

Money For College Athletes

The issue of granting a stipend for the marketing, enrollment, game attendance, sales of school paraphernalia and other monetary gains that popular student athletes provide at hundreds of American colleges and universities is in the national news again—this time because of a recent suspension for illegal profits of Georgia Bulldogs running back and early Heisman Trophy candidate, Todd Gurley II.

Gurley, a junior football star, was reportedly paid \$400 by an autograph dealer for signing a few hundred school items during the spring offseason that are now being sold on Ebay. A violation of NCAA amateur rules that do not allow scholarship athletes

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to accept or seek payment or gifts for their autographs, appearances or popularity, Gurley was suspended indefinitely from the University of Georgia, who did not have a choice in the matter.

Once reports surfaced that Gurley was suspected of NCAA violations, the school could have been forced to forfeit their Saturday game against the Missouri Tigers, along with paying other NCAA fines and penalties. So UGA Director of Athletics, Greg McGarity, moved to shut down the athlete immediately, while school officials and attorneys uncover the details of the case



THE BLACK ATHLETE
Omar Tyree

with the NCAA.

I had just read a great article about this kid Todd Gurley II a few weeks ago. A reporter wrote all about his humble upbringings with a single mother in Baltimore, Md., who moved Gurley and his older siblings to Rocky Mount, North Carolina and later to Tarboro for a better cost of living and a simpler life “out in the country.” Gurley didn’t even have access to cable TV. It wasn’t in his mother’s family budget.

So this kid learned to work hard for everything. All he had was the love of his family, friends and football. His excellence as a high school athlete then paved the way for a grand opportunity to attend the University of Georgia, one of the premiere football schools of the south.

But once Gurley arrived there as a celebrated freshman, and had immediate success on the field, just imagine the difference this kid felt when hundreds of thousands of fans showed up to cheer and celebrate his name each week, while millions more watched on TV, bought thousands of his team jerseys, and began to ask him for his autograph everywhere we went. Only, Gurley could not make a dime off of anything, and he had to be very care-

ful about the wrong person inviting him out to a movie with buttered popcorn and a Pepsi.

Sure, I’ve heard all about the “free rides” of full scholarships that student athletes receive—now worth \$30,000 - \$80,000 a year. But I’ve also been there at the University of Pittsburgh in my own freshman year of 1987, and those so-called “free rides” are earned, because these schools will work athletics to death in order to win. So good luck with choosing a major that’s actually worth \$30,000 - \$80,000. Most athletes don’t have the time for it, and many coaches will tell them so—especially in football and basketball. Nor were these kids invited to school to focus on a major. They are recruited to play sports, while masquerading as students. That’s the hardcore reality here.

These are the many questions of execution and fairness that pop up. But at the end of the day, life is never fair. Is it fair that a rich kid can earn a full scholarship to school and call home to his parents for thousands of dollars each month, while riding the bench in soccer? At the same time, a superstar basketball player from generations of poverty waits by the school cafeteria door each day with a growling stomach, while the university markets his name, game and jersey for hundreds of thousands of dollars that he can’t touch, including the scholarship money that paid for the wealthy benchwarmer in soccer.

It’s all an insane argument that will need to be dealt with sooner rather than later. The NCAA will have to find a better way to make it all work—in fairness.

Tennis Shoes and Steaks Event

Portland Prime will give away 500 pairs of new shoes to local children on Oct. 18. Now in its third year, the Tennis Shoes and Steaks event will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Portland Prime restaurant, 121 SW 3rd Ave., Portland.

“The gift of a new pair of shoes can give a personal message of encouragement and can change a child’s life forever,” said restaurant owner Frank Taylor. “This is why our volunteers wash the children’s feet and give them a new pair of socks along with a backpack full of school supplies.”

After receiving their new shoes, the children will be treated to a hearty steak sandwich lunch.

“I feel so blessed to be able to do this event,” Taylor said. “Putting a smile on a child’s face, and making them feel good makes my day.”

Since Taylor started working with the nonprofit Samaritans Feet, Portland Prime has given away more than 1500 pairs of tennis shoes to children in the community, helping them put their best foot forward as they enter a new school year.

Portland Prime is open daily for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. It offers a happy hour from 4 -7 p.m., and dinner from 4 -11 p.m. The restaurant is known for its prime steaks and chops, fresh Pacific NW seafood and live music every Friday and Saturday evening.

We honor the many accomplishments of African Americans.



It is our primary goal as a labor union to better the lives of all people working in the building trades through advocacy, civil demonstration, and the long-held belief that workers deserve a "family wage" - fair pay for an honest day's work.

A family wage, and the benefits that go with it, not only strengthens families, but also allows our communities to become stronger, more cohesive, and more responsive to their citizens' needs.

Our family wage agenda reflects our commitment to people working in the building trades, and to workers everywhere. In this small way, we are doing our part to help people achieve the American Dream. This dream that workers can hold dear regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, creed, or religious beliefs.

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