



The future of College Football, Inc.: Where the sport's money and management go from here

Nicole Auerbach and Stewart Mandel Sep 27, 2022



"Dramatic changes are necessary to permit athletes to participate in the enormous proceeds."

When longtime NCAA president Walter Byers said those words about college athletics in 1995, the Big Ten's annual revenue was around \$50 million. Last month, the conference announced a new television deal worth more than \$1 billion per year. In 1995, the Orange, Sugar, Rose and Fiesta Bowls generated less than \$100 million in combined television revenue. Earlier this month, the College Football Playoff approved a 12-team postseason format that is expected to generate upwards of \$2 billion annually.

Twenty-seven years later, nothing has fundamentally changed about the management of college football. The NCAA, whose membership spans from SEC powerhouse [Alabama](#) to Division III Albion College, sets the rules and policies. The Football Bowl Subdivision conferences and their bowl partners control the top level's postseason. And of course, the athletes still do not directly participate in the enormous proceeds.

But College Football, Inc. has reached a historic crossroads. All at once, the sport is developing its first truly national playoff. Realignment has destabilized the conference landscape. And last year's legalization of players profiting from their name, image and likeness rights, coupled with a blistering Supreme Court takedown of the NCAA's business model, has opened the floodgates to future legislation and litigation that will inevitably lead to universities paying athletes.

For the first time, influential voices who long held firm to the status quo are acknowledging that college football is in dire need of transformation. Two key questions need to be answered:

Who should run college football?

And how should its skyrocketing revenues be distributed?

"There's general agreement, at least among FBS programs, that we need a new model to govern football and certain parts of what we do in that space," said [Ohio State](#) athletic director Gene Smith.

"I do believe the players should receive a revenue share from the massive TV deals that have been worked out," said [Michigan](#) coach Jim Harbaugh.

The NCAA relented last year on permitting athletes to earn income from their name, image and likeness compensation only after numerous states passed bills allowing it. The world is changing too fast for the organization to drag its feet as much as possible on the new most pressing questions.

Around that same time as NIL reform, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 9-0 against the NCAA in an antitrust case involving educational expenses, with Justice Brett Kavanaugh authoring a blistering concurring opinion that signaled the court would be open to broader legal challenges in the future. "There are serious questions whether the NCAA's remaining compensation rules can pass muster," he wrote. And while a California state senator's bill requiring schools to share 50 percent of their revenue with the players did not advance beyond preliminary stages, several U.S. congressmen have authored their own bills regarding athlete compensation.

As Smith said, "Nobody has a crystal ball" for what the sport will look like a decade from now. But many of its leaders have keen insight into the issues at hand. *The Athletic* spoke to more than two dozen conference commissioners, athletic directors and industry experts over the past few months to get a sense of the state of college football and how it will chart its course forward.

If, that is, they can actually figure it out for themselves before the courts or federal government do it for them.



CFP revenue, stratification and the breakaway option

The first shred of future clarity for how the money flows throughout college football lies in the shape and scope of the sport's championship format, a topic that will be discussed further this week at College Football Playoff management committee meetings in Rosemont, Ill.

ESPN currently pays the College Football Playoff roughly \$608 million per year for the New Year's Six bowls (which rotate hosting the two semifinals) and the national championship game. CFP officials have indicated those games will be folded into the new 12-team format, joined by four new on-campus first-round games. The 12-team Playoff will be in place in time for the 2026 regular season — and [perhaps as early as 2024 if several logistical hurdles can be worked out](#).

The expanded Playoff could more than triple in value to at least \$1.9 billion annually once the CFP can take its rights to the open market beginning with the 2026 season, according to estimates from sports marketing consultancy firm Navigate. If the revenue distribution model stayed the same, the Power 5 leagues would net at least \$230 million annually, up from \$74 million now. But it's not a given that the model would stay the same; the expanding Big Ten and SEC are expected to push for a formula similar to the NCAA men's basketball tournament, in which leagues receive payouts proportional to the number of

teams they put in the field.

Those two conferences have thrown around their weight for years, but after the SEC's addition of [Texas](#) and [Oklahoma](#) and the Big Ten's addition of [USC](#) and [UCLA](#), all corners of college sports are bracing for an era of two super conferences, the rich getting richer at a rate that far exceeds the rest.

"With that kind of consolidation, everyone is realizing that it is important to have (CFP) access," said AAC commissioner Mike Aresco.

Many of Aresco's peers instead use the word "stratification" to describe the current state of college athletics: Power dynamics that existed long before this latest round of realignment and media rights revenue are only getting more pronounced.

"Competitive equity is, really, a mirage that we have been chasing for a long, long time, and I don't think it's attainable," former Big 12 commissioner Bob Bowlsby said. "Even within conferences the concept of legislating equity is a flawed entry assumption, and I think we need to get away from that."

Then what should be legislated? The Division I Transformation Committee, co-chaired by Ohio athletic director Julie Cromer and SEC commissioner Greg Sankey, has been tasked with reforming the NCAA's governance system from within. The expected end result is decentralization in a number of areas, allowing more major decisions to be enacted at the sport, conference or school level. With the collegiate model confronting various antitrust challenges, that appears to be its best strategy from a liability standpoint.

It may or may not make major sports easier to manage on a day-to-day basis.

"People are very frustrated with the fact that we're still, to this day, living under rules in a rulebook that is decades old and needs to be modernized," said Cromer. "And, in the process, the structure to do that is so cumbersome that it's very difficult to keep up with what we need to do."

In May, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith helped spark an industry-wide conversation on the topic when he suggested FBS football create its own governance system while keeping the rest of the sports under the NCAA umbrella. He has said repeatedly since that the point of his comments was to get his peers talking and thinking about outside-the-box changes.

"Football is just different than all the other sports," Smith said this month. "I'm not advocating that we should do anything with basketball. We don't even need to touch the basketball tournament. Keep that alive. There are so many things that the NCAA does that we need to keep alive – from academic services to the eligibility center to a number of different services we need to not even touch."

ACC commissioner Jim Phillips has advocated for something similar and noted in an interview last month that there may be "different iterations of movement from where it is now — maybe (football) is not completely out (of the NCAA), but maybe it's another step in that direction that frees up this ability to run and operate college football in the 21st century, in this year 2022 and beyond."

Warren, the Big Ten commissioner, said college football's leaders need to make some structural decisions.

"Is there a governing board? Is there a football czar? What are our goals?" Warren said. "The more we can get to the point where we have a centralized governance structure where it's clear who's in charge, I think the better we'll be able to serve our various constituents."

"We need to remain nimble and we need to remain aware that we are at an interesting inflection point in college athletics, generally speaking, but especially from a football standpoint. The next 12 to 24 months will impact the College Football Playoff for the next, probably, 15 to 20 years."



Sankey figures to play a significant role in the future structure of college football. (Dale Zanine / USA Today)

'A more federated system'

The issue of college football governance – and all its associated complexities – was top of mind in Washington, D.C., earlier this month, at the LEAD1 national conference for FBS athletic directors. If football broke away from the NCAA entirely, such a move would prompt immediate questions about its bureaucratic setup and its cost.

In D.C., former NCAA director of financial operations Kathleen McNeely told ADs that the NCAA pays an estimated \$65 million in administrative costs and legal fees on behalf of its members each year.

"There's not a magic wand that you just wave," said West Virginia athletic director Shane Lyons, who chairs the Division I Council. "(If you) shift to another structure, what are we resolving? It's still, we have the legal risk. We have all the other issues that we have under the NCAA umbrella as well."

Lyons said it was his understanding that the CFP as an entity did not want to take on the potential liability associated with running major college football. Sankey has also noted there are legislative, policy and practical reasons to treat football players the same as athletes in other NCAA-sponsored sports.

"How do we take football, put it off by itself, a different decision-making structure, and leave men's basketball in the old decision-making structure that we didn't like?" Sankey said. "I don't know how you tell a football player, 'We could do A, B, C for you. But I'm sorry, men's basketball or women's basketball player, or future Olympian, or future Major League All-Star, we can't do that for you because we're still in disorganization?'"

"That's a really disconnected view of our athletic programs on our campuses, in my opinion."

LEAD1 president and CEO Tom McMillen said there was strong consensus among FBS ADs calling for a streamlined FBS football-only governance system that was still under the NCAA's purview. "What eventually could be set up for football is a more federated system, which could then work for all other sports," McMillen said.

Patriot League commissioner Jennifer Heppel, whose members compete at the FCS level, noted the conversation around the future of football governance is not new. In 2014, Division I granted the five most-resourced leagues autonomy to pass their own legislation in certain areas (which they used to pass cost-of-attendance stipends). The Power 5 conferences also have weighted voting on various D-I governing boards as well as a majority of D-I Football Oversight Committee roster spots.

"FBS institutions and conferences have the power in this model," Heppel said. "The Division I Council can be controlled by an FBS vote. The Board of Directors can be controlled by an FBS vote. Is it the most efficient and streamlined process? I can't answer that because that's out of FCS control. But it's the process that they have wanted and built — and they've always been given that authority to do so, in consultation and cooperation with the rest of Division I."

Those outside the system sense that tension, too.

"The positioning of FBS college football as continuing to be half-in and half-out of the NCAA is not tenable, and it has to be addressed," said Amy Perko, the chief executive officer of the Knight Commission, an advocacy group that first recommended breaking FBS football out from under the NCAA's umbrella back in 2020. Perko noted that the current setup — with all the revenue generated by FBS football flowing through the CFP — means that football's postseason governance and its financials are "shielded from public transparency." She said she believes that is "inappropriate for the marquee event for what is currently structured as an educational nonprofit."

"In the work that we did, it was shocking to us how many Division I presidents and even administrators did not realize that the NCAA makes zero in revenue from FBS football, and yet the NCAA is liable for the rules in the sport," Perko said. "The NCAA is listed as a defendant in hundreds of lawsuits related to FBS football. And the NCAA covers some national costs related to the sport."

"Continuing to punt the issue of the governance of FBS football down the road is negligent of leaders."

Sharing revenue with athletes: Is it feasible?

Not every college football program pays its coach \$10 million per year or renovates its facilities on an annual basis. But some do. As TV contracts keep soaring ever higher, courts, Congress and much of the public are increasingly uncomfortable that everyone but the athletes themselves are prospering.

With NIL, schools themselves aren't allowed to be directly involved in the financial transaction. Compensating athletes beyond their scholarship would fundamentally alter the athlete-university relationship. And the outside pressure straining that relationship is coming from all directions.

The concept of a "student-athlete" is under fire from at least four legal directions right now, from antitrust law to collective bargaining rights to a challenge under the Fair Labor Standards Act to unfair labor practice charges filed to the U.S. Department of Education of Civil Rights against the NCAA, which has been since referred to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Congress could also force changes to athletes' employment status, though that would likely require bipartisan support on an issue that has drawn polarized opinions based on party affiliation.

In short, there are myriad roads that end in athletes becoming paid employees of some sort, with all the complications that may come with that. And while the upper-echelon Power 5 schools, with annual budgets in the \$150-200 million range, should be able to afford paying the athletes *and* giving their head coaches eight-figure annual salaries, many FBS athletic departments operate at a deficit. Sharing income with even just revenue-sport athletes while also funding 15-20 non-revenue teams would require a degree of fiscal discipline most athletics directors don't usually employ.

"The system as it currently exists is a dysfunctional economic system," said sports economist Andrew Zimbalist. "Whenever more money comes in from a TV network or something else ... you spend more money on recruiting, you spend money on facilities. The revenue is much, much higher than it was 10, 20 years ago, but the system never moves into becoming profitable.

"So, you might say, 'All this money is coming in, couldn't we give some of it to the players?' Sure, but not in the current system."

"(Football) is a professional sport," said Victoria Jackson, a sports historian at [Arizona State](#) who recently authored a [white paper](#) outlining a plan for Power 5 revenue sharing. "We're calling it something else, using the cover of the other sports, and then the fact that it takes place within higher education. It's professional sports! To not share revenues and pay athletes or recognize employee status — the end of that peculiar, illegal design is on the horizon."

In Jackson's proposal, football would become a separate entity from all other college sports. Power 5 players would receive 50 percent of conference TV revenue, similar to the split in professional leagues, and their programs would no longer subsidize a school's non-revenue teams. Jackson, herself a former college runner, recommends the conferences divide up their media rights on a sport-by-sport basis and conduct revenue sharing within each to maintain Title IX compliance. She envisions Olympic sports becoming publicly funded feeder systems to the various U.S. national teams. Former Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe proposed a similar model [at a 2014 Knight Commission hearing](#).

But even if the Power 5 schools suddenly decided tomorrow to bring a revenue-sharing model into just football, there is no easy answer as to how it would work logistically. Would every player on a team be paid the same amount, or would a star quarterback make \$5 million and a backup left tackle \$5,000? Would the schools be allowed to spend as much as they want, or would there be a salary cap? If the latter, with whom would they collectively bargain? The few attempts so far to unionize college athletes have not advanced all that far.

"The option is to make them minor league sports," said Zimbalist. "Take the top 30 teams in men's college basketball, take the top 32 teams in football, affiliate them with the pro leagues, and have the pro leagues put money into them like [Major League Baseball](#) does with its minor leagues, and then you can pay them. You could have a market system that determines their wages. But it's much, much more complicated to try to maintain the academic umbrella."

But of course, the [NFL](#) has no incentive to create a minor league for football when the college game already provides the league with a free farm system. The onus to create a sensible revenue sharing system could fall on the universities themselves.

Passivity on the part of NCAA members led to NIL being foisted upon them at the eleventh hour, resulting in a chaotic, largely unregulated environment. Retiring Mountain West commissioner Craig Thompson recommends that commissioners, athletic directors and various NCAA governing boards work together to prepare for the inevitable next evolution of athlete compensation.

"You have to be more proactive," Thompson said. "We can't keep waiting for somebody else to determine our future, maybe the federal government or maybe someone else.

"There might be unionization or a pay-for-play model. Everybody says, 'No, we just don't want to go there.' But if we haven't crossed the line yet, we're tiptoeing on the line right now."

An alternative to full employee status

Two FBS athletic directors told *The Athletic* the solution to the athlete compensation puzzle might lie in licensing. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic and because no such formal proposals have been put forth in their respective conferences or from any NCAA governing board. Perhaps, they said, a school could sign a licensing deal with its athletes similar to NIL deals to pay them to represent the athletic department without the athletes themselves becoming formal employees.

Outgoing NCAA president Mark Emmert himself floated a similar idea, terming it a "brand ambassador model," [during a recent interview with business reporter Kristi Dosh at the University of Florida](#).

"Especially with the size of media contracts that are being created right now, there needs to be recognition of the brand building value, for the school itself, of the athletes," Emmert said during the event's Q&A portion. "Finding a way to provide money to athletes, not as employees but as these basically brand ambassadors, that are gauged to the marketing power of individual sports ... Universities may not love it, but I think it works."

The two athletic directors think it's worth exploring that or a similar concept, with one describing it as a sort of compromise between the status quo and an employee-employer relationship. There's money going directly into athletes' pockets, but there are no timesheets. No firing athletes for poor performance.

But this plan has drawbacks of its own. Emmert said during the same appearance that he believed such a model would exist outside of Title IX regulation, an assertion that lawyer Sarah Wake strongly pushed back on this month.

"Title IX applies to colleges and universities that receive federal financial assistance to their students, faculty and staff," said Wake, a partner at McGuireWoods who previously served in-house at Northwestern University and as a Title IX coordinator at [Notre Dame](#). "If some framework change applies to student athletes that renders them employees, Title IX would absolutely apply to employees of those institutions that are otherwise subject to Title IX. Even if Title IX doesn't apply to employees, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in the context of the employer-employee relationship."

Asked about Emmert's comments last week, Sankey pointedly demurred.

"Mark is responsible for explaining himself, not me," Sankey said.



The topic of athlete compensation beyond a scholarship used to be taboo; now it is something openly discussed on league-wide conference calls, administrators said. Still, prominent leaders such as Sankey and Warren are not interested in abandoning college sports' academic mission amid revolutionary change.

"I may be labeled a dinosaur at this point in my career," Sankey said. "But we have a responsibility to make sure education is at the center of what we do in college sports."

CFP executive director Bill Hancock said his organization knows it needs to do more for athletes in the future, citing examples of increased benefits such as paying for athletes' families to attend CFP games, but he specifically said CFP leadership has not discussed the possibility of sharing revenue with athletes. A number of schools have implemented the new \$5,980-a-year academic achievement payments that the Alston Supreme Court ruling legalized. But those benefits are tethered in some way to academics and don't fit what many college administrators would disparagingly call "pay-for-play."

It may sound Pollyannaish, but many college administrators believe in supporting a system that helps young adults earn degrees. These administrators know that one or two sports at their schools subsidize every other sport on campus. If college athletics were starting from scratch as a business in 2022, this wouldn't make sense.

But that's why those athletic directors suggest exploring ways for schools, leagues and/or the CFP (in its new media deal) to license athletes' NIL rights as opposed to hiring them as employees. And it's why many administrators are sounding alarm bells to avoid what happened with NIL, when the courts and politicians dictated the terms.

"Where we land in that question might be driven by us, but it also may not," Cromer said. "It's important for us to have some of these conversations, to be prepared for that reality."

Georgia president Jere Morehead, who serves on the NCAA's Board of Governors, said much of what is happening in college sports right now was not anticipated when the NIL floodgates opened in the summer of 2021.

"We've got to find a solution to some of the unintended consequences of NIL to make sure we don't lose the collegiate model through this whole process," Morehead said. "If we're not careful, we're going to get college athletics to a point that it no longer resembles what we all think college athletics should be about."

Bowlsby, who retired from his Big 12 post this summer, said he and his peers have made mistakes on these macro issues in the past and can't afford to now.

"We've stated what our principles are and then we haven't lived up to those principles," he said. "If we're going to have any sort of defensible position, we're going to have to think deeply about what our principles are and then make darn sure that we act in ways — individually and collectively — that are consistent with those principles."

Contributing reporting: Matt Fortuna from Washington, D.C., and Seth Emerson from Athens, Ga.

(Top illustration: The Athletic)



COMMENTS

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1



BR/HP.

👍 21 🔄 ⋮

1 Thomas C. · Sep 27, 2022

@Brett T. I agree many parts of your comment, but I disagree with your opening sentence blaming media for setting the agenda. TV numbers, and to a smaller extent ticket sales, a result of fan interest, is driving the agenda. Don't shoot the messenger.

👍 6 🔄 ⋮

5 Steven H. · Sep 27, 2022

The TV revenue numbers say otherwise, as do the Division 3 ticket sales numbers.

Also, the marginal cost of a full boat tuition scholarship at a major university is not the rack rate - probably closer to 10% of the published figure b

👍 4 🔄 ⋮

0 David T. · Sep 27, 2022

Just read an article on a different site about the SMU-TCU "Iron Skillet" game. Talk about what makes college football special! There is no way that is duplicated with "professional football" sponsored by or licensed by colleges.

👍 2 🔄 ⋮

10 Reed M. · Sep 27, 2022

@Steven H. Yeah, it's never been clear to me how that's accounted for.

When the university budget says "the athletic department spent X dollars on scholarships," I assume the athletic department doesn't actually write checks for their tuition payments. They just shift that money from the athletic department's expense line to the university's total for "tuition and fees."

So how do they decide what that number should be? Do they actually figure out how much it would have cost that student to go there - considering all the other aid they could have received? Or do they just count each of them as if they were the full sticker price?

That would be fine at those few places where the athletics budget is profitable, but at most institutions, accounting scholarships like that would make them appear to be losing more money than they really are and I don't know who benefits from that.

👍 1 🔄 ⋮

1 Anonymous User · Sep 28, 2022

The marginal cost of tuition isn't the rack rate, but the coaching, medical staff, tutoring, nutrition etc is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars per player.

👍 4 🔄 ⋮

O Owen S. · Sep 27, 2022

If Title IX stands in the way of paying the players that actually generate the money, perhaps we need some changes to Title IX. It's one thing to ensure equal funding between male and female athletes in non-revenue sports. But equalized funding that stands in the way of paying the solely male athletes that already pay for everyone else...that's like mandating the WNBA players get paid more because the NBA makes a lot of money. Simply inane.

👍 38 🔄 8 ⋮

J John R. · Sep 27, 2022

@Owen S. Couldn't disagree more. Here's what Title IX actually says - "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

👍 10 🔄 ⋮

J Josh W. · Sep 27, 2022

Are you saying that the women's rowing team should get paid just as much as the starting quarterback of the football team? I'm not trying to argue with you, I seriously want to know how you think. This is a case study in capitalism vs communism.

👍 13 🔄 ⋮

C Craig M. · Sep 27, 2022

@John R. Kind of seems like you're helping make Josh's point that the law needs to be re-examined. The law was made at a time and for a college athletics landscape much, much different than today.

👍 15 🔄 ⋮

M Moby · Sep 27, 2022

"This is a case study in capitalism vs communism" lmao

👍 16 🔄 ⋮

M Matthew L. · Sep 27, 2022

@Owen S. There's a 0% chance this will happen. If anything, Title IX has gained more prominence and impact over time, and it's likely that any effort to alter its scheme would garner substantial political push-back. It's untouchable, and as an attorney there's significant gaps in here that the court system will eventually likely fill however they so chose unless Congress actually does its jobs and legislates here

👍 4 🔄 ⋮

J Jeffrey N. · Sep 27, 2022

Congress is not going to change that law, so you can quit worrying about that.

👍 1 🔄 ⋮

P Phillip C. · Sep 27, 2022

The Title IX brigade is using the statute as a straw man. There's no issue with participation - the push is to tap into the expanded CFP payout and spread it around. The players who actually participate in that event are entitled to those funds. It's not a slush fund.

👍 2 🔄 ⋮

D Dan K. · Sep 27, 2022

@Owen S. The NBA and WNBA don't receive federal funding.

👍 2 🔄 ⋮

D David F. · Sep 27, 2022

DJ college football is never going to fit into a mold akin to the NFL without blowing the whole thing up and creating a new structure. There is a salary cap in the NFL. There is revenue sharing in the NFL. There is a draft in the NFL. The schedule is set-up each year with parity in mind. Green Bay has just as good of a chance at success as teams in LA, NYC, and Chicago in this model. This will never happen the way DJ is structured. There is not even parity in each conference, let alone across the landscape. Since money/TV/money is dictating everything, the only solution seems to be one or two super conferences made up of the teams that have the most likely chance of competing and/or who will attract the most eyeballs. The super league(s) will generate its own revenue separate from the collegiate structure. It will form its own governance. It will have to figure out issues like caps on spending, an equivalent to the draft, revenue sharing, etc. There really isn't a middle ground if you are going to pay the players equitably. How can Vanderbilt, Indiana, Cal, etc. hope to compete (pay top coaches, pay top players) and at the same time, why would the Ohio States, Alabamas, and USC's pay for them to participate? Not saying we should mourn or not, but CFB as we know it (even as we know it this year) is over.

👍 21 🔄 4 ⋮

S Sam C. · Sep 27, 2022

@David F. Another difference that allows for a salary cap and a draft is that the players are represented by an association (not really a "union"). The owners and that body negotiate thus avoiding some antitrust laws (and the NFL has exemptions for others).

👍 1 🔄 ⋮

Zach C. · Sep 27, 2022

@David F. Yeah, look how that super league model turned out...

You may not agree with this, but Brett T said the quiet part out loud: without all universities having a semblance of a chance to compete and have access, and consolidation happening in the same tires super conference fashion people keep proposing, fans will stop tuning in and the cash cow will go bone dry. The super league model will only accelerate that demise, and not just of college football but college athletics as a whole.

I'm not sure whether I would normally trust anything that comes out of Greg Sankey's mouth, but he was absolutely right when he said that expanding the playoff is good for everyone because it keeps football competitively strong across the country. Having each region and conference involved in the playoff ensures the product is strong nationally, which means more butts in seats and more eyeballs on TVs, which means more money rolling in for the broadcast partners.

If I were the college czar I would continue to ensure as much revenue parity where I can get it. That starts with making sure that any payout from the CFP is distributed as equitably as possible among conferences, regardless of P5/G5 status. There's already a large gap between the BIG/SEC deals and everyone else; we know enough about the upcoming TV deals to know that there will still be a sizeable gap between them and every other conference. Ensuring equal or minimally unequal distribution among conferences seems like the best way to keep the gap between haves/have nots small.

NIL is a whole different animal...I don't even know where to start with that.

👍 3 🔄 ⋮

David G. · Sep 27, 2022

@David F. This is a mere pipe dream on my part so I'm not seriously suggesting it'd ever happen, but reading your comment makes me wonder what it'd be like if all 131 teams did a draft of recruits instead of actual recruiting lol. I kind of love the idea in theory and it helps that I'm a G5 school fan!

👍 🔄 ⋮

G Kennedy C. · Sep 28, 2022

The top schools will continue to pay so they can play 7 home games and win 10-11 regular season games a year. They won't stand for the mediocre 7-5, 6-6, 5-7 seasons (as happens in the NFL) which would be likely in a 32 team super league by just playing within the league.

👍 🔄 ⋮

John R. · Sep 27, 2022

I wish someone would explain why the Congress should get involved in regulating an entertainment business like college football. What is the federal interest in having a level "playing field" of NIL, or college football rules across the nation? Where closer to a nuclear war in Europe than anytime since the Cuban Missile Crisis, and you want Congress to worry about some kid playing football at Texas A&M is getting more NIL money than a kid at Michigan?

👍 16 🔄 8 ⋮

Josh W. · Sep 27, 2022

Couldn't agree more!

👍 4 🔄 ⋮

Anonymous U. · Sep 27, 2022

@John R. Because the United States spends billions of dollars every year on higher education and because it has laws on the books that protect the rights of our citizens including athletes of all genders. Just yesterday the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the student debt forgiveness proposed by President Biden would cost taxpayers \$420 Billion dollars. In addition, Title IX has done so much to bring women's sports forward. The women already have the most popular soccer team in the US. The quality of play in the WNBA has improved light years over the last twenty years - check you tube and you can see this. So things are not always static and we should support participation by all Americans. Lastly, we are the United States and yes we need to pay close attention to the situation in Ukraine and Europe and globally. But we can do more than one thing at a time.

👍 24 🔄 ⋮

Larry L. · Sep 27, 2022

@John R., I've never bought the argument that Congress can't handle two things at the same time, but I do agree with you that the government doesn't need to get involved at this time. Let's wait a few years and let the dust settle on NIL, the expanded playoffs and realignment, and see if the conference commissioners can act like grownups and police themselves. If they can't, that's when Daddy (aka Congress) might need to step in

👍 3 🔄 ⋮

John O. · Sep 27, 2022

@John R. Whether they should or not, Congress will get involved any time there is an issue which will get their names massive exposure in the media, thereby ensuring higher re-election contributions and name familiarity.

👍 2 🔄 ⋮

L Larry L. · Sep 27, 2022
@John O., that's true to an extent. But it also depends on who's writing the checks back home and how involved they want their representatives to be. If you're an elected official from Alabama, for example, you might be better off resisting messing with the status quo for risk of ticking off the voters back home. Remember, any time Congress gets involved, there's no telling where it will go.

T Thomas C. · Sep 27, 2022
@John R. It is interstate commerce, involves the possible exploitation of fellow citizens (I know, they don't have to play football, exploitation is too dramatic a word, but I can't think of another one); this is definitely in the peruse of congress. Doesn't mean they should act, but it should be looked at.

F Femi O. · Sep 27, 2022
@John R. This is simultaneously a civil rights issue, a workers' rights issue and a free market issue. Congress was always going to eventually get involved.

S Sam C. · Sep 27, 2022
@Anonymous U. The cost of higher education has very, very little to do with the athletic departments at P5 schools who are largely funded from the revenue they generate and donations.

S Stuart G. · Sep 27, 2022
No disagreement with anything here. A fascinating topic in all honesty, with no perfect answer

Intentionally or not, it's interesting that the story actually reads like a Business school case study: Nicole and Stewart use terms such as "industry", "stratification", "macro issues" and the shout-out to the always popular "white paper" !!

C Chris P. · Sep 27, 2022
College football is being played and this. This topic an off-season topic is being written about in the middle of a college football season.

D Darren L. · Sep 27, 2022
@Chris P. Oh. You poor thing. Being forced to read this. Whatever should you do? Read the other 50 articles that have been written about this past weeks games?

L Larry L. · Sep 27, 2022
@Chris P., an off-season topic? It's a sports topic and the Athletic is a sports website. So skip over it and go check how you're doing on FanDuel.

C Chris P. · Sep 27, 2022
Naw I'm good. I'll do what I want to do. And guess what? You ain't gonna do anything about it.

S Steve K. · Sep 27, 2022
Wow. You must be fun at parties.

F Femi O. · Sep 27, 2022
@Chris P. You should do what you want to do. So should writers and editors at The Athletic.

L Larry L. · Sep 27, 2022
@Chris P., that's the spirit. Get feisty. It'll take your mind off the egregiousness of this shamefully out-of-season article.

M Mike P. · Sep 27, 2022

When college football chooses to continue to allow "bowl organizers" to greatly profit off of their new playoff schedule, it will prove again that college football is clueless when it comes to running a business. Is the fiesta bowl committee really needed to host a college football playoff game in Arizona? I'm guessing an organized college football league could find stadiums to rent in desirable cities without having to share profits with bowl games.

👍 6 ↻ 1 ⋮

R Reed M. · Sep 27, 2022

@Mike P: They don't want to just "rent" a stadium. They want to work with the existing bowls and stadiums because they have already extracted all kinds of free money from the local governments.

They're well aware of how to run a business: Get somebody else to pay for everything as often as possible.

👍 ↻ ⋮

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