

## **The case against legalizing gambling on college sports**

**By Kent Fuchs and Glenn Altschuler**

The history of sports is, alas, awash in gambling scandals. The most infamous recent example resulted in Pete Rose getting banned from baseball and excluded from consideration for the Hall of Fame for betting on his own team and other teams, at times from the dugout.

Nor has college sports been immune. In 1951, 33 basketball players from City College of New York and at least six other schools were ensnared in a mafia-linked point-shaving scandal. Following evidence of point shaving in 1995, two basketball players at Northwestern University received prison time. Other betting scandals since then have received less media attention.

For student athletes, gambling poses a unique danger, exacerbated by the social media – and now by real-time gambling. In our judgement, legalized sports gambling, fed by real-time data analytics and online betting, is likely to be a nightmare for colleges, universities, and American society.

In May, 2018, the Supreme Court overturned the 1992 Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act that had barred states from regulating and taxing sports betting. The court has left it to the states or the federal government to decide what to do next. Soon after the court's decision, Delaware and New Jersey legalized betting. Five more legislatures have since passed bills to do the same, and a dozen more are pending.

On October 25, 2018, the NCAA, which currently prohibits student athletes and athletic staff from betting on any sport in which the NCAA has a championship, announced the formation of a committee to examine the sports wagering landscape and any risks associated with it.

Unlike conventional gambling, real-time gambling allows bettors to wager on outcomes that are irrelevant to winning, losing, and point spreads. They can bet on a first down when the final score is not in doubt. They can bet on whether the next play will be a run or a pass.

Imagine the temptation and pressure on student athletes approached by unscrupulous bettors and bookies to throw an “irrelevant” single play.

Even more worrisome, college students not involved in athletics, alumni, and “fantasy” sports fans around the country may well find “the rush” of real-time gambling irresistible, adding to the mental health and addiction challenges already facing universities and society.

Indeed, a 2004 study by Dr. Howard Shaffer at Harvard Medical School concluded that the more rapid the cycle of bets, play and loss or payout in gambling activities, the greater the risk of developing an addiction.

As Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling, told the Associated Press in May, "Absolutely, categorically, there will be more risk factors for addiction - we've never had that much high-speed, high-stakes interactive access to any sort of betting."

It doesn't take an expert to conclude that the risks of real-time gambling are particularly worrisome for young people, who are already glued to their smart phones and steeped in a culture of online gaming.

What's more, if real-time gambling on college sports becomes acceptable, high-school or youth sports may well be next. Do we really want bettors wagering on an errant pitch at the Little League World Series or a fumble at a Pop Warner Youth Football Championship game?

We believe that state and university budgets and corporate quarterly earnings should not be balanced by betting on student athletics. Accordingly, we call on states to resist this temptation in their post – Murphy v. NCAA deliberations.

Since state-by-state variation is likely to be unworkable, we also call on government at all levels to step in to prevent college sports from becoming a gambler's paradise. If states do succumb to the allure of gambling dollars, we urge a ban on participation by anyone under 21. We ask our colleagues in colleges and universities to endorse a call for strict standards of enforcement.

The scandals and sanctions involved in college athletics have already put at risk the time-tested ability of college sports to inculcate values of competitiveness, integrity, individual achievement, and team spirit. Allowing betting on college sports will make things far worse.

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