

The Scholarship Divide

These articles are exploring the chase for N.C.A.A. scholarships, the scarcity of athletic aid, and the challenges facing coaches and scholarship athletes.

March 10, 2008

THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE

Expectations Lose to Reality of Sports Scholarships

By **BILL PENNINGTON**

Correction Appended

At youth sporting events, the sidelines have become the ritual community meeting place, where families sit in rows of folding chairs aligned like church pews. These congregations are diverse in spirit but unified by one gospel: heaven is your child receiving a college athletic scholarship.

Parents sacrifice weekends and vacations to tournaments and specialty camps, spending thousands each year in this quest for the holy grail.

But the expectations of parents and athletes can differ sharply from the financial and cultural realities of college athletics, according to an analysis by The New York Times of previously undisclosed data from the [National Collegiate Athletic Association](#) and interviews with dozens of college officials.

Excluding the glamour sports of football and basketball, the average N.C.A.A. athletic scholarship is nowhere near a full ride, amounting to \$8,707. In sports like baseball or track and field, the number is routinely as low as \$2,000. Even when football and basketball are included, the average is \$10,409. Tuition and room and board for N.C.A.A. institutions often cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000 a year.

“People run themselves ragged to play on three teams at once so they could always reach the next level,” said Margaret Barry of Laurel, Md., whose daughter is a scholarship swimmer at the [University of Delaware](#). “They’re going to be disappointed when they learn that if they’re very lucky, they will get a scholarship worth 15 percent of the \$40,000 college bill. What’s that? \$6,000?”

Within the N.C.A.A. data, last collected in 2003-4 and based on N.C.A.A. calculations from an internal study, are other statistical insights about the distribution of money for the 138,216 athletes who received athletic aid in Division I and Division II.

¶Men received 57 percent of all scholarship money, but in 11 of the 14 sports with men’s and women’s teams, the women’s teams averaged higher amounts per athlete.

¶On average, the best-paying sport was neither football nor men’s or women’s basketball. It was men’s ice hockey, at \$21,755. Next was women’s ice hockey (\$20,540).

¶The lowest overall average scholarship total was in men’s riflery (\$3,608), and the lowest for women was in bowling (\$4,899). Baseball was the second-lowest men’s sport (\$5,806).

Many students and their parents think of playing a sport not because of scholarship money, but because it is stimulating and might even give them a leg up in the increasingly competitive process of applying to college. But coaches and administrators, the gatekeepers of the recruiting system, said in interviews that parents and athletes who hoped for such money were much too optimistic and that they were unprepared to effectively navigate the system. The athletes, they added, were the ones who ultimately suffered.

Coaches surveyed at two representative N.C.A.A. Division I institutions — [Villanova University](#) outside Philadelphia and the University of Delaware — told tales of rejecting top prospects because their parents were obstinate in scholarship negotiations.

“I dropped a good player because her dad was a jerk — all he ever talked to me about was scholarship money,” said Joanie Milhous, the field hockey coach at Villanova. “I don’t need that in my program. I recruit good, ethical parents as much as good, talented kids because, in the end, there’s a connection between the two.”

The best-laid plans of coaches do not always bring harmony on teams, however, and scholarships can be at the heart of the unrest. Who is getting how much tends to get around like the salaries in a workplace. The result — scholarship envy — can divide teams.

The chase for a scholarship has another side that is rarely discussed. Although those athletes who receive athletic aid are viewed as the ultimate winners, they typically find the demands on their time, minds and bodies in college even more taxing than the long journey to get there.

There are 6 a.m. weight-lifting sessions, exhausting practices, team meetings, study halls and long trips to games. Their varsity commitments often limit the courses they can take. Athletes also share a frustrating feeling of estrangement from the rest of the student body, which views them as the privileged ones. In this setting, it is not uncommon for first- and second-year athletes to relinquish their scholarships.

“Kids who have worked their whole life trying to get a scholarship think the hard part is over when they get the college money,” said Tim Poydenis, a senior at Villanova receiving \$3,000 a year to play baseball. “They don’t know that it’s a whole new monster when you get here. Yes, all the hard work paid off. And now you have to work harder.”

Lack of Knowledge

Parents often look back on the many years spent shuttling sons and daughters to practices, camps and games with a changed eye. Swept up in the dizzying pursuit of sports achievement, they realize how little they knew of the process.

Mrs. Barry remembers how her daughter Cortney rose at 4 a.m. for years so she could attend a private swim practice before school. A second practice followed in the afternoon. Weekends were for competitions. Cortney is now a standout freshman at Delaware after receiving a \$10,000 annual athletic scholarship.

“I’m very proud of her and it was worth it on many levels, but not necessarily the ones everybody talks about,” Mrs. Barry said. “It can take over your life. Getting up at 4 a.m. was like having another baby again. And the expenses are significant; I know I didn’t buy new clothes for a while.

“But the hardest part is that nobody educates the parents on what’s really going on or what’s going to happen.”

When they received the letter from Delaware informing them of Cortney’s scholarship, she and her husband, Bob, were thrilled. Later, they shared a quiet laugh, noting that the scholarship might just defray the cost of the last couple of years of Cortney’s youth sports swim career.

The paradox has caught the attention of [Myles Brand](#), the president of the N.C.A.A.

“The youth sports culture is overly aggressive, and while the opportunity for an athletic scholarship is not trivial, it’s easy for the opportunity to be overexaggerated by parents and advisers,” Mr. Brand said in a telephone interview. “That can skew behavior and, based on the numbers, lead to unrealistic expectations.”

Instead, Mr. Brand said, families should focus on academics.

“The real opportunity is taking advantage of how eager institutions are to reward good students,” he said. “In America’s colleges, there is a system of discounting for academic achievement. Most people with good academic records aren’t paying full sticker price. We don’t want people to stop playing sports; it’s good for them. But the best opportunity available is to try to improve one’s academic qualifications.” The math of athletic scholarships is complicated and widely misunderstood.

Despite common references in news media reports, there is no such thing as a four-year scholarship. All N.C.A.A. athletic scholarships must be renewed and are not guaranteed year to year, something stated in bold letters on the organization's Web site for student-athletes. Nearly every scholarship can be canceled for almost any reason in any year, although it is unclear how often that happens.

In 2003-4, N.C.A.A. institutions gave athletic scholarships amounting to about 2 percent of the 6.4 million athletes playing those sports in high school four years earlier. Despite the considerable attention paid to sports, the select group of athletes barely registers statistically among the 5.3 million students at N.C.A.A. colleges and universities.

Scholarships are typically split and distributed to a handful, or even, say, 20, athletes because most institutions do not fully finance the so-called nonrevenue sports like soccer, baseball, golf, lacrosse, volleyball, softball, swimming, and track and field. Colleges offering these sports often pay for only five or six full scholarships, which are often sliced up to cover an entire team. Some sports have one or two full scholarships, or none at all.

The N.C.A.A. also restricts by sport the number of scholarships a college is allowed to distribute, and the numbers for most teams are tiny when compared with Division I football and its 85-scholarship limit.

A fully financed men's Division I soccer team is restricted to 9.9 full scholarships, for freshmen to seniors. These are typically divided up among as many as 25 or 30 players. A majority of N.C.A.A. members do not reach those limits and are not fully financed in most of their sports.

Ms. Milhous, whose Villanova field hockey team plays in the competitive Big East Conference, must make tough choices in recruiting. The N.C.A.A. permits Division I field hockey teams to have 12 full scholarships, but her team has fewer.

"I tell parents of recruits I have eight scholarships, and they say: 'Wow, eight a year? That's great,'" she said. "And I say: 'No, eight over four or five years of recruits. And I've got 22 girls on our team.'"

That can mean a \$2,000 scholarship, which surprises parents.

"They might argue with me," Ms. Milhous said. "But the fact is I've got girls getting from \$2,000 to \$20,000, and it all has to add up to eight scholarships. It's very subjective, and remember, what I get to give out is also determined by how many seniors I've got leaving."

Two Brothers, Two Stories

Joe Taylor, a soccer player at Villanova, received a scholarship worth half his roughly \$40,000 in college costs when he graduated from a suburban Philadelphia high school three years ago. He had spent years on one of the top travel soccer teams in the country, F.C. Delco, and had several college aid offers.

"It was still a huge dogfight to get whatever you can get," Mr. Taylor said. "Everyone is scrambling. There are so many good players, and nobody understands how few get to keep playing after high school."

In 2003-4, there was the equivalent of one full N.C.A.A. men's soccer scholarship available for about every 145 boys who were playing high school soccer four years earlier.

"There's a lot of luck involved really," Mr. Taylor said. "I can pinpoint a time when I was suddenly heavily recruited. It was after a tournament in Long Island the summer after my junior year. I scored a few goals. The Villanova coach was there, and so were some other college coaches. Within a couple of days, my in-box was full of e-mails. I've wondered, What would have happened if didn't play well that day?"

Mr. Taylor has a younger brother, Pat, who followed in his footsteps, playing on the same national-level travel team and for the same Olympic developmental program.

“He did everything I did, and in some ways I think he’s a better player than me,” Joe said. “But you know, I think he didn’t have the big game when the right college coaches were there. He didn’t get the money offers I did.”

Pat Taylor is a freshman at Loyola College in Baltimore. Though recruited, he did not make the soccer team during tryouts last fall.

“I feel terrible for him — he worked as hard as I did for all those years,” Joe Taylor said.

Their father, Chris Taylor, said he once calculated what he spent on the boys’ soccer careers.

“Ten thousand per kid per year is not an unreasonable estimate,” he said. “But we never looked at it as a financial transaction. You are misguided if you do it for that reason. You cannot recoup what you put in if you think of it that way. It was their passion — still is — and we wanted to indulge that.

“So what if we didn’t take vacations for a few years.”

Pat Taylor, who started playing soccer at 4, said it took him about a month to accept that his dream of playing varsity soccer on scholarship in college would not happen. He looks back fondly on his youth career but also wishes he knew at the start what he knows now about the process.

“The whole thing really is a crapshoot, but no one ever says that out loud,” he said. “On every team I played on, every single person there thought for sure that they would play in college. I thought so, too. Just by the numbers, it’s completely unrealistic.

“And if I had it to do over, I would have skipped a practice every now and then to go to a concert or a movie with my friends. I missed out on a lot of things for soccer. I wish I could have some of that time back.”

Griffin Palmer contributed reporting to this article.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 11, 2008

A front-page article on Monday about the unrealistic expectations of families in the pursuit of college athletic scholarships omitted a reporting credit. Griffin Palmer analyzed college and high school statistics for the article.

Scholarships: Slicing the Pie

Division I and Division II statistics from the National Collegiate Athletic Association show the average athletic scholarship to be valued at \$10,409. But in sports like baseball or track and field, which routinely award partial scholarships, a player can receive as little as \$2,000.

	NUMBER OF H.S. BOYS PARTICIPATING	NUMBER AWARDED	STUDENTS RECEIVING*	SCHOLARSHIPS		YEARLY VALUE PER RECIPIENT
				TOTAL AMOUNT GIVEN (IN MILLIONS)	AVG. % OF FULL SCHOLARSHIP	
Ice Hockey	32,166	1,089	1,369	\$ 29.8	80%	\$21,755
Basketball	541,130	5,949	7,545	126.0	79	16,698
Gymnastics	3,495	94	186	2.5	51	13,351
Football	1,025,762	19,549	28,299	367.3	69	12,980
Fencing	777	48	127	1.4	38	10,814
Skiing	11,854	69	143	1.4	49	9,783
Tennis	158,796	1,257	2,927	26.5	43	9,050
Lacrosse	35,266	551	1,723	14.9	32	8,670
Soccer	330,044	2,357	6,047	51.6	39	8,533
Swimming/ Diving	86,640	1,080	2,806	23.3	38	8,294
Water Polo	13,871	83	282	2.2	30	7,756
Wrestling	239,105	789	2,160	14.5	37	6,703
Track and Field/ Cross Country	713,305	3,112	8,414	54.6	37	6,491
Volleyball	35,915	129	416	2.6	31	6,360
Golf	165,857	1,310	3,662	23.2	36	6,338
Baseball	451,701	3,983	12,272	71.3	32	5,806
Riflery	2,274	15	75	.3	21	3,608
Bowling	10,110	—	—	—	—	—
Field Hockey	213	—	—	—	—	—
Rowing	2,186	—	—	—	—	—
Softball	1,484	—	—	—	—	—

	NUMBER OF H.S. GIRLS PARTICIPATING	NUMBER AWARDED	STUDENTS RECEIVING*	SCHOLARSHIPS		YEARLY VALUE PER RECIPIENT
				TOTAL AMOUNT GIVEN (IN MILLIONS)	AVG. % OF FULL SCHOLARSHIP	
Ice Hockey	4,245	423	529	\$ 10.9	80%	\$20,540
Gymnastics	21,620	411	512	8.4	80	16,478
Basketball	451,600	6,217	8,000	123.7	78	15,459
Volleyball	382,755	4,352	6,614	84.2	66	12,726
Tennis	159,740	2,293	3,506	44.3	65	12,629
Fencing	641	81	176	2.1	46	12,040
Field Hockey	58,372	699	1,680	17.6	42	10,464
Skiing	9,307	95	192	1.9	50	10,022
Golf	54,720	1,224	2,302	22.6	53	9,801
Rowing	2,359	958	2,295	22.3	42	9,723
Swimming/ Diving	138,475	1,935	4,247	41.2	46	9,702
Lacrosse	26,677	630	1,756	17.0	36	9,685
Soccer	270,273	3,964	9,310	78.2	43	8,404
Softball	365,008	3,637	7,877	65.0	46	8,255
Track and Field/ Cross Country	602,930	4,506	9,888	80.1	46	8,105
Water Polo	11,856	153	445	3.5	34	7,793
Riflery	775	61	171	1.1	36	6,292
Bowling	9,603	97	263	1.3	37	4,899
Baseball	1,354	—	—	—	—	—
Football	673	—	—	—	—	—

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N.A.I.A. Reports Aid Differently
By THE NEW YORK TIMES

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics also provided scholarship data to The New York Times. The athletes received an average of \$6,784 in 19 sports during the 2003-4 academic year.

But the portion of that aid that was dedicated specifically to athletic scholarships could not be determined because the N.A.I.A., unlike the [National Collegiate Athletic Association](#), does not differentiate athletic aid from other institutional aid given athletes. In the N.A.I.A., all aid from a college or university to a student-athlete is reported as one sum. Academically gifted students are also exempt from the aid counted by the N.A.I.A. using a set of established criteria.

In the N.A.I.A. in 2003-4, 42,730 athletes received aid for a total of about \$290 million. Football players made up the biggest group of athletes receiving aid, which averaged \$5,664 a player. But other sports distributed more per recipient, like women's soccer, in which the average aid package, athletic and institutional, was \$7,442. Men's basketball players averaged an aid package worth \$8,486.

Like the N.C.A.A., the N.A.I.A. has scholarship limits for its member colleges by sport. A football team, for example, is restricted to 24 scholarships. Baseball and the men's and women's soccer programs can award 12 scholarships.

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March 11, 2008
THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE
Recruits Clamor for More From Coaches With Less

By **BILL PENNINGTON**

The country's celebrity college football and basketball coaches lead nationally ranked teams on television, controlling a bevy of full scholarships and a sophisticated marketing machine that swathes college athletics with an air of affluence. They are far from typical.

More common is the soccer, lacrosse or softball coach who sits in a closet-sized office beside a \$100 air conditioner and a 12-inch TV, trying to figure out ways to buy the best athlete possible for the least amount of scholarship money, which can be as little as \$400. A jack-of-all-trades, this coach has a job that requires the skills of a stock portfolio manager, labor lawyer, headhunter, family counselor and soothsayer.

"There have been days when you feel like a used-car salesman," said Joe Godri, the baseball coach at [Villanova University](#). "I've always been completely honest, but you can't get away from the fact that the process can be crazy. You pump up a kid so much to come to your place, and when he agrees, you say, 'O.K., and what I've got for you is 25 percent of your cost to attend here.'

"And no one believes you, but that's a good Division I baseball scholarship. You have to convince his parents that you're being really fair."

The current cost to attend Villanova is nearly \$45,000 a year, and it has cost more than \$35,000 since 2003. The average [N.C.A.A.](#) Division I baseball scholarship, compiled from 2003-4 statistics obtained from the N.C.A.A., is worth \$7,069.

"It's like we have a salary cap from the professional sports model," said Godri, whose baseball program can dole out the equivalent of six full scholarships across four years. "Except we're dealing in thousands, not millions, and we have to stretch it across 25 or 30 kids."

Working against these college coaches is a perception in the hyper and driven youth sports culture that scholarship money is plentiful. Online recruiting services and private counselors promote the notion that some athletic scholarships go unclaimed.

In interviews with more than 20 college coaches and administrators at two representative N.C.A.A. Division I institutions, Villanova and the [University of Delaware](#), the coaches said they routinely encountered parents with an almost irrational desire to have their children earn some kind of athletic scholarship. Sometimes the amount is irrelevant, as long as the child can attend his or her high school's national letter of intent signing day and be feted in the local newspapers as a scholarship athlete.

"Parents say to me all the time: 'Can't you just throw her something? Just make her feel good,' " said Joanie Milhous, the Villanova field hockey coach. "I have to explain I don't have money to throw around. I think these families have just invested so much in private lessons, tutors and camps, they can't stand the thought of getting nothing at all back financially."

The Delaware men's track coach, Jim Fischer, added: "I'm somewhat amazed that the question of scholarship money always comes up, even when it's an athlete I haven't shown much interest in and who clearly isn't a college-level player. When I meet with them, I sit there thinking, this parent will never even ask about money because their kid would have trouble making some high school teams. But you know what? They ask for money, too."

Other coaches said athletes or their parents tried to be too wily in their scholarship negotiations.

“Families will try to play the coaches off each other,” said Kim Ciarrocca, who coaches women’s lacrosse at Delaware. “They’ll say that they’ve got a half or full scholarship offer from some school and want us to match it. What they don’t know is that we coaches all talk to each other, and we know the truth.”

She added: “We will call the other coach and ask, ‘Hey, did you offer that kid a full ride?’ When the answer is no, that kid might have lost the interest of two coaches.”

Godri said parents sometimes are misled by advisers who use the high-profile sports of football or basketball as a model for how to play the recruiting game. That is a mistake, Godri said, because the money in the nonrevenue sports is limited.

“The first thing people have to understand is that they are probably not going to recoup the money they’ve already spent on their kid’s athletic career,” Godri said. “But that’s what they are told. People get exploited. I wish people would relax and talk frankly to coaches. I’d tell them to lower their expectations, and everything will probably work out fine for all concerned.”

At the same time, the coaches concede that there is a competitive nature to the recruiting system and that they are not above using tactics to sway or hurry high school athletes in their decision-making.

Ciarrocca’s husband, Kirk, is an assistant football coach at Delaware. They discuss recruiting strategies.

“I think all the women’s sports have learned from the men’s sports, and right or wrong, we now do some of the things they do,” Ciarrocca said.

For example, if she is looking for a goalie, she might bring to campus each of her top three potential recruits at the position in the space of a few days. She said she would tell them that there were three players, that all three had been on campus recently and that they had a week to decide whether to attend Delaware. The first player to commit gets the scholarship money. The others do not.

“I’ve waited patiently in the past,” Ciarrocca said, “and lost all three.”

Coaches said the rules of this recruiting engagement were understood by anyone who had been in the game before. That is why coaches say they are happiest when they make their first call to a recruit’s home and find out the object of their attention had an older sibling who was recruited by colleges.

“Those people understand the landscape,” Milhous said. “If it’s the oldest child, I know it’s going to be harder.”

Among the principal things families do not know, the coaches said, is that there is a lot more money available outside athletics in the form of grants, loans and other institutional aid. In many cases, the athletic aid will be a piece of the financial package.

“The athletic money can also increase over time, because a good 17-year-old player can grow into a great 19-year-old player, and just about any coach will want to recognize that and keep the player happy,” said Godri, who has had two recent graduates drafted in the second round of Major League Baseball’s amateur draft.

For that reason, most coaches treat their pool of scholarship money as a reserve that must be strategically invested like a stock portfolio. And like a stock plan, it can be drastically affected by unforeseen outside forces — in this case, injuries and academic ineligibility. Other factors are the attrition of graduation and an always volatile position depth chart.

“Sometimes you have to try to predict the future, and if you think it’s easy, you’ve never done it,” Godri said. “This is why when a parent says to me, ‘You must have more money,’ I can say with a clear conscience, ‘There ain’t no more money.’”

Every coach interviewed said the battle over scholarship dollars would go more smoothly if parents and athletes did their homework and knew how few full scholarships the N.C.A.A. allowed in each sport (11.7 for baseball, 12 for field hockey, for example) and how few Division I institutions actually funded sports to those levels (far less than half). Most said there was an overemphasis on the potential financial benefit of a child’s athletic success.

“What they should be doing is attending the games of a college they are considering,” Milhous said. “Go sit with the parents of the current players. That will tell you everything. By the end of the game, they’ll know everything — good or bad. And that’s what really matters.

“But people tend to just focus on the money. They chase the scholarship and I’ve had several families come back to me a year or two later and say, ‘Chasing the money was a mistake.’ It sounds like a cliché, but there’s a lot more to being a happy college athlete than how much money you get. The money alone won’t make you happy.”

Griffin Palmer contributed reporting.

Playing Within the Confines

The maximum number of full scholarships allowed in an academic year to N.C.A.A. Division I and Division II institutions in the following men's and women's sports.

	MEN		WOMEN	
	Div. I	Div. II	Div. I	Div. II
Archery	—	—	5.0	9.0
Badminton	—	—	6.0	10.0
Baseball	11.7	9.0	—	—
Basketball	13.0	10.0	15.0	10.0
Bowling	—	—	5.0	5.0
Cross-Country/Track and Field	12.6	12.6	18.0	12.6
Equestrian	—	—	15.0	15.0
Fencing	4.5	4.5	5.0	4.5
Field Hockey	—	—	12.0	6.3
Football		36.0	—	—
Bowl subdivision*	85.0		—	—
Championship subdivision†	63.0		—	—
Golf	4.5	3.6	6.0	5.4
Gymnastics	6.3	5.4	12.0	6.0
Ice Hockey	18.0	13.5	18.0	18.0
Lacrosse	12.6	10.8	12.0	9.9
Rowing	—	—	20.0	20.0
Rifle	3.6	3.6	—	—
Rugby	—	—	12.0	12.0
Skiing	6.3	6.3	7.0	6.3
Soccer	9.9	9.0	14.0	9.9
Softball	—	—	12.0	7.2
Squash	—	—	12.0	9.0
Swimming and Diving	9.9	8.1	14.0	8.1
Synchronized Swimming	—	—	5.0	5.0
Team Handball	—	—	10.0	12.0
Tennis	4.5	4.5	8.0	6.0
Volleyball	4.5	4.5	12.0	8.0
Water Polo	4.5	4.5	8.0	8.0
Wrestling	9.9	9.0	—	—

* Formerly Division I-A; † Formerly Division I-AA.

Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association

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THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE

New Rules Threaten Sport's Tryout Process

By **BILL PENNINGTON**

Perhaps no college sport has better exemplified the undefined nature of athletic scholarship distribution than baseball, where some players traditionally received as little as \$400 a year while stars were awarded full scholarships.

For years, some coaches have signed a handful of high school athletes to what were viewed as tryout scholarships. For \$1,000 or less apiece, four or five players would be enrolled and then evaluated during the college's fall practices.

Those who were deemed good players were asked to remain on campus for the spring baseball season and might have their scholarships upgraded in the future. Players not considered likely to be valuable contributors would be cut from the team and encouraged to transfer elsewhere by the spring, which an athlete could do without interrupting his eligibility.

Baseball coaches and college administrators said such maneuvering evolved in part as an answer to scholarship limits. The [N.C.A.A.](#) limits Division I baseball teams to 11.7 full scholarships, but a college roster customarily has about 35 players. Since coaches are forced to split scholarships into small amounts, it is not unusual for players to be lured to a campus for as little \$500 or \$1,000.

"If some coach brings in four guys at \$400 and gets one keeper, that has been viewed as a good deal," said Joe Godri, the coach at [Villanova University](#). "He got a good player for \$1,600."

But Godri prefers the new frontier that college baseball is facing. Baseball-specific N.C.A.A. restrictions going into effect this fall will eliminate the tryout scholarship. All scholarships in the sport will have to be worth at least 25 percent of an institution's tuition and room and board.

Also starting this fall, any baseball player transferring between institutions will lose his eligibility for a year, something already in place for football, basketball, ice hockey and volleyball. And because the N.C.A.A. has said that graduation rates for baseball players were among the lowest in college athletics, the organization will soon require that players be academically eligible in the fall to play during the spring.

"This will be a lot more fair for all of us," Godri said. "Now everybody has to look at a prospect as someone you'll probably have for four years. You won't have people running off kids after four months just because they don't like them."

The new rules will also limit the number of players who can receive athletic aid on a team to 30 by 2008-9 and 27 by 2009-10. For the dozens of coaches like Godri who are not overseeing fully funded baseball programs, this last guideline may not be a major problem. He has the equivalent of six full scholarships.

But for the major college baseball powers handing out the limit of 11.7 scholarships, the new rule is highly controversial. Some coaches say they feel that baseball is being unfairly persecuted.

"We're the only partial scholarship sport with these kind of sanctions," said Mississippi State's longtime baseball coach, Ron Polk, who wrote a host of N.C.A.A. officials and college presidents an 18-page letter delineating his objections. "We're the only partial scholarship sport that has to have its athletes eligible two consecutive semesters and that has restrictions on how to distribute our scholarships."

"The new rules are flawed because baseball is not football, where they get 85 full scholarships for a team. In football, they can afford to have their kids all go to summer school to help their eligibility and their grades. Give baseball some of that money and we'll be happy to send our kids to summer school, too."

[Myles Brand](#), the N.C.A.A. president, said the driving factor in the new rules was the realization that while baseball players tended to enter college with higher academic qualifications than most other college athletes, their grades in college were poor when compared with their athletic peers.

Brand cited the fall semester tryout scholarship as a contributing factor.

“There were just too many athletes changing schools every year and never staying long enough to achieve academically,” he said.

Polk countered that the N.C.A.A.’s Academic Progress Rate, a measuring stick that assesses the graduation rates of college teams with penalties built in, would have ultimately penalized those baseball teams handing out tryout scholarships.

“Instead I’m going to have to dump five to eight guys from my team to satisfy the N.C.A.A.,” Polk said. “They’ll probably transfer. How is that going to help graduation rates?”

March 12, 2008
THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE
It's Not an Adventure, It's a Job
By **BILL PENNINGTON**

A few months into her first year at Villanova, Stephanie Campbell was despondent.

As a high school senior in New Jersey, she had been thrilled to receive a \$19,000 athletic scholarship to play field hockey at [Villanova University](#), a select, private institution outside Philadelphia. But she had not counted on the 7 a.m. start of every class day, something required so she could be in the locker room by noon to prepare for a four-hour shift of afternoon practices and weight-lifting sessions. Travel to games forced her to miss exams and classes. There were also mandatory team meetings, study halls and weekend practices.

She was overwhelmed.

“Plus, her roommate had a typical college student’s social life, while Stephanie was in her room on weekend nights trying to sleep because she had a game the next day,” her mother, Kathleen Campbell, said last month. “She came home crying.”

So Kathleen Campbell sat her daughter down, waited for a break in the sobs and said: “Villanova costs more than \$40,000 a year to attend. They’re paying you \$19,000 to play field hockey. At your age, there is no one out there anywhere who is going to pay you that kind of money to do anything. And that’s how you have to look at this: It’s a job, but it’s a great job.”

Campbell, 22, kept at it all four years, serving as a team captain last fall while majoring in marketing. She is expected to graduate this spring.

“I’m missing the sport terribly already,” she said last month. “But it was a ton of work. Receiving an athletic scholarship is a wonderful thing, but most of us only know what we’re getting, not what we’re getting into.”

Dozens of scholarship athletes at [N.C.A.A.](#) Division I institutions said in interviews that they had underestimated how taxing and hectic their lives would be playing college sports. They also said others share a common misperception that athletes lead a privileged existence.

“You know, maybe if you’re a scholarship football player at Oklahoma, everything is taken care of for you,” Tim Poydenis, a scholarship baseball player at Villanova, said. “But most of us are nonrevenue-sport athletes who have to do our own fund-raising just to pay for basics like sweat pants and batting gloves. We miss all these classes, which obviously doesn’t help us or make our professors happy. We give up almost all our free time. Our social life is stripped bare.

“Friday happy hour or spring break? Forget it. I haven’t had a spring break since I was a sophomore in high school.”

The athletes were interviewed over several weeks from a cross section of sports at two representative Division I institutions, Villanova, a charter member of the Big East Conference, and the [University of Delaware](#), a state-run institution that is a member of the Colonial Athletic Association. None of the athletes asked for or expected sympathy. They know there are many overscheduled college students who devote extra hours to academic and extracurricular activities or part-time jobs and internships.

“We love what we do, and it is worth it,” Poydenis said. “But everybody thinks every college athlete is on a pampered full ride. The truth is a lot of us are getting \$4,000 and working our butts off for it.”

The life of the scholarship athlete is so arduous that coaches and athletes said it was not unusual for as many as 15 percent of those receiving athletic aid to quit sports and turn down the scholarship money after a year or two.

“I came in with 10 recruited girls,” Stephanie Campbell said. “There are four of us left as seniors. Not everyone was on scholarship, but maybe half who left were getting money.”

Campbell said she had a teammate who wanted to be an engineer but that the classes and off-campus projects in that major clashed with field hockey practices and trips.

Katie Lee, a senior softball player at Delaware, said at least one scholarship player had quit the team in each of her seasons. Of her former teammates, she said, "I see them around campus, and they look happy."

Emily Schaknowski, a sophomore lacrosse player on athletic scholarship at Delaware, said 5 of the 12 women she entered with were no longer on the team. Most had relinquished their scholarships.

Joe Taylor, a junior soccer player at Villanova, said he was one of four left from a freshman recruiting class of 10.

"You wonder if you should try to talk them out of it," Taylor said. "But for most of those guys, it probably is the best decision to walk away."

At Villanova, Poydenis said he thought the defections resulted from the shock that set in after a youth sports culture ethos collided with the realities of college athletics.

"Kids who have worked their whole life trying to get a scholarship think the hard part is over when they get the college money," he said. "They don't know that it's a whole new monster when you get here."

His coach, Joe Godri, says he tries to warn recruits before they accept athletic aid. He tells them that being a Division I student-athlete is a full-time job. "It's not even close to being a normal college student," Godri said.

The Division I athletes interviewed indicated they devoted at least four hours a day to their sport, not counting the time it takes to play or to travel to games. Classes must be scheduled in the early morning to free the afternoon for practices and games. Practices often last from 4 to 6:30 p.m., although several athletes talked about how they had to arrive early for treatment of injuries or to have old injuries taped or harnessed. Highly competitive, demanding practices come next.

There is often a team dinner, perhaps a short meeting and a mandatory study hall in some cases. Weekday away games, which are common, can mean a bus ride that begins at 1 p.m. and a return trip that reaches campus at 10 p.m.

"You come back to your dorm room ready to crash," Taylor said. "But you've got homework or maybe a test the next morning. The rest of the dorm is starting to get a little rowdy because those guys have all finished their homework. They might be getting ready to go out. A lot of them took a nap in the afternoon."

College athletes routinely said there was one accouterment not often mentioned in recruiting trips but essential to the athlete's equipment bag: ear plugs.

"They help you sleep on those nights when you have a game the next day," Jamie Flynn, a junior soccer player at Delaware, said.

Many athletes tend to gather together in off-campus housing, so at least their apartment is quieter on the nights before games. Most teams have a rule prohibiting alcohol 48 hours before a game. The Villanova field hockey team, for example, pledges to not to drink alcohol for the entire season.

And the players police other teammates who might not be abiding by the rules about partying before games or practices. Jillian Loyden, a senior All-Big East goalie on Villanova's soccer team, said it was usually first-year players who slipped up.

"They get to college and want to be normal college students on a Friday night," said Loyden, who has raided parties to usher first-year teammates out of a building so they would head home to bed. "You have to make them understand that our team is not a social club."

Athletes from the nonrevenue sports also customarily have to do extra work on campus to raise money to pay for equipment or apparel not normally financed by the athletic department, like warm-up jackets. Courtney Barry, a scholarship swimmer at Delaware, cut short her Thanksgiving Day break at

home last year because the swim team had agreed to clean the garbage from the football stadium bleachers to pay for some expenses.

For this and other reasons, college athletes often refer to students who are nonathletes as “normals” or “regulars.” When asked why, Stephanie Campbell answered, “Because we’re not normal.”

“Look, we are fortunate to be athletes and to get tuition money to do it,” Campbell added. “I have loved my time here. I’m going to get a prestigious degree, and I know there are a lot of people who would have wanted to trade places with me. But I’d still say Division I athletics is not meant for everybody. Nobody tells you that.”

Campbell, who was an All-Big East selection in her final season, has gone back to her hometown, Gibbsboro in South Jersey, to help coach the club team she played for as a youngster.

“I worry about the kids I see now, because they’re under so much stress to get something out of field hockey,” she said. “You can never lose sight of why you play. Yes, I got a scholarship, but in the end, I put up with the sore muscles, lost sleep and everything else because I loved playing that much.”

These days, she is trying to make up for lost time on the business networking front, attending vocational seminars and fairs aimed at easing college graduates into the workplace. It is a new game for Campbell.

“Well, I’m graduating in May,” she said. “I need a job.”

Griffin Palmer contributed reporting.

March 12, 2008

THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE

Divvying Scholarship Dollars Can Divide a Team

By **BILL PENNINGTON**

An athlete's worth to a college is often negotiated behind the closed door of a coach's office with the scholarship amount kept a guarded secret, like a salary in a workplace. But the figures have a way of eventually getting out, as they do in any office.

What happens next is not surprising: scholarship envy.

"It tends to come out when someone is either playing really well or really bad," said Jillian Loyden, a senior goalkeeper on the [Villanova University](#) women's soccer team. "If someone has a few really poor games, you hear girls during a bus ride saying: 'And she's on 75 percent scholarship. What is the coach thinking?'"

Joe Taylor, a standout member of the Villanova men's soccer team whose athletic aid represents more than half his college expenses, agreed. "Playing badly and getting a lot of money will usually lead to resentment," he said. "I guess it's normal, but it's not very good for the team concept."

Cortney Barry, a freshman swimmer at the [University of Delaware](#) who was granted an athletic scholarship worth \$10,000 annually, added: "Groups can divide a team based on the amount of money everyone is getting. People talk about it secretly. They'll say: 'I'm faster. Why is she getting more money?'"

Barry, who has had a spectacular first season, wondered if the disharmony might stem from the competitive pursuit of scholarship money that began when the athletes were young swimmers seeking the attention of college coaches.

"I knew girls who had grown to hate swimming and hated just getting into the pool," Barry said. "They wanted to quit, but they felt pressure from their parents, who had invested a lot in their swim careers. It was a means to eventually get college money. Some of those girls are at other colleges now, and you know, it's like it's still about the money — am I getting enough?"

"You can never win that way. The real reward is getting to do your sport in college."

Coaches do what they can to keep the money issue underground.

"We ask them to avoid the subject," said Joanie Milhous, Villanova's longtime field hockey coach. "But we have a lot of girls who are roommates. It's a long year — how many things do you keep from your roommate?"

Delaware's women's lacrosse coach, Kim Ciarrocca, said she worried most about scholarship envy when recruiting players from the same high school.

"You don't want them comparing offers, because one of them is most likely getting less," Ciarrocca said. "You ask them not to say anything, but if the kids are close, you know they will talk. It's the same on a team."

Several coaches said the parents of athletes also sometimes compared notes on financial packages, usually with disquieting results.

But there are some teams that seem to have developed a culture in which scholarship money does not come up too often.

"We're friends, and I wouldn't ask my friend what her family income was," said Katie Lee, a senior softball player at Delaware. "Although I have noticed that everyone comes onto campus thinking that everyone else is on full scholarship. I was the same way. You do find out pretty quickly that almost no one is on full scholarship. That gets out right away."

Stephanie Campbell, a Villanova field hockey player, said athletes were instructed not to discuss scholarship totals for good reason.

“It tends to rank us and define our worth,” she said, frowning. “We’re supposed to be one team.”

Campbell, who received an athletic scholarship worth roughly half of Villanova’s \$40,000-plus price tag, had another perspective on the inevitability of players comparing amounts. She said it motivated and humbled her.

“There were girls on the team doing all the same work as me — driving themselves to exhaustion — and I knew they weren’t getting a lot of money,” she said. “I had so much respect for them. I thought, ‘Well, I can’t let up.’”

March 16, 2008
The Scholarship Divide: Readers Weigh In

To the Sports Editor:

As a track and field and cross-country athlete at the [University of Kansas](#), I, like many of the athletes featured in “The Scholarship Divide,” was often out of bed before sunrise, spent 8 to 10 days a month on the road and sometimes forsook parties and alcohol in the name of better performance.

My response to the “taxing and hectic” lifestyle of the college athlete was to pinch myself. Though many of my teammates received no athletic scholarship money, I received a roughly 50 percent to 70 percent scholarship, depending on the year, to play a game, to travel around the country (free) with my best friends playing that game, and to proudly wear the name of the school that I grew to love across my chest while I did so. To this day, it was the best “job” I’ve ever had.

It’s a shame that the same mentality that fuels expensive college board prep classes and application-padding extracurricular overloads has sucked the fun out of children’s games for so many.

Kevin McGinn

Brooklyn

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To the Sports Editor:

You hit many nails on the head without taking a side in the whole issue of college scholarships. As a college coach, I run into unrealistic expectations. They cause tension in the recruiting process and put pressure on the prospective student-athletes. My guess is that these expectations ultimately take the fun out of the sport for so many youngsters, and that may be the biggest loss in all of this.

Mike Glavin

Philadelphia

The writer is the head coach of men’s cross-country, and track and field at [St. Joseph’s University](#).

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To the Sports Editor:

I am the athletic director at a Division III university, which, of course, cannot give athletic scholarships. But since I arrived three years ago, I have noticed how the dream of the holy grail affects our ability to recruit student-athletes.

Our coaches need to wait until all the Division I and Division II offers have been made, and the youngsters and parents have time to accept (if they can) that their son or daughter is really a Division III player.

Dave King

Harrisonburg, Va.

The writer is the athletic director at Eastern Mennonite University.

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To the Sports Editor:

My husband has been a high school football and baseball coach for 25 years. Not only have we seen this situation over and over, we also have five children who play sports.

Our third-oldest boy just received scholarship money to play at a small private college in St. Louis, but it does not cover as much as most would think considering tuition costs. One of our other boys received a football and baseball scholarship that didn’t cover the full tuition, and room and board.

I am amazed what parents and their children think they deserve. I hope all of our children look back on their childhood with good memories and a healthy respect for athletics. Stephanie Bunton

St. Louis

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To the Sports Editor:

As a high school varsity soccer coach, your story on the minuscule odds of using sports to pay for college struck home. I often tell players and parents: if you want soccer to pay for college, make sure to put \$10 in a savings account every time you have a practice or game.

Dan Woog

Westport, Conn.

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To the Sports Editor:

Parents are spending more and more money each year on expensive traveling teams and private coaches for their athletic children. If securing an athletic scholarship to pay for college is the primary aim of these parents, they would be better advised to invest in stocks.

Sports can be a positive influence in the life of a teenager, teaching self-discipline and boosting self-esteem. But when the focus is on winning an athletic scholarship, the costs are too great. Few college athletes ever earn a living at their sport, so time and energy may be better spent finding the right academic program.

Sports can be part of the package, but it should never be the primary focus for student-athletes.

Deborah Dille

Oakland, Calif.

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To the Sports Editor:

One of the arguments for continuing sports scholarships, if not increasing them, is that athletic performance is measured objectively, through impartial statistics and observers. Academia, by contrast, must rely on standardized test scores to compare scholarship candidates, which often overlooks many challenges and accomplishments of in-depth student histories.

Courtney Hibbard

Pacific Grove, Calif.

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To the Sports Editor:

Why is it that athletics takes primacy over all other pursuits as the key that opens the money door for aspiring students? For every parent whose child is an athlete, there are probably as many whose children are exceptional musicians, dancers or artists. These parents have also sacrificed weekends and vacations to get their children to camps and competitions. Their children rise at ungodly hours to march on athletic fields or go to studios to practice. How many of them get scholarships? Judith Pollack Meyer Princeton, N.J.

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To the Sports Editor:

It is no surprise that parents are deceived regarding the chances that their children will receive sports scholarships to college. The local newspapers are filled with news that makes heroes out of successful high school athletes. When the papers spend as much time lauding the academic and artistic achievements of students, and intellectual competitions receive the same emphasis as sports tournaments, this may change.

Most colleges still emphasize the life of the mind when giving out scholarships. Instead of hitting the field, high school students are better off hitting the books.

Frank Louis Rusciano

Lawrenceville, N.J.

The writer is a professor at Rider University.

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To the Sports Editor:

The Delaware men's track coach, Jim Fischer, expressed amazement that "the question of scholarship money always comes up, even when it's an athlete I haven't shown much interest in and who clearly isn't a college-level player."

The problem is the obscene cost of higher education in this country. Parents and students can't be blamed for desperately panning for money in whatever improbable stream they think they might be able to find it. Donald Marritz

Gettysburg, Pa.

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To the Sports Editor:

As a single father and coach, I know too well about the time and money that is sacrificed for my three children to play sports. But the full ride should not be our focus; it's the ride you take with your children through life. The ride to the practice field, the ride to the game, the ride home after a loss or a victory. Sports allow us to bridge the gap between generations, giving us the opportunity to share in the lives and passions of our children. And in the end, if a scholarship is offered, that will just be the icing on what hopefully has been a great experience and a wonderful childhood.

Dana Provost

Newhall, Calif.