yet, the NCAA sees a student athlete receiving a small stipend more of a venture towards professionalism than this?

Another indication that college sports can no longer be placed under the “amateur” title is apparent in the evolution of college stadiums. Today the illustration of a new corporate sponsorship is apparent in almost every stadium with things like “Ohio State University’s new \$105 million Schottenstein Center, 110 luxury boxes at Neyland Stadium (University of Tennessee), and the University of Michigan spending \$7.4 million to renovate Michigan Stadium” (qtd. in “College Student’s Perceptions” 2). The NCAA isn’t keeping the industry around college sports simple with basic venues and humble salaries for their coaches.

Instead they have to create something that is slowly resembling that of professional sports environments. For these exploitations the NCAA can no longer hold college athletics today to a standard of remaining “amateurism”. The industry surrounding it has far surpassed that point and it is time we reward our college athletes like the professionals we market them to be. Many people argue that even if the NCAA does come to its senses and passes a law regulating stipends for Division I institutions, Title IX implications would make it almost impossible to implement stipends.

Those critics argue that if stipends were approved, Title IX would then regulate all student athletes at the school to receive stipends due to equal opportunity. The sum of money required to be able to provide every student athlete with this, critics say, would be impossible for even successful athletic departments to afford. It is correct that such a reward would be possible for schools to afford. Stipends should only be given to the top three sports that are generating the most revenue. It would create more of an incentive for programs to be successful, and it would reward student athletes of the teams who were having the greatest success.

Title IX cannot be applied to the stipend system because it is outdated and needs to be reformed. Title IX was originally created for the racial movement in order to encourage what, at that time, was a change that needed to be enforced (“In Defense” 1). Today, many schools athletic departments actually lose money by trying to comply with the outdated law. In order to equally match the number of guy to girl scholarships a university might be forced to eliminate a men’s revenue generating sport such as hockey and instead have to add a women’s sport that loses money (“In Defense” 2).

Title IX is outdated and if a stipend system is established, the top 3 revenue generating teams should receive a stipend. Whether the NCAA wants to accept it or not, their exploitive actions in pursuit of commercial profit have eliminated any sense of college sports today seeming "amateur". Because of this exploitation it is time for college student athletes to finally receive the proper reward they have deserved for a good amount of time. College athletes should receive stipends because there is a large discrepancy between what college athletes are worth and how much they are given.

This is because athletic scholarships do not cover the full cost of living, and also because the operation, money, and industry associated with college athletics is too great to still be titled "amateur". By affording these stipends to college athletes, maybe just maybe, when that athlete walks into the store and sees that jersey with his name on the back he might be financially secure enough with his living expenses to be able to purchase it.

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