



Should colleges pay their athletes? The answer is complicated

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A recent Supreme Court decision may mean big changes are coming for college sports.

The court decided in a case last week that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the organization that runs college sports, cannot limit the education-related benefits universities and colleges give certain athletes. This means schools can give football and basketball players extra benefits such as scholarships for graduate school or money for computers.

The Supreme Court did not decide the bigger question: Can schools give athletes benefits not related to education? In other

words, the court did not decide if schools could pay the student athletes.

The court may decide that question in a future case. Here are some things the justices should think about when they consider whether the NCAA can limit the amount college athletes are paid.

Football and men's basketball are the big money makers in college sports. Television networks pay more than \$1.5 billion a year to televise the College Football Playoff and the men's NCAA basketball tournament. As a result, college football and basketball coaches, as well as some athletic department administrators, make millions of dollars a year in salaries.

So it doesn't seem fair that the NCAA limits what football and basketball players can receive from their athletic scholarships to the cost of attending the college plus a small amount of money. (Some of these athletes may soon earn money from the use of their name, image or likeness — on a jersey, for example — because of an expected NCAA rules change.)

Most of the nearly half-million college athletes do not play big-money sports. For them, the money they receive from an athletic scholarship along with coaching, medical care and tutoring can be a good deal. Attending college costs a lot.

In addition, the money generated by football and men's basketball teams often helps pay for less popular sports at the school. How will colleges pay for wrestling, rowing or even lacrosse, if more money goes to football and basketball programs?

Also, will there be less money for women's sports? Is that fair or even legal? Title IX (9 in Roman numerals) of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires that schools give female and male athletes similar benefits. If colleges pay male football and basketball players, will they have to pay their field hockey and softball players, as well as their female swimmers?

Will all the athletes receive the same money and benefits? Isn't a star quarterback such as Trevor Lawrence of Clemson University worth more than a third-string center on the team?

If colleges start to pay athletes in football and basketball, will some colleges drop out of Division I or drop the sports completely because it's too expensive to compete? Will we end up with fewer college football and basketball teams?

It's easy to say college football and basketball players should get a larger share of

the money their sports generate, but it's hard to figure out exactly how that might happen.

I'm not sure even the justices on the Supreme Court can do that.