

NIL Track - Overview

College football is at a crossroads. On one hand, it is riding a crest of unprecedented popularity and financial gain. The sport has never been stronger in terms of fan interest and support, media acclaim, and financial considerations.

However, on the other hand, a **player's name, image, and likeness** (NIL) is threatening the foundation of college football. Finding a comprehensive and lasting solution will require far-reaching innovations.

What Is NIL?

As the world of college sports stands at a pivotal juncture, it's crucial to understand the concepts of Name, Image, and Likeness. It has been the primary driving force in reshaping college athletics.

Name, Image, and Likeness refers to the rights of college athletes to monetize their personal brand while still maintaining their amateur status. To aid players, various legislative bodies and the NCAA created **NIL legislation**. As a result of this legislation, a school's student athletes can earn money when they participate in endorsement deals, create a strong social media presence to monetize their personal brand, and establish personal business ventures.

In the past, student-athletes were strictly prohibited from profiting in this manner, which led to contentious debates in most schools about fairness and exploitation within college sports. NIL opportunities have opened a new era where athletes can benefit financially from their fame and hard work.

How Does NIL Affect College Sports?

NIL, although beneficial on the surface to athletes – introduces a set of challenges and unintended consequences that ripple through the entire ecosystem of college sports. They necessitate a careful examination of how NIL impacts team dynamics, the traditional model of collegiate sports, and the long-term sustainability of college sports.

College athletics is navigating through uncharted waters, grappling with issues of equity, cohesion, and the amateurism that has long defined its spirit. This situation calls for a balanced approach that safeguards the interests of student-athletes while preserving the integrity and competitive balance of college sports.

Here are four of the most significant challenges confronting college sports – specifically football – due to Name, Image, and Likeness.

A. The disparities in earning potential among teammates can lead to jealousy or resentment, potentially fracturing team unity. High-profile players might command more attention and resources, overshadowing team achievements with individual pursuits.

B. Recruiting battles for student-athletes may increasingly hinge on the potential for NIL earnings, shifting focus from athletic development and academic fit to financial benefits. Schools with smaller athletic programs may not have the means to facilitate lucrative NIL deals, altering the competitive balance.

C. While NIL rules aim to compensate student-athletes fairly for their name, image, and likeness, the influx of money risks blurring the lines between amateur and professional sports. It also challenges the foundational principles of college athletics.

D. Institutions must navigate complex legal and compliance issues to ensure athletes and programs adhere to NIL legislation without compromising eligibility or violating NCAA rules.

Conclusion

Name, Image, and Likeness has contributed to a system that may need a radical overhaul. The NCAA is simply unable to regulate college football as it exists today.

College football's restructuring is under a time limit, and time is running out. There is already a growing interest in the federal government to provide oversight if colleges can't do it by themselves.

Protecting Athletes, Schools, and Sports (**PASS**) legislation is being proposed to oversee NIL at the university level. This bill would make it illegal for states to pass NIL laws like those laws that have made the present NIL system arbitrary and unfair.

It would be wise for university football programs to adopt a system that will work to improve the sport for college athletes. Otherwise, external forces like the federal government might impose their own system to reform college football, which may not align with the preferences of coaches and schools.

