

Compensation for College Athletes?

Former Duke player and current college basketball analyst Jay Bilas is an outspoken critic of the NCAA's stance on student-athlete compensation. In a 2012 opinion piece for the *New York Times*, Bilas argues that although "It is not immoral for the NCAA to make money off of athletics," it is "profoundly immoral for the NCAA to restrict athletes from receiving compensation while everyone else profits."¹ He is referring to the fact that while high-profile college athletes provide universities, corporations, and the NCAA itself with windfall profits, the athletes themselves are not compensated except through scholarships.

In his book *The New Plantation*, Dr. Billy Hawkins of the University of Georgia draws attention to another reality: the majority of athletes generating revenue for the NCAA and other institutions are African-American while the majority of people running those institutions and reaping the economic benefits are predominantly white.

Proponents of compensation for student athletes point out that even when the student-athletes' scholarships are factored into the equation, these students still generate much more money for the university than they receive. Additionally, because these students compete at such a high level, they spend more time training than focusing on academics. In short, student-athletes sacrifice their own well-being for the benefit of the university and receive relatively little in return.

Opponents of compensation for student athletes, however, point out the difficulty that would come with paying athletes. Who gets to decide how much each athlete is paid? Would all athletes be paid the same? Or would athletes be paid according to how much revenue they bring in to the university? How would such a figure be determined? In addition to problems dealing with compensation, some argue that paying amateur athletes would ruin the spirit of college athletics. Love of the game and pride in representing one's university and community may be diminished, opponents say, if athletes were compensated.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Do scholarships, free room and board, and stipends provide adequate compensation for student athletes?
2. Should college athletes be paid? If so, should their scholarships and other benefits be eliminated?
3. Is the current structure of NCAA sports exploitative?

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/03/13/ncaa-and-the-interests-of-student-athletes/college-athletes-should-be-compensated>

