

High School Sports ‘Transfer’ Into New Era

BY JACKSON TEETOR



Graphic by Jackson Teetor

In 2018, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) instituted the Transfer Portal which created a uniform database in which coaches, athletes, and staff can easily see who is in the portal and who they can recruit to come to their school. Another groundbreaking change the portal made was allowing the athletes to not have to sit out a full year after transferring, giving more incentive if one wished to transfer schools.

High school sports have similar rules nowadays where students must wait 90 school days before they are able to participate in a varsity sport. Students may also submit their name to the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) by May 1st stating they intend to transfer to a different school to be able to participate immediately the next school year. In some special cases, students can make a case to the NSAA that they had to already missed a season for injury or another obstacle out of their control and be able to bypass the 90-day rule. Recently the Nebraska High School “Transfer Portal” has become a topic of much debate on social media sites and other news sources. Some believe that more regulations should be put in place to hinder as many students as possible from moving schools for the purpose of making these high school sports “super-teams.”

In the 2024 Class A state football matchup between Westside and Millard South, over 50 percent of the starters for both teams had transferred from other schools. In fact, all of Millard South’s touchdowns were scored by a student who transferred in from another school. Millard South went on to win the championship. South was able to score over 49 points in every game except for one leading up to the State Championship.

Some claim that certain public schools are going out and deliberately recruiting these students but none of the schools will ever admit to this as this would be against the NSAA’s regulations. The negative effects of this “transfer portal” mostly affect Class A schools as the talent becomes more saturated in certain schools. The biggest problems this poses are that it bars students who have been playing for the same school from getting the spots they have spent their whole careers working to get to just because someone else decided they didn’t like their other school anymore. If a student knows that all these elite athletes are transferring into their school it could discourage them from even trying out for that sport. It could even lead to students from other schools not wanting to go out for sports because they don’t want to compete against these super teams. Stricter regulations need to be put in place to keep schools from being able to create these collegiate level high school teams. It threatens the true nature of high school sports, which is to play with others from your own area and bring a true championship home to your school.

Name, Image, & Likeness *Incentives Ruining the Heart of College Athletics*

BY WILL STORBECK

If you have paid any attention to college sports in the past couple of years, you have noticed that there has been a drastic reworking of the top teams and conferences due to athletes and teams following the flow of money. Back in 2021, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) allowed student-athletes to be paid for their name, image, and likeness (NIL). This one change will lead to the downfall of college sports because it is starting to take away the things that make college sports great. Now that the athletes can get paid by the schools, money is a major factor in determining where they go to play. Before NIL, the top recruited athletes went to the schools with the programs, with previous success, or high-level player development. The successful programs used to be based on tradition, high level coaching, and strong fan bases. When money is thrown into the mix, the schools that are willing to pony up the most money are the ones that land the best athletes. Because of this, it has become increasingly difficult for schools to build programs that develop players and have a consistent level of play. This makes the school’s athletic programs lose their identity. When each team exchanges players year after year, program development will become impossible. Fans are going to have an extremely difficult time staying attached to their favorite teams if they don’t even recognize the players on their team each year. Another major impact of NIL is the upcoming roster cuts that the NCAA is requiring teams to have. For example, college football teams used to be allowed to have up to 150 players on their roster. Now, that number has been cut down to 105. This is due to a lawsuit regarding the payment of college athletes. Since the NCAA is required to pay reparations to athletes, they cut down the roster sizes as a

result. The ones most affected by this are the walk-on athletes. A walk-on athlete is someone who was not offered a scholarship to play for a school but was good enough to try out and make the team. This gave players that did not get many looks from the top schools an opportunity to display their talent in front of the coaches. A great example of this is Baker Mayfield. He made the decision to walk on at Texas Tech University, despite getting offers from smaller D-1 schools.

conferences. For example, conferences like the Big Ten and the SEC have seen the addition of major schools from all over the country. This led to the death of the Pac 12 conference due to schools like Oregon, UCLA, and USC all leaving to join larger conferences. These major conference changes make college sports much less entertaining. They get rid of local rivalries and make the postseason much less interesting. We used to have to wait to watch the top teams from each conference battle it out in the most important, high stakes playoff games. Now, the top teams can play each other multiple times throughout the year due to them being in the same conference. It’s yet another example of college sports losing their identity and slowly becoming less fun to watch as a result of NIL. College sports are one of the most beloved forms of entertainment in America. Events like March Madness or the College Football Playoffs are watched and enjoyed by millions of people. Most importantly, fans establish a close connection with their favorite school’s team. Now, with all these drastic changes to the fundamental aspects of college sports, they have become increasingly difficult to love.



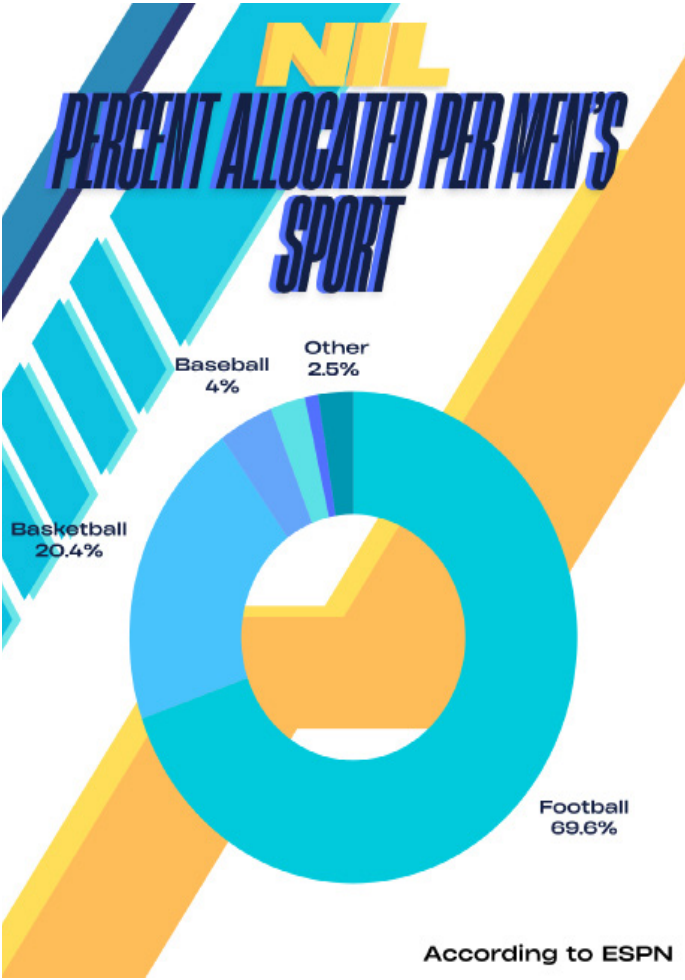
Graphic courtesy of American Football International

Eventually, Mayfield worked his way up the depth chart and became the starting quarterback. He then became the first and only walk-on player to win the Heisman and was drafted as the number one overall pick in the 2018 NFL draft. Remarkable stories like these are what NIL is starting to tear away from college sports. The underdog stories are what fans love about college athletics. Getting rid of walk-on athletes is a great way to make fans slowly lose interest in NCAA sports. The effect of NIL that has been arguably the most prevalent in college sports is the formation of huge

Billion Dollar Program

NIL Pay Days for College Athletes

BY CONNOR SMITH



Graphic by Easton Crouse

The common idiom “Money makes the world go ‘round” applies to almost every aspect of our society; until recently, collegiate level sports were an exception to the rule. However, with the NCAA legalizing student athletes making money from their name, image, and likeness (or NIL), the scourge of the dol-

lar sign has tarnished the previously unblemished field of college athletics. This development has brought millions of dollars flowing into the pockets of college athletes from donors paying into huge college NIL funds. According to the New York Times, the total NIL market for college athletics is expected to amount to nearly \$1.67 billion this year. College football is one of the biggest magnets for these funds, with title contenders such as Texas and Penn State spending upwards of \$13 million dollars on their programs.

Though this seems like an inordinate amount of money, Ohio State was not to be outdone and raised more than \$20 million dollars in incentives for players. This level of cash flow is not limited to college football, however; the University of Nebraska’s NIL foundation, the 1890 Initiative, has recently made a \$5 million dollar deal with Nebraska Crossing Outlets to support Nebraska’s dominant volleyball program. Needless to say, the level of enthusiasm for college sports has not waned recently, and each year the budgets for these programs has continued to increase.

This means that in many cases bigger programs can effectively buy better players, which in theory means that there is less competition from smaller teams, commonly known as underdogs. However, many teams have proven this theory wrong. For example, the Northern Illinois Huskies’s upset win over the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame in college football this year shocked millions.

So, while NIL money has upset the traditional balance of college sports, it has been proven that a scrappy squad such as Northern Illinois with less than a half million dollars of NIL funding can take down a money-bloated behemoth like Notre Dame.

While the NCAA’s allowance for players to profit from their Name, Image and Likeness has had a large impact on how college athletics programs operate, it has had an even bigger impact on the lifestyle of college athletes. While some purists claim that NIL money has ruined the integrity of college athletics and the athletes, this claim is historically inaccurate.

Remembering the legacy of high-profile college athletes such as Johnny Manziel and OJ Simpson, integrity has never been an essential in the recipe for athletic success. After all, in an era where the payment of players was illegal, Johnny Manziel was seen on video holding a stack of bills to his ear and yelling, “I can’t hear you, I got too much...money in my hand.”

The perspective of the athletes on the advent of NIL deals can be summed up in a quote from Jordan Belfort: “There is no nobility in poverty. I’ve been a rich man and a poor man, and I’ll choose rich every time.”

And could you really blame them? Athletes used to have to choose between completing their education or going on to make money that their families needed by going to the big leagues. But now, they can kill two birds with one stone and benefit from their athletic talent monetarily and through receiving a college education. This keeps some of the best players from declaring for the draft and keeps them playing college sports.

All in all, the advent of NIL has had a massive impact on college athletics, affecting the management of entire programs and the lives of individual athletes. While NIL has changed the traditional landscape of college sports, the benefits for the players far outweigh the negatives produced from it.

‘Banking’ on Their Futures

How NIL Pays Off for Student-Athletes

BY OLIVER SORENSEN

In 2025, Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) has truly become the “name of the game.” While some are quick to focus on its downsides and dismiss it entirely, NIL brings a host of positives that may well outweigh the negatives. For student-athletes, it provides financial support, incentives for education, and an overall enhancement of college sports.

When NIL deals were introduced, student-athletes suddenly found themselves in a position where they could earn money while still in college. However, making money is one thing—managing and investing it is another. According to StudentAthleteInsights.com, 74% of student-athletes expressed interest in learning about investment platforms and financial management. NIL has created a necessary push toward financial literacy, equipping athletes with skills that will serve them well beyond their athletic careers.

Former NFL player Brandon Copeland once reflected, “I had to make it to the [Baltimore] Ravens to know what a 401(k) was—that’s bad.” Through NIL, athletes now have the opportunity to educate themselves on budgeting, investing, and financial planning while they are still in school. This knowledge ensures that even if their athletic careers don’t pan out as planned, they are prepared for financial stability in the future.

For years, college athletes faced a tough decision: declare for the professional league early or complete their education. Many athletes value their education, but financial struggles often push them to leave school prematurely. With NIL, student-athletes no longer have to choose between staying in school and earning money. They can now generate income while still working toward their degree, which reduces the

financial pressure that once forced them to turn pro before they were ready.

Additionally, if an athlete does choose to leave college early, NIL ensures they have already gained experience in handling finances. This advantage allows them to navigate professional sports with a stronger foundation and avoid the financial hazards that many young athletes have encountered in the past.

NIL has also opened doors for athletes beyond the traditional stars of football and basketball. Now, athletes in Olympic sports, women’s sports, and even niche markets can secure endorsement deals. Social media platforms allow athletes to build personal brands, and companies are eager to support those with strong followings and authentic engagement.

This shift means that more student-athletes have opportunities to benefit from their hard work and dedication, regardless of their sport’s TV ratings.

Fans benefit from NIL, too. With student-athletes having financial security and fewer incentives to rush into professional leagues, college sports retain high-quality athletes for longer. This means stronger teams, better competition, and a more exciting product for the fans to enjoy. Instead of watching their favorite players leave too soon due to financial pressure or other reasons, supporters can see them develop throughout their college careers.

While the debate around NIL will continue, its positives are undeniable. It has provided student-athletes with financial opportunities, encouraged financial literacy, and will help keep talent in college longer. As NIL continues to evolve, its impact will only grow, proving that empowering student-athletes can be a win for everyone involved.



Graphic by Oliver Sorensen