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*Pay for Play Starts with Education Reform*

*by*

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As people in the sports industry have recently noted, to say that universities are paying student-athletes with a college education is to say that these schools are indeed compensating them. Thus, the conversation you and I are having is not should the universities compensate student-athletes but by how much. According to a recent study, there are teams such as the University of Connecticut's men's basketball team that recently had a graduation rate of 31%. In other words, close to 7 out of 10 Husky basketball players will not graduate.

The real question is what kind of education is being provided? I have had the opportunity to speak with student-athletes who would admit that many on their team do not know how to do things like write a resume or other basic life skills. For the 99% of athletes that will not be able to play professionally, many of them are inadequately prepared to transition to a career when their playing days are over. We can throw out tuition numbers and what athletes are saving by getting a scholarship, but many of them pass through a system that is all too quick to forget about them once their eligibility is through.

Colleges and universities involved in big-time college athletics must begin to be accountable for what author William Rhoden calls "the conveyor belt" they have created as universities cycle through "YouTube sensations" every four years.

Before we can talk about how college athletes should be compensated for the use of their likeness along with other pertinent things, we must begin by addressing the current educational system that has been created by big-time college athletics. If I can go to any college bookstore and buy a player's jersey, these players deserve to be compensated. However, those that say college athletes should just be paid monetarily are missing a step. Indeed, the current NCAA compensation system is antiquated, but real reform must start in the classroom. If we are agreeing that the compensation starts with an education, it is time for universities to pull the plug on the conveyor belt and ensure student-athletes are able to "go professional in something else" as the NCAA so often claims.