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January 11, 2012

What Lies Ahead for College Sports?

Hosted by Brad Wolverton

It's been a rough year for big-time college sports, to put it mildly. And as the NCAA opens its annual convention in Indianapolis, the association—which has suffered through an unprecedented series of scandals—finds itself besieged by calls for change.

But what would change look like? We wanted specifics, so we asked three distinguished experts (*look to the right to read their profiles*) to stop by our offices and share their thoughts. The result was a wide-ranging and thought-provoking conversation.

Excerpt: What Will College Sports Look Like in 20 Years?

Panelists predict major change—and a couple of tumultuous decades for the NCAA.

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Part 1

What's the appetite for change in college sports? And can "student-athletes" really wear both hats?

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Part 2

How would colleges go about paying student athletes? Is spending on coaches and facilities out of hand?

The Panelists



Taylor Branch

is the author of the three-volume history of the civil-rights movement, *America in the King Years*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. His latest book, *The Cartel: Inside the Rise and Imminent Fall of the NCAA*, was published last year as a Byliner Originals e-book.



C. Thomas McMillen

is a former college and professional basketball player and a former member of Congress. He served on the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics and is secretary of the University System of Maryland board of regents.



Jeffrey Orleans

is a former executive director of the Ivy League and a consultant to the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics and to a number of colleges and athletics conferences. As a federal civil-rights lawyer, he helped write the implementing regulation for Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments.



Brad Wolverton

is a senior writer who covers college-sports issues for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

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Part 3

Should students foot the bill for college sports? Could lawsuits bring sweeping change to the NCAA?

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More on Athletics

What the Hell Has Happened to College Sports?

What would you change about big-time athletics, if you could? *The Chronicle* asked several innovative thinkers who know and care about sports. Here's what they said.

The NCAA's New Leader Goes on the Offensive

Mark Emmert is moving quickly to bring change to college sports. Some colleges, especially those with smaller, poorer programs, are feeling left behind.

Players: The Chronicle's Athletics Blog

Read dispatches on the people and business of college sports.

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pianiste 1 month ago

Before I invest eighteen minutes of my life: Why just four white guys? No African-Americans (they aren't a huge percentage of the prominent "revenue sports" players, and don't include a bunch of coaches?), no women (Title IX isn't a factor in the overall college-sports situation, and women's sports are an

afterthought?)

11 people liked this. [Like](#)



panacea 1 month ago in reply to pianiste

Why do we need to include experts by race? Why is that necessary? Are you saying these gentlemen can't come to an opinion because they are white and many athletes are black?

5 people liked this. [Like](#)



ald8m 1 month ago in reply to panacea

They can come to an opinion, sure, but none of them are engaged any longer in the day-to-day business of college athletics. And surely you can understand that more diversity on the panel (women and minorities) might bring different perspectives to the conversation - or maybe it wouldn't, but that would be telling, too.

[Like](#)



pianiste 1 month ago in reply to panacea

I'm not saying these gentlemen "can't come to an opinion" (whatever that means) because they're white, while many athletes (and coaches and administrators and trainers, et al.) are black (and female). I'm implying that it's dereliction of duty on the CHE's part that, when it decides to have a round table on the future of college athletics and looks around for participants, it just happens to land on three old white guys to muse out loud. (Brad Wolverton is a CHE reporter, so it's OK that he's a given.) Coincidence? Hardly. Racism/sexism? Probably not deliberate. Early 1960s-style, old-boy-network "Mad Men"-type thinking? Yep.

Let's not forget that the sudden urge to re-examine college athletics, and spill a whole lot of ink and bytes in editorializing about it, comes from the malfeasances (an initial sin of commission followed by a raft of sins of omission) of an all-white old-boy network: Sandusky to McQuearly to Paterno to the AD and VP to Spanier. You'd think that the CHE would want to step outside the box a bit.

Correction: Eighteen minutes is the length of only one segment. The entire discussion takes almost an hour. All the more reason for a less homogenous panel.

3 people liked this. [Like](#)



yogert8 1 month ago

Some Division I schools, who are already operating in the red, will not be able to survive if they have to pay there athletes who are already on athletic scholarship.

1 person liked this. [Like](#)



tdr75 1 month ago in reply to yogert8

It's not "some" division I schools operating in the red. It's the majority...a very substantial majority (I read somewhere that the number of universities who have D-I football programs and athletic departments that operate in the black is something like a dozen). Very few colleges and universities make money on athletics. The idea that athletics contributes to a college's bottom line and support the academic side of the house is largely a myth.

I still find the idea of paying the athletes under the guise of college amateur athletics to be reprehensible (especially those already on scholarship...and let's face it, we are talking the big-money sports here, not cross country...the last time I checked, a football team in D-I could hand out something like 85 scholarships...roughly 4 times the number of players needed to field a complete offense/defense combination). If you want to get paid, join a minor league farm team. Oh wait...football doesn't have one. They use colleges and universities for that. The fact is that at many schools, the "in-kind" payment of free tuition, room, board, plus all the "extras" (tutors, separate dining facilities, etc) adds up to anywhere from \$15,000 (for students at an in-state state university in Mississippi for example) to well over \$65,000 per year.

Why pay them additionally? They are getting a FREE EDUCATION... which in case no one has noticed is an increasingly valuable commodity. If they fail to take advantage of that while they are students it speaks to their priorities, but many schools already ALSO offer athletes lifetime tuition if they choose to complete their degree later in life (after presumably jumping ship for something better).

They already get paid. The fact that they don't have a wallet full of cash doesn't change that.

3 people liked this. [Like](#)



Taylor Branch 1 month ago in reply to tdr75

Every college is free to choose the Division III option for sports, but they won't without an unlikely revolt of academic stakeholders.

No college is or should be required to pay players scholarships, or anything else, but the current system strictly limits such payment by collusion and fiat through the NCAA.

You and most of us routinely presume to have a say in such governance of college sports, but it seldom occurs to ask why the athletes themselves have no voice at all. They are excluded from NCAA membership, due process, et al., which is a formula for exploitation of many kinds.

To recoil from paying those athletes who generate millions for colleges a salary above their "free" education is like saying you don't deserve any salary because your employer provides "free" health insurance.

[Like](#)



22260556 1 month ago

The composition of this panel of "experts" illustrates at least some of the reasons why for the past thirty years we have rehashed the same issues, talked about "reforming" the system, yet are still stuck in the same ditch.

1 person liked this. [Like](#)



panacea 1 month ago in reply to 22260556

Would you care to list the reasons you allude to?

[Like](#)



11264892 1 month ago

The videos represent an interesting set of discussions from generally knowledgeable people. Unfortunately, these discussions miss one of the most important reasons that intercollegiate athletics is more or less out of control at our large

universities. The Boards of Regents at these institutions are pulling the strings behind the scenes. It is the exception university President that controls the athletic programs. Some Regents are great individuals. Many are not. They are short timers, especially at the public universities. They have the capacity to create long term problems in their short term periods of power. Unfortunately, many have no understanding of their long term impacts. On athletic related matters and many more, they operate behind the scenes with little public accountability. They force raises to coaches even when there is no money. They commit to facilities that represent long term debt to their universities, not to their athletic departments. They fire coaches at a whim and are not around when their mistakes have to be corrected. Exposing the behind the scenes role of these individuals needs to be a part of the rhetoric about what needs to be done to fix intercollegiate athletics.

Like



gfraenkel 1 month ago

Intercollegiate sport is not in the mission statement of my university because it has nothing to do with academic functions. The European universities get along very well without it. Private and intercollegiate sport and PE have some health value. If a university values the profit from sports then commercialize the system. Pay professional players. Coach's salaries should be no more than a salary for a public school teacher. As it is a small minority of college athletes become successful professionals. It is not the university's responsibility to train these people. College sports are an unnecessary distraction to university life. Worse, in many schools student athletes are required to miss regularly scheduled course activities in order to attend required athletic practice and playing events. These students are thus at a uncompetitive disadvantage compared to students who come regularly to class. Intercollegiate athletic competition should be abolished. The the general public will understand and appreciate us properly. Beware the siren song of university sports.

Like



gmmartin 1 month ago

On Student-Athlete pay: institutions should not pay student-athletes, however student-athletes should be able to make money off-the-field in any legal way manageable. This includes being spokespeople for Nike or Gatorade or GM for that matter. It seems unfair that a student-athlete can work at McDonalds and earn minimum wage but not earn thousands from doing commercials or wearing McDonald's gear as a spokesperson.

On Bowl Games for Football Bowl Subdivision: Get over the thought missing class time and physical harm of along season. If Divisions 3, 2, and Football Championship Division can do it, so can the FBS. Keep it simple and admit this is about bowl tradition and money. How to keep the money and the tradition? Do an eight team playoff like the other schools ending in December, then have the Bowls as normal. The Bowls can have even more prestige if you make the top 5 games (4 bowls plus the NCAA Championship game) by money sharing decide the final Top 10 rankings. That tradition will be great.

Like



zeigrog 1 month ago

Basically, resolving the intercollegiate athletics is simple. To be honest and completely ethical, all students should be treated the same! Academically qualified, bona fide students with proven financial need should be helped to the extent possible. Period. This is "Division III NCAA Mentality", and it is the only honest, sound approach to this disgraceful situation. Amen.

Like

3 people liked this. [Like](#)

 **sand6432** 1 month ago

The discussion here in many ways is quite sophisticated, but i was disappointed in the treatment of the scandals at Miami and Penn State as though they were someone both indicative in the same way of the failures of the present system. In fact, these two schools were miles apart in how their football programs were run in regard to the place of academics, with Joe Paterno notably making Penn State a leader in emphasizing the priority of academic values whereas Miami was at just about the opposite pole. Where the systems both failed is in the insular nature of the cultures surrounding the sport, the coverup of scandals indicating the lack of sufficient transparency and the inadequacy of the governance structures concerning athletics in these two universities.

On the issue of how change will come about, the three panelists alluded to the possible consequences of downgrading the non-revenue sports in order to prioritize the revenue-producing ones, but they neglected to identify one important source of where the countervailing pressure will come from, viz., the parents of athletes in those non-revenue sports. If too many of those sports are eliminated by colleges, there will be many angry parents who will join in protesting that change, and collectively they far outnumber the parents of athletes in just football and basketball.

---Sandy Thatcher

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[Like](#)

 **trudie** 3 weeks ago

<http://www.noorlandjuristen.nl...> for exemple Alimentatie

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 **Jeff Smith** 1 day ago

Eliminating subsidies from tuition to athletics will allow for market forces to shape intercollegiate athletics. Here is a petition to end athletic subsidies:

<http://www.change.org/petition...>

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