NCAA votes to allow athletes to profit from their Name, Image or Likeness

On October 29, 2019, the NCAA Board of Governors voted “unanimously to permit students participating in athletics the opportunity to benefit from the use of their name, image or likeness (NIL) in a manner consistent with the collegiate model”. The Board further directed each of the NCAA’s divisions (Divisions I, II and III) to immediately consider updates to relevant bylaws and policies for the 21st Century. More specifically, each of the divisions was directed to create new rules on NILs by no later than January, 2021. And, the NCAA made it clear that compensation for “athletic performance or participation” is impermissible.

Recently, the state of California put even more pressure on the NCAA to pay college athletes. Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law SB 206, the Fair Pay to Play Act, which will make it illegal for California colleges to deny their athletes the chance to hire agents or gain compensation for the use of their name, image or likeness, beginning in 2023. Twelve other states, including New York, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Colorado have proposed, or planned to propose, similar bills.

The NCAA’s new position on this topic will enable college athletes to sign endorsement deals, sponsor sports camps, be paid to sign autographs, and be paid to have their names appear on replica jerseys. Keep in mind that this is not a matter of the colleges paying the athletes, but that the players will be able to negotiate deals with video game publishers, camps, trading card shows, clothing makers, sneaker companies, and other businesses that want to take advantage of the players’ identities.

This is a very complicated undertaking. California’s new law is not scheduled to go into effect until 2023, allowing a fair amount of time to review, analyze and evaluate different concept proposals. The NCAA wants to make the transition to be effective not later than January, 2021.

See any complications or opportunities for confusion here? How about trying to define “the opportunity to benefit . . . in a manner consistent with the collegiate model”, which was part of the opening sentence of this article.

IECA ANNUAL CONFERENCE - ATLANTA

If you will be attending the IECA Conference in Atlanta, please join our Affinity Group on Friday, November 8 at 7:30 am in Room M101 to network with other counselors who advise student-athletes.

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