

It's Past Time to Pay College Athletes

No intro today. Let's get right to this. Here are five reasons why it is ludicrous that we are not paying college athletes in 2017.

1. Three Words: Fair Market Value

This idea was presented to me by friend and professional financial advisor, Chris Wright, when I used to argue against college athletes being paid. The concept is simple: Fair market value says a seller and a buyer come to an agreement on price based on what is reasonable in an open market. There is a reason that the NBA will always bring in tons of more money than soccer or the WNBA in the US: People are willing to pay more to watch it.

The NCAA has a \$10 billion TV contract for the basketball tournament and \$500 million for the football playoffs. Many athletic departments in the NCAA bring in nine digits a year. People are getting rich off of this. Very rich. But not the players. In 2013, when my dad bought tickets to take my three brothers and me to Florida for the Outback Bowl, we paid a lot of money to watch Jadeaveon Clowney knock a guy's helmet off and Steve Spurrier go for the TD bomb with 30 seconds left. Yet one man got a big check for that game while the other got no compensation from our expenses.

2. Scholarships are not the same thing as salary

The obvious retort is that they get scholarships: an average of \$100,000 over four years at a D1 school, I have read. Yet

this rejoinder is faulty for at least two reasons. First, because fair market value says some players in the big money sports deserve much more than that. [At least one source](#) says that the projected fair market value of the average college football player was \$178,000 per year from 2011 to 2015, while the average college basketball player for the same time was \$375,000. That is the average. A quarterback like Johnny Manziel would have been worth much more, with Texas A&M being a huge revenue school.

Secondly, the scholarships cover things like tuition, books and fees. They are not truly paid to play. And at times, the scholarships aren't enough to live reasonably. At the end of the 2014 NCAA Men's Basketball Championship game, UConn's Shabazz Napier took advantage of being in front of a microphone on CBS to tell the world, "We go to bed hungry at night." I was so unaware of what he really meant that at first I thought he was speaking figuratively, as in, "We go to bed hungry *for a championship* every night." No, he was being literal. How fair is it that a player who brings in far more money for his school than an average student on academic scholarship, should ever have too little money to eat because of NCAA rules?

Like it or not, capitalism rules the US. It's time to pay these athletes what they are worth.

3. The NCAA is a complete and utter dumpster fire

You may remember a few years ago when six Ohio St. football players were caught selling athletic equipment, rings and similar things for cash and tattoos (which was illegal but were *things they owned*...think about that for a second), and the NCAA banned them for five games the next year. But they let them play in the bowl game vs. Arkansas. The reason they were allowed to play the bowl was because they didn't fully

understand what they were doing was wrong. What?

Then you have the incredible story of Charleston Southern having to suspend 32 players for a game vs. Florida State in 2016 because they used extra money from their book allowance to buy school supplies.

Or how about the story of how [Lane Kiffin at Tennessee allegedly sent attractive hostesses to high school games in South Carolina to get recruits to come?](#) Marcus Lattimore, one of the finest young men of Christian integrity to ever play football in the state of SC said, "I haven't seen (any) other schools do that. It's crazy." And did the NCAA ever find anything of substance to pin on UT? Nope.

Welcome to the NCAA, the worst run, most corrupt and hypocritical sports organization in America.

The NCAA once made Todd Gurley do community service for selling his autograph in addition to suspending him, as though he were some kind of criminal in need of rehabilitation. The NCAA suspended Enes Kanter for life for money he made as a professional overseas that he never touched and was willing to give back. The NCAA sometimes suspends people 5 games for selling things and sometimes 0.5. There is no rhyme, reason or consistency to most of it.

There really is a simple way to stop the madness. Pay the players. Let the people give them however much money they want to.

4. Even if the NCAA were virtuous, they could never fairly monitor recruiting.

Did you hear former Texas Longhorns QB Chris Simms mention recently that [he used to get "\\$100 handshakes" from boosters?](#) Who out there doesn't think this happens all the time? Who out

there doesn't think every major program is cheating in ways that will always be ahead of the NCAA?

If you pay the players there is no need for any tables to hand money under.

5. It's time to abandon the pretense of the ideal student-athlete

Some sports will never have a minor leagues and that is essentially what college becomes. That could be a good thing. Pay them to play and if they want to get an education because they cannot go to the next level, they still can. The "one and done" culture of college basketball is a travesty and an overreach by the NBA. Many freshmen know they don't have to go to class in the spring if they are leaving. Paying them gives them purpose and could even convince some athletes to stay in school longer and make college sports even better.

I don't buy that it is a bad idea to give new adults money because they cannot handle it. We do it in so many sports anyway: Tennis, minor league baseball, one and done basketball, etc. Money could mess up some 18 and 19-year olds, but it stands to do far more good than harm.

I don't have a great plan for how to make paying athletes work as far as specifics, but some people do. I do not think it will ever happen because the NCAA is so powerful. But it should happen. Otherwise the NCAA will continue to deal with injustice and corruption on a massive scale. As long as they hold the power and wealth, I do not think they care. And that is a shame. The players and the fans deserve better.

