

## The Exploitation of College Athletes in the NCAA: Chasing the American Dream

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The exploitation of college athletes has been a problem in the United States since the creation of the NCAA and sports marketing. Universities make millions off of the publicity collegiate sports create for them. The National Collegiate Athletic Association, also known as the NCAA, has a perfect business model. The students put in hours every day practicing, learning plays and traveling around the country to play games and they hardly have any time for academics let alone even go to class. The universities say that they get a valuable education in return. Life of a NCAA D1 star athlete may seem like a blast, but some of them do not come from wealthy families, and need to earn extra, as the scholarship does not pay for everything. College athletes are exploited beyond measure and this may not seem like the American dream that everyone thinks it is.

The term full-ride scholarship is well known. D1 athletes may get a so-called "full-ride scholarship". This may seem like a great deal, but to most athletes at the D1 level, a full-ride scholarship does not really seem "full-ride". As mentioned in the above paragraph, most athletes spend more than 40 hours a day perfecting their game. The rest of the time they are usually in classes, doing homework or studying for their exams. They do not have time to work part-time. For example, in the summer, most athletes have practices in the morning and afternoon. They do not have the time to take summer

courses and because they are not going to class, they do not receive their scholarship funds over the summer. This means they have to find their own place to stay and pay for everything over the summer. Although they have to pay for everything, because they do not have the time to work, they have to find a way to come up with the rent for their summer residence during the practice sessions. Some of them could easily make money by doing summer camps, appearing on TV or commercials, or just making merchandise with their name on it, but because the NCAA does not allow these "amateur" athletes to make profits, they need to have part-time jobs during the off-season. Basketball legend, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, talks about his UCLA days and how he needed to find a way to make money to pay for his bills. Most people probably think that D1 stars like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar go partying every weekend and hang out with cheerleaders. The reality is that Abdul-Jabbar needed to work as a groundskeeper at UCLA to make sure he can stay in school. The NCAA allows only scholarships that are spent on Abdul Jabar tuition, a place to stay, and books for class. According to Kareem Abdul Jabar in the magazine, Jacobin, student-athletes need at least \$3,200 more to live an ordinary life of a college student. Although, people may wish they had athletic abilities so that they could go to college for "free" and become famous and make money, the life of student-athletes isn't as sweet as it sounds.

The NCAA insists on calling their players "student athletes," but they are more like employees at a sweatshop. The NCAA sells goods and makes money off of these student-athletes' hard work while the players themselves are not allowed to make a dime. Electronic Arts Inc., a video game company, and the Collegiate Licensing

Company, an American collegiate trademark licensing company, and the NCAA have reached a class action settlement over the allegations that they have violated the athletes' rights by using their likeness, names and information without their consent in EA's NCAA video games. NCAA athletes who were listed on a NCAA D1 football or basketball roster anytime between May 4 2003, and September 3, 2014, can receive cash rewards, the amount of which is determined by various factors, such as the players represented in the video game look like them or depending on also the years he played. The NCAA and EA denied the allegations because they wanted to avoid the cost of a prolonged litigation. The NCAA and EA have made millions with their video games. It is not fair that the students who are used in the games do not get any credit or money.

Collegiate student-athletes spend more than 40 hours a week practicing. They spend even more time learning plays, working out, and traveling the country to compete. They do not have time to take advantage of the scholarship they are given. They are given the promise of a great education in return for playing their sports to the best of their abilities. This may sound like a great deal, but keep in mind the daily schedule of the athletes. Because collegiate student-athletes may spend more than 40 hours a week practicing, they have little time to keep up with academic commitments.

An example of this is one that has led to a lawsuit against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the NCAA. Filed by two former UNC student-athletes, the lawsuit claims that they were deprived of a "meaningful education" while representing the school on the field. The lawsuit is centered around so-called "paper classes" that existed at UNC Chapel-Hill. "Paper classes" are classes that the academic

and athletic department would utilize so that student athletes could keep their GPA above the minimum for NCAA eligibility. This was coincidentally offered in the Afro and Afro-American Studies department. The secretary of the department felt sympathetic towards the athletes who barely had any time to study, and started a class in 1992. Classes of this nature multiplied and continued until 2011, when questions started to be asked. 3,100 students have been said to have benefited from these classes. The teacher would scan through the essay due at the end of the semester and hand out A's and B's. 47% of the 3,100 were student-athletes. Of this, half were football players, 12% men's basketball players, 6% were women's basketball players and the remaining 32% of students came from other sports. In 2005, the Tar Heels won a national collegiate championship for men's basketball. Of the 15 players on the team that won, 10 were Afro-American Studies majors. The coaches' assistants advised the players to take these fake courses.

The NCAA allows only 20 hours of in-season practices. In these 20 hours voluntary workouts are not included. If practice sessions or workouts are "unofficial", they are not included. The lawsuit describes the potential problem in the below statement:

"The 20-hour rule itself is also rife with loopholes. Administrative meetings, weight-lifting, conditioning, film study, and activities incidental to participation, such as taping, visits to the trainer, and rehabilitation, do not count towards the 20-hour limit. Nor do "voluntary" activities where no coach is present. Game days count as three total hours, even though they often require travel and hours of pre- and post-game meetings and activities." (Mccants)

With everything included, athletes claim that for D1 baseball, 42.1 hours a week were spent on athletics in-season. They need to take this into account. If 42.1 hours is spent every week on athletics, they would hardly have any time to attend class or major in anything time-consuming such as engineering. They used this data to make their case in the UNC lawsuit.

The student-athletes can receive the scholarship if the athlete is eligible to play. If the student becomes injured and is no longer eligible to play, the school can decide to no longer give the student a scholarship. Students on athletic scholarships that come from poor families usually drop out if they get injured. They do not have money to pay tuition and beyond that they also need to come up with a way to pay their medical bills. The NCAA offers Student-Athlete Disability Insurance, but the student-athletes may only receive money from the insurance if they cannot play for the rest of their college lives. Most injuries, for example an ACL tear, can heal, but the players may no longer be able to play up to their potential. They may be cut from the team and this would mean that they will no longer receive their scholarship. Also other serious injuries may be compensated with NCAA's catastrophic injury relief, but this can only be received if the medical bills go past 90,000 dollars. If the medical bill is 85,000, the students must pay their own bills. In this case, most students would drop out because they would need to pay for their own medical bills. Athletes like Kyle Hardrick of University of Oklahoma lost his basketball scholarship after tearing his meniscus. He would have been able to attend four years of university with his scholarship; but after being ineligible to play after tearing his meniscus, he dropped out of Oklahoma. He attempted to play at a

community college but failed and recently was hired to an oil field. He still has severe knee pain and is forced to pay for his own medical bills. Lawyers on their side of the case argue that if college players were allowed a salary and paid, they would be able to form a union and receive worker's compensation. This would mean that if they were hurt on the job; by playing their sport, the NCAA and the universities would be responsible for paying their medical bills. This would make athletes feel more safe playing NCAA athletics. They would no longer have to work jobs and would have the time and money for school and other career choices they wish to pursue.

Playing NCAA D1 athletics may sound bad enough, but playing D1 athletics at an Ivy League school is even worse. First of all, they do not give scholarships. They may give athletes a better chance of being accepted, in return of an informal promise that they will play athletics for four years. This promise can be broken, without any academic or economic consequences. Many athletes at Ivy League Schools choose to break this promise. This is because of all the pressures are even more intense at Ivy League schools. One can only imagine the hard effort and time someone has to put in to receive good grades at these competitive schools, but to be a successful athlete at the D1 level in the NCAA, one must workout, practice, and train vigorously as well. Although professors insist that academic work must come first, coaches at these universities do not necessarily agree. They usually encourage students to take summer courses or to enroll in a different class if class time conflicts with practice. Also, student-athletes would feel less appreciation and reward if they were to play at a state college. At Ivy League schools, such as the University of Pennsylvania, there is not much school spirit. Fans do

not show up to games. They receive little respect from their peers and professors, as Ivy League universities are not centered on sports. There is also mistreatment within the team. Coaches usually mistreat players that do not perform as well as the stars. Some feel that the time and effort they must put in to become a successful student-athlete in an Ivy League School are duly acknowledged and rewarded. This is why many players quit athletics after enrolling in Ivy League universities.

Inequality is not new to America. As of now, the richest 20 percent of Americans hold 84 percent of all the wealth in the country. Like in the NCAA, the most powerful people usually have all the wealth, and they will not willingly give up their power and wealth. This is a known phenomenon, as there are many laws that keep presidential elections in check. Presidents may only hold two terms. This is so they don't ever become an emperor or king. It is possible for people to become successful in America. The so-called "American Dream" lives on. Wealth distribution, in the U.S.A. and in the NCAA is not possible.

Athletes may think that they are chasing the ultimate American dream by getting a scholarship to go to a D1 school and eventually going pro. Kids and high school athletes envision the American Dream; going to college on a full-ride scholarship and making it pro. This rarely happens, but they are willing to be used and exploited to keep their hopes and dreams alive. Americans love to be in power of their own fate, and people in power like to keep their power. The general public needs to start looking at these problems of inequality at the collegiate athletic level and at the national level, the way

the founding fathers viewed politics. They need to keep those in power in check. They need to take action.



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