

Prompt: College athletics is arguably more popular than professional sports. Many more fans hang-on to their devotion of college teams than they do professional teams. This popularity has sprung an argument on whether or not student athletes should be paid for playing. Write an argument essay on whether college athletes should be paid or not with a claim, counterclaim, and evidence from the texts defending your side.

Text 1

Should NCAA Athletes Be Paid?

This weekend, the Final Four of both the Women's and Men's NCAA basketball tournaments will garner the collective attention of sports fans across the country. Brackets will be busted, nets will be cut down, and two champions will ultimately be crowned.

But while those teams are celebrating a national title, the real winners of the tournaments may be their corporate sponsors, broadcasters and ultimately, the NCAA itself.

The NCAA basketball tournaments, or "March Madness," have become a huge business. As Forbes' Chris Smith wrote, CBS and Turner Broadcasting make more than \$1 billion off the games, "thanks in part to a \$700,000 ad rate for a 30-second spot during the Final Four." Athletic conferences receive millions of dollars in payouts from the NCAA when their teams advance deep into the tournament. Ditto for the coaches of the final squads standing. The NCAA, as a whole, makes \$6 billion annually.

But the players themselves don't see any of that money, even as they risk career-ending injuries every time that they step onto the court, field or rink. Just last weekend, Louisville's Kevin Ware suffered a gruesome broken leg (but successfully had surgery that will enable him to return to playing eventually).

The huge amount of money being made off college sports has led some to question whether student-athletes can be considered amateurs any longer, and whether they should, instead, be paid for their efforts. The New York Times' Joe Nocera has been beating the drum to reform the NCAA, and he is certainly not alone. A group of former players has filed an antitrust lawsuit alleging that student athletes are entitled to some of the money the NCAA makes off of using their names and likenesses on merchandise such as jerseys and video games.

But on the flip side, the argument can be made that the opportunity to both receive an education and get the exposure to win a major professional contract more than compensates NCAA athletes for their efforts. "Rather than push college athletics further

and further from academics, we need to bring it closer," says NCAA president Mike Emmert.

Text 2:

Pros/Cons of Paying College Athletes

In the 2013 NCAA tournament Louisville player Kevin Ware suffered a horrific injury to his lower right leg while attempting to block an opposing player's shot. Six months later, Ware was healed and back to practicing. He was lucky. There have been instances of players becoming paralyzed by hits or tackles on football fields or other injuries that have ended player's careers before they even get started. These athletes are sacrificing their bodies and physical health at a chance to play a game they love, and possibly make it to the professional level.

Journalist Michael Wilbon has written that seeing the \$11 billion deal between the NCAA and CBS/Turner Sports for March Madness between 2011 and 2024 prompted him to change his mind about paying student-athletes. This deal shows the amount of money the NCAA is bringing in over the course of one month alone. March Madness is one of the most watched sporting events in the country. Yet the money being made off this event is not trickling down to the players, who are the stars of the tournament. One aspect I find lacking in this topic discussion is the ignoring of the very real fact that a lot of athletes are very financially irresponsible. The ESPN documentary *Broke* gave an inside view of the financial woes of many professional athletes, noting that around 60% of NBA players are broke within five years of retirement.

Many of these players blamed poor investments, trusting unethical financial advisors and lavish spending habits as the reason for their money troubles. If schools were to begin paying players, they could also help these students build a foundation of financial literacy. This would allow them to introduce these students to financial investors who had their best interests in mind. Whether or not these college athletes went on to play professionally, they would at least, have some type of financial literacy to carry with them into whatever career they choose. This would (hopefully) set them up a better financial future.

While not all student-athletes are on scholarship, many are, particularly those who are playing for schools we see winning national championships. In addition to free tuition and room and board, these college athletes also often receive stipends to help towards books and other basic needs. This money does not have to be paid back. Most other students are not receiving these benefits, and will come out of school with a great deal of student loan debt. Thus, in comparison, student-athletes already have it easier, financially, than most of the students at their school.

There are many fans of collegiate level sports because they believe the players at this level play with more passion and love of the sport than athletes at the professional level.

There are some who say professional athletes do not play as hard because they have already made it to the highest level, and they do not want to risk injury if a game is not for a national championship. Paying student-athletes could detract from their passion and make them less motivated to play hard to get to the next level.

Paying college athletes is difficult for a number of reasons. Firstly, according to Jeffrey Dorfman, only a few collegiate sports actually bring in money. College football, as well as men's and women's basketball, are the money makers as far as collegiate athletics is concerned. Most other programs are actually cash strapped. Therefore, the issue becomes should only football and basketball college athletes be paid? Is that fair to other student-athletes? Furthermore, where should the money come from? Is it the responsibility of the school to pay these athletes or the NCAA? Other questions include how much should students-athletes be paid, how often, will it work in a similar way that professional contracts work, etc? All these questions reveal how difficult it would be to change the college athletic system to compensate college athletes.