

Charnee Smith
Writing Workshop
Professor Jaroff
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The Corruption of Intercollegiate Athletics

The United States of America currently stands as the only country in the world that allows athletes the opportunity to participate in big-time sports at institutions of higher learning (Branch). The group that governs all intercollegiate athletics is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which consists of 1,281 institutions, conferences, organizations and individuals. The NCAA was founded in 1906 to protect young athletes from being abused and exploited ("Athletic Resource"). Over time, however, the NCAA changed its focus from setting the rules and regulations for the protection of amateur athletes to forming its own monopoly. They have begun to exploit the athletes. Once college athletes sign a university contract they are given strict obligations and are denied of many Constitutional rights. The corruption that has manifested itself as a result of this athletic culture, has lead to huge profits ,of the NCAA and other institutions, off of free labor. The best way to eliminate this NCAA corruption is by paying student athletes.

Many people are oblivious to the current corruption taking place in the NCAA. Colleges and universities have made student-athletes think that they are privileged to play the sports they enjoy while still receiving an education. However, college athletes are mistreated even from recruitment time. These coaches and recruiters look for the strongest and fastest athletes to play on their team. Many times the athletes that are chosen are black males from low

income families who are eager to escape from their underprivileged neighborhoods and leave to play for a school without any compensation. To say the least, college sports have become a business and the NCAA sells college athletics. The principal sports sold are football and basketball, but there are many others. Millions of fans pour into football and basketball stadiums each seasons, and tens of millions more watch the games on television. The NCAA will have earned an estimated amount of \$777 million dollars in 2011. Of that \$777 million, \$700 million is expected to come from media rights payments. Most of the organizations revenue comes from a 14-year \$10.8 billion agreement with Turner Broadcasting and CBS Sports. (Streib) They have an agreement with Turner Broadcasting and CBS Sports for rights to the Division I Men's Basketball Championship. Despite the recession, fans continue to support their favorite teams. In 2010 alone, The Big Ten made close to \$905 million. In 2011, the biggest intercollegiate basketball event, March Madness, earned \$122 billion from its fans. The competition lasted a total of 20 days. (Streib) Even the coach salaries are unbelievable. Football Coach Mack Brown of the University of Texas makes an average salary of \$5,192,500. (Atom) The amount of money that the NCAA brings is incomparable to the amount of money college athletes make. A majority of the Division 1 athletes would be unable to enjoy the college lifestyle if they had not been recruited and are still unable to live comfortable. This leads to athletes accepting money from recruiters and boosters.

One of the NCAA's biggest scandals is the University of Michigan basketball scandal which involved the infamous "Fab 5". The "Fab 5" consisted of five Michigan Wolverine players. They are Chris Webber, Jalen Rose, Juwan Howard, Jimmy King, and Ray Jackson

The commercialization of college sports became evident when these young boys became popular. College athletes have no right to their bodies. The college player cannot own his or her feet or name. But, they are forced to wear specific teams shoes like Nike and their names are placed on the back of sports Jerseys; all of which make a profit. Whatever Nike wanted to sell they would advertise that product on the Fab 5. They made things like black socks and baggy shorts popular. Once the players began to realize that they were being exploited they began to protest by wearing plain blue t-shirts on the court without a company sponsor. In ESPN's Michigan Fab Five documentary, Jalen Rose explained his intercollegiate basketball experience at University of Michigan as, "I didn't feel like a college student anymore, I felt like a professional athlete that wasn't getting paid". ("30 for 30") The only joy the players were able to get out of the NCAA profits were playing the video games that they were featured in; however, they received no profit from them. Business skyrocketed during the 4 years the infamous Fab 5 played at Michigan. Everyone was making money except for the Fab 5 themselves. Ray Jackson admitted, "Perception of our lifestyle is that we were living like rockstars, we weren't living that lifestyle. That just wasn't what it was. We lived like every college student." ("30 for 30") Because these athletes were struggling to pay for daily necessities they began to resort to illegal pay. A six-year investigation took place about Ed Martin's involvement with the team. It is amongst the largest incidents involving payments to college athletes in American history. The FBI, IRS, DOJ, NCAA, and Big Ten Conference were all involved with the investigation.. The players allegedly borrowed a total of \$616,000 from Ed Martin. Webber had received the majority of the money. Martin and Webber had developed a relationship dating all the way back to Webber's middle school years. When

Martin discovered his talents he began to support and motivate Webber.

During one five year period Webber receive \$280,000 from Martin. Webber had intentions on paying Martin back, because it was only a loan. The “Fab 5” was eventually found guilty have receiving illegal pay and were forced to let go of their amateur status. The University of Michigan suspended their basketball program for two years after the allegations and removed each of the player’s names from the record books and took down all of the banners that they had collectively achieved. If athletes were paid all of this could have been avoided.

Many disagree with this disposition because it would create more problems than it would solve. A large percentage of people believe that universities should not allow players any type of compensation for participating in a big-time sport. When athletes sign themselves over to a university they are well aware that they are entering the university as a student-athlete with no pay. It is enough for students to have an opportunity to showcase their talents to pro league scouts, for four years, in hopes to make a career. A recent ice hockey graduate of Hamilton College believes that :

There are far too many logistical, economic and legal hurdles that would have to disappear before paying students could even become a reality.... Economic issues aside, I still don't believe that student-athletes should be paid. College athletics should be about playing the game you love while you get an education (Ryder).

By adding compensation to these students it may tarnish the glory of playing at an amateur level and would prompt more athletes to drop out of school and move onto pro sports. Athletes get to sign up for classes before the rest of the student body and receive free tutoring so that

they can maintain acceptable grades to be active. If we pay one group of athletes, we must pay them all. For example, if the mens football team from the Big East receives compensation the women's fencing team should also be paid. They argue that athletes are already receiving enough advantages by receiving a free education or a large amount of scholarships. In reality, the amount of scholarships available to student-athletes is limited.

Currently, full 4-year scholarships do not exist in the NCAA Division I. The scholarships that are provided are on a year to year basis. Each school is allowed 85 scholarships for football and 13 scholarships for basketball; however, this does not mean that each program offers the entire amount of scholarships provided. There are typically over one hundred men on a football team, which means several players are left to pay for their own education. Players are not guaranteed to be a part of the team each season, they can be cut for injuries, poor academic performance, or failure to comply with the NCAA rules and regulations. Players can be cut for no reason at all. It is argued that students are privileged to be receiving an education, but education is often overlooked. A question of what it means to be a student-athlete arises. Schools call these players "student-athletes" even though their athletics

come before their school work. Advisors often shy students away from choosing demanding majors which results in the athletes graduating from college with no professional ability to compete in the competitive workplace. Athletes are required to participate in study hall however they are discouraged from academic achievement. The GPA requirement for a freshman athlete is a 1.65 increasing by each year, with a requirement of 2.0 for seniors. ("NCAA Eligibility Regulations")

The NCAA rules on amateurism state that no athlete at the intercollegiate level may be paid or compensated. According to the NCAA Eligibility Center, an individual will lose their privilege to play if he or she:

Accepts a promise of pay, even if such pay is to be received following completion of intercollegiate athletics participation or Receives, directly or indirectly, a salary, reimbursement of expenses or any other form of financial assistance from a professional sports organization based on athletics skills or participation, except as permitted by NCAA rules and regulations. ("NCAA Eligibility Center")

This is what creates much of the scandal that now take place in college sports. When one combines millions of dollars with a greedy football booster, corruption arises. Because they do not get paid, many top athletes become tempted to accept gifts. Scandal never ceases to ends in college sports. College athletes should get paid. Many people believe that this would destroy the integrity of the NCAA. But, the NCAA makes billions of dollars from the unpaid labor of young athletes and much of the organizations scandal and corruption would disappear if athletes were allowed some type of compensation. Paying college athletes while they are

enrolled in school can begin to cause problems because they will have no motivation to finish school. A possible solution is that each athlete should have an account, that he or she cannot touch until completion of four years at the university, where the money is transferred into. They may receive some type of stipend if big games like playoffs and championships are won.

In conclusion, I believe that college athletes are being deprived of their rights. NCAA and other corporations are making billions of dollars off of these young athletes who receive nothing in return. There has been scandal after scandal of college athletes accepting illegal gifts and compensation. Much of this corruption that exists today can be simply solved by providing athletes with some type of stipend for their work. There can be several errors with this decision but it would benefit the NCAA in the long run. Each student athlete should, if he does not already, receive some type of semester stipend to cover the essentials such as food and transportation. Also, If universities decide to pay athletes, the only thing that would make sense would be to pay athletes after they have received a degree. That way they would have to actually work hard in their academic lives to earn the money for playing college athletics. To prevent amateur rule conflicts each student should receive an account that the cannot upon until 4 successful years and an athletic team are completed. I believe this is a reasonable compromise so that students are reimbursed for their hard work but do not become superficial while they are enrolled in school.

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