

PRO/CON: Should college athletes play for free?

By William H. Noack and Don Kusler, Tribune Company, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.25.18

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Jessica Shepard (23) of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish attempts a shot while defended by Teaira McCowan (15) and Victoria Vivians (35) of the Mississippi State Lady Bulldogs during the fourth quarter in the championship game of the 2018 NCAA Women's Final Four at Nationwide Arena on April 1, 2018, in Columbus, Ohio. Notre Dame defeated Mississippi State 61-58. Photo by: Andy Lyons/Getty Images

PRO: Paying college athletes would cause more problems

College athletes are not allowed to be paid to play their sport. However, some colleges have gotten into trouble for offering things to athletes to get them to join their teams.

To address these problems in college basketball, a commission issued a report. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice led the commission, or group. The report made several good recommendations, but, wisely, it did not suggest that players be paid.

The commission favored the amateur rule of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The members supported the idea that paying players would bring more problems later.

The report's focus was on basketball, but it also could apply to college football. The report has been criticized, but it is a sincere effort to improve college athletics.

Money is playing too large a role in college sports. The answer is not to add even more money by paying players.

Many Athletes Receive Scholarships To Pay For College

Many athletes receive scholarships to attend college. A year at college can be worth \$50,000 or more. So they do receive something for their work.

Much of the call for paying athletes has come from the popularity of college football and basketball on television, and the money these sports produce. However, most of that money goes back to the universities. It supports both sports and academics.

Some Rice report recommendations stand out.

— The NBA should allow players to enter its pro draft out of high school. The current rule requires players to be 19 years old or a year out of high school. Some colleges have become a one-year stopover for players on their way to the NBA.

— The punishments should be severe enough to prevent cheating.

The NCAA has moved slowly, but it's a start.

The report supported the value of amateur play. It also noted the worth of an education for the many college basketball players who don't go on to the NBA.

ABOUT THE WRITER: William H. Noack played basketball at Michigan State University and works in business in the Washington, D.C., area.

CON: College athletes should be justly compensated for their hard work

College sports are a business and too many athletes in the business are underpaid.

The system needs to change, and a pay arrangement should be made.

As athletes, these students work long hours each day. They work something similar to a full-time job on top of trying to navigate college.

It is true that most of the 450,000-plus college athletes are not moneymakers for their universities.

The "pay" that they receive is in playing their sport and getting help with seeking a college degree. It should be the example of a successful system.

Football And Basketball Are Big Moneymaking Sports

Student success stories are harder to find in football and basketball. They are the two big moneymaking sports.

It is in these two sports that the profits and power lead to problems for athletes and their families. Hundreds of millions of dollars flow to universities, coaches and sports agents, among others. That wealth is produced by the athletes people want to watch.

Some of the Rice report's recommendations might have good effects. Yet overall it seemed to support the NCAA's position that college athletes should not receive pay. This is even though they are treated like

employees of a business.

Time To Pay Athletes For Money They Make For Colleges

It is past time for change to come.

Even scholarships for top athletes do not always bring something meaningful. Universities send these athletes to easy classes, leading to meaningless college degrees.

The NCAA should increase efforts to "pay" students with an education of value.

A useful idea from the Rice report is allowing those who do not get drafted to come back to school.

When people buy things that have a picture of an athlete, the athlete should get paid. Athletes should have the same right to profit as the universities and the NCAA.

The sooner the NCAA shares the value of top athletes with the athletes themselves, the better.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Don Kusler is national director of Americans for Democratic Action.