

The Effect of the NIL on Recruitment

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ABSTRACT

The recent emergence of pay for collegiate athletes through the reformation of the NIL rules (name, image, and likeness), can change the entire system of recruitment of college sports, while will affect the entire business scope of the NCAA. I studied the subject of recruitment for the NCAA from the years 2018-2022 to analyze any changes in the recruitment plane before and after the NIL rule change in 2019. This research showed while a profound effect hasn't taken place yet, changes are bound to come along, as the NIL rule becomes more widespread, and athletes start to take advantage of its benefits. These choices made by rising college athletes will alter the recruiting game as a whole as some schools will be targeted more than others.

Introduction

Athletes are permitted to profit from their name, image, and likeness under NCAA NIL regulations. Since the governing body for collegiate athletics enacted new regulations declaring that student-athletes may accept income, sponsorships, endorsements, and payment, NCAA regulations have altered. Student-athletes have had growing frustrations for the past decade with the NCAA, as they were not able to profit off of their skills as non-student-athletes have been doing. Trying to work a full-time job as a student-athlete is practically impossible. This rule change enables student-athletes who are not receiving full scholarships an option to earn money while still participating in their sport. Profiting from NIL may give student-athletes more practical options for revenue and payment, especially given the time restrictions associated with participating as a collegiate athlete. While athletes and fans are both excited for the future of college sports with the new NIL rule, there is one obstacle in their way. How will this rule affect recruitment? What type of schools might benefit more/less from this policy change?

Theory and Literature Review

While many schools have accepted the rule, and are making changes to their current programs, 22 other state schools do not allow athletes to profit off of their name, image, and likeness. This greatly affects recruiting through the fact that emerging high school athletes would be keener on schools that offer them the opportunity to make money. Schools that are already stronger in the NCAA, will only benefit from this rule, as the NIL rule is more apparent there. Also, based on the location of the school, athletes would be offered different types of deals for either greater or lesser value. Schools in the biggest cities in the nation, such as Los Angeles, New York, etc., have a thriving range of companies that wish to work with athletes. The preference of the student-athlete likely leans more toward these major city schools than toward colleges with more conventional settings, such as small suburban or rural communities with few businesses nearby, even if they may not be superior to the other college at whatever sport the athlete plays. Many scholars have stated that scholarships typically do not cover all of the costs incurred by student-athletes, and not every member of the team is awarded a full scholarship or even one at all. These student-athletes will be compensated by either large, national firms or

regional businesses close to the institution. According to Pratik Thakur, from Daily Trojan, Jordan Bohannon, a basketball player for Iowa, signed a NIL contract with Boomin Iowa Fireworks, a regional business in the region. Arkansas' offensive line and a nearby barbecue joint formed a partnership. Athletes will be drawn to colleges that are situated in commercial hubs with significant marketing budgets. This relates to my claim, indicating that recruitment will be much more location-based, allowing these student-athletes to receive far greater offers and prospects for financial reward. Multiple sources have stated that even if they are not situated in regions that are as economically prosperous as L.A., New York, or any other significant, bustling cities, student-athletes would still be encouraged to attend the current big powerhouses, such as Duke or Kentucky for basketball. This is due to the notion that major brands are more likely to prioritize players from certain schools since they are aware of the caliber of these schools' athletes. Essentially, players continue to attend elite institutions regardless of where they are.

Methodology

To display the change in recruitment status throughout the rule change, I tracked the recruiting rankings of 20 teams, from 2018-2022. I used the "247Sports Composite Rating" and formula, to help me find average recruiting rankings. A team's top recruit is worth the most points, and each recruit is weighted in the rankings using a bell curve. The point total for a team may be thought of as the average of the ratings of all of the team's committed players, with the best recruit being worth 100% of his rating value, the second-best recruit being worth almost 100% of his rating value, and the last recruit only being worth a small portion. By using this approach, all commitments are guaranteed to have some impact on the team's score without favoring teams with a large number of commitments over others. 247sports used a specific formula:

$$\sum_{n=1}^c R_n * e^{-(n-1)^2/2+\sigma^2}$$

where R_n is the 247Sports Composite Rating of the n th-best commit multiplied by 100 and c is the total number of commitments received by a certain team.

This allowed me to not only get a general idea of how powerhouse schools were generally formed, and where they ranked officially, but also how the NIL rule change affected recruitment.

Results

I noticed patterns of increased popularity in recruiting after the NIL rule change, but the development was nothing to go off of. I viewed a source that provided information on the average recruitment rates for 20 teams, between the years 2018-2022, which showed how recruitment rates dropped and rose. As of right now, the NIL rule has not made a profound effect on the stage of the NCAA recruiting landscape yet, but in the near future, it is a definite possibility of the rule placement creating a real effect on recruitment. After I took this data into a deeper dive, I found some outliers where teams were bottom ranked recruiting-wise one random year, while succeeding the next couple of years.

College	Year	Recruit Avg				
Gonzaga	2022	20.94				
Gonzaga	2021	69.06	Texas Tech	2022	62.91	
Gonzaga	2020	65.58	Texas Tech	2021	41.71	
Gonzaga	2019	66.64	Texas Tech	2020	64.54	
Gonzaga	2018	41.55	Texas Tech	2019	62.64	
Arizona	2022	41	Texas Tech	2018	55.47	
Arizona	2021	54.65	Providence	2022	36.82	
Arizona	2020	64.98	Providence	2021	35.66	
Arizona	2019	52.39	Providence	2020	32.18	
Arizona	2018	64.49	Providence	2019	27.43	
Kansas	2022	68.21	Providence	2018	61.45	
Kansas	2021	63.65	Wisconsin	2022	38.47	
Kansas	2020	58.62	Wisconsin	2021	52.49	
Kansas	2019	64.77	Wisconsin	2020	54.98	
Kansas	2018	68.14	Wisconsin	2019	19.26	
Baylor	2022	47.62	Wisconsin	2018	39.66	
Baylor	2021	62.13	Houston	2022	52.45	
Baylor	2020	56.93	Houston	2021	53.25	
Baylor	2019	22.22	Houston	2020	49.5	
Baylor	2018	54.93	Houston	2019	45.14	
Tennessee	2022	61.55	Houston	2018	35.39	
Tennessee	2021	69.02	Iowa	2022	40.67	
Tennessee	2020	66.89	Iowa	2021	33.96	
Tennessee	2019	57.71	Iowa	2020	45.01	
Tennessee	2018	25.61	Iowa	2019	40.83	
Villanova	2022	62.04	Iowa	2018	42.6	
Villanova	2021	56.98	Arkansas	2022	69.99	
Villanova	2020	28.4	Arkansas	2021	41.35	
Villanova	2019	68.56	Arkansas	2020	64.96	
Villanova	2018	66.52	Arkansas	2019	16.78	
Kentucky	2022	61.98	Arkansas	2018	54.1	
Kentucky	2021	69.45	Saint Mary's	2022	23.6	
Kentucky	2020	70.34	Saint Mary's	2021	16.44	
Kentucky	2019	69.87	Saint Mary's	2020	46.07	
Kentucky	2018	70.29	Saint Mary's	2019		
Auburn	2022	61.69	Saint Mary's	2018	26.23	
Auburn	2021	29.8	Illinois	2022	65.75	
Auburn	2020	64.6	Illinois	2021	56.95	
Auburn	2019	60.62	Illinois	2020	62.19	
Auburn	2018		Illinois	2019	41.79	
Duke	2022	71.11	Illinois	2018	59.61	
Duke	2021	68.81	USC	2022	66.28	
Duke	2020	69.83	USC	2021	50	
Duke	2019	69.3	USC	2020	57.42	
Duke	2018	71.12	USC	2019	67.66	
Purdue	2022	52.65	USC	2018	62.82	
Purdue	2021	50.43				
Purdue	2020	54.46				
Purdue	2019	46.43				
Purdue	2018	49.91				
UCLA	2022	64.87				
UCLA	2021	51.91				
UCLA	2020	47.5				
UCLA	2019	40.28				
UCLA	2018	67.92				

Figure 1. Average Recruiting Rankings. This chart made analyzes how average recruiting rankingsfor 20 teams have dropped and rise since from 2018 - 2022.

Discussion and Conclusion

Among many other observations, I found sources showing that many teams succeeded before the NIL rule, because of the team's boosters. While unethical, boosters often offer money to athletes as an incentive to attend their respective schools. These boosters often use their deep pockets to use NIL-disguised transactions to induce prospects to sign with their school or convince current players to remain on their school's roster. This greatly counteracts the NCAA's mission of eliminating any booster involvement with recruitment. My research also suggests as the past couple of years since the NIL rule change, not much has changed in the college recruitment scope. Better high school prospects are still attending better institutions. Although my results from my data analysis showed some inconsistencies, overall, they formulated similar results as I had seen across all types of sources throughout my research. Because the NIL rule has only been allowed recently, I believe that in the near future, the possibility of athletes benefiting financially from their name image and likeness, will greatly create a ripple in recruitment across the country, and alter the entire business scope of the NCAA.

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