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8-19-2014

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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Gardner-Webb Compliance Officer Discusses Student-Athlete Pay" (2014). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 1330.
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Gardner-Webb Compliance Officer Discusses Student-Athlete Pay



Office of University Communications

August 19, 2014

Courts Considering Compensation for NCAA Players for Use of Names, Likenesses

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — Should college student-athletes receive a paycheck in addition to a scholarship? It has been a highly debated topic in recent years, and a court ruling this month could lead to a major paycheck for some graduating athletes in the near future.

Former UCLA basketball player Ed O'Bannon filed a suit against the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) on behalf of Division I football and men's basketball players, claiming that student-athletes should be entitled to money for the NCAA's use of their names, images, and likenesses. The NCAA argues that paying its athletes means they're no longer amateurs.

A U.S. District Court judge ruled this month that the NCAA's rules and bylaws in relation to the representation of athletes are in violation of antitrust law. The ruling suggests athletes should be compensated for the profits universities gain on their behalf, said Stephen Dolan, GWU Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance.

Dolan helps Gardner-Webb meet NCAA rules, including the monitoring of grades, recruiting, drug testing, and other factors that impact the eligibility of the University's athletes. He said GWU players should not expect to profit from potential changes to compensation.

“A big misconception with the ruling is that colleges are now allowed to pay student athletes,” Dolan offered in a recent interview with WGWG.org. “That is not the case. The ruling allows athletes to be compensated if a school, institution, or the NCAA profits off their name, image, or likeness, at a minimum of \$5,000 a year, for up to \$20,000 over the course of their career. That money would be put into a type of trust fund that would be provided to the athlete upon their graduation from the institution.”

College sports video games offer one example of ways student-athletes are represented, potentially creating financial benefits for their university, Dolan said. The games do not usually include the names of athletes, but they include hundreds of their likenesses, physical statistics, and hometown information. The court ruling vouches for pay for athletes for the use of that representation.

However, the video game likenesses of players at schools in smaller athletic conferences are often less accurate when compared to their real-life counterparts, Dolan said. The electronic players often carry the Gardner-Webb name on their jerseys, but they maintain a different jersey number, different size, and different race, Dolan said.

“There is no likeness in that case,” he shared. “They just generated a team because we are Division I. We expect the court ruling to impact the major conference schools. That would be primarily due to money generated via major television contracts, such as the contract Notre Dame maintains with NBC to carry its football games. There is a possibility an impact of the ruling could trickle down to schools like Gardner-Webb, but initially we do not anticipate it would change anything here.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.