Athletes Rights to Choose

Athletes should have the right to choose for themselves whether or not they are ready to become professional athletes. It’s their lives, their bodies, and it should be their choice. Organizations like the NCAA, make millions of dollars annually off of young athletes and their likeness. Those organizations should not be standing in the way of athletes profiting of their talents. Many young athletes have families and could benefit from the monetary gains. It is not an easy road to becoming a professional athlete, but many athletes have jumped from high school to professional leagues without problems. An age requirement with a college claus currently blocks young athletes from making the leap from high school to the professional world.

The NFL and the NCAA have an age requirement barring young athletes from becoming professional athletes right after high school. Currently the NFL is the only sport which requires the longest college stay. “To be eligible for the draft, players must have been out of high school for at least three years and must have used up their college eligibility before the start of the next college football season.” (“The rules of the draft”) If an athlete forgoes college and instead waits out the three years they lessen their chances of becoming part of the NFL. The NFL uses colleges and Universities to weed out athletes. These young athletes make millions of dollars for their respective Colleges and Universities but they don’t receive a share of that profit. There are scholarships available but very few are full ride and others are far less than what the athlete needs to succeed.

An athlete named Maurice Clarett played high school and college football before he was suspended from his college team for accepting “improper benefits”. Clarette then tried to enter the NFL draft early. He was unsuccessful because of the current three year rule. He decided to sue the NFL. His case went all the way up to the Supreme Court but they sided with the NFL. “The Supreme Court treated the NFL age requirement as a valid eligibility requirement under U.S. labor law”. (Bianchi) A lower court sided with Clarett but he still wouldn’t get a chance to be drafted until 2005. Clarett was drafted by the Denver Broncos but was cut during training. If he had been able to be drafted right out of high school he would have had a better chance at playing professionally. He could have cashed in on his talents early but the age requirement kept him from the NFL. (“Maurice Clarett Lost His Way”)

Young athletes are not able to join the professional sports world because they are deemed too immature or not physically developed enough. At eighteen a young person is considered an adult. They can join the military, vote, go to college or join the workforce. Why is it that they can do all of this but are banned from playing sports until they have completed three years of college? The argument that they are too immature is not a valid one because if they are mature enough to fight our wars, they are mature enough to play professional sports. It is their lives and their bodies, no organization should tell them they are not mature enough to make that decision for themselves.

It’s argued that having a degree to fall back on to support a family will help an athlete in the future. There is a “good thirty plus years post sports life” to think about. ( Hill) Failing to have age restrictions with a college claus sets athletes up for failure. If they do make it to the pros very few are successful, and the athlete is worse off in the end. The reality is that becoming a professional athlete isn’t the easiest road to follow. Very few athletes are talented enough to make a career out of playing professionally. Less than 10% of NCAA athletes make it to the professional level in baseball. (Estimated Probability of Competing) Of the NCAA Basketball athletes 1.9 percent make it to the Major Pros and Football isn’t far behind with only 1.5% making it to the Major Pros. (Estimated Probability of Competing) Athletes who chose not to go to college have an even smaller chance of making it to the professional level. A typical eighteen year old is not mentally or physically ready to take on a full grown adult in a physical sport. (Estimated Probability of Competing) The risk of getting seriously injured is far greater when a young athlete goes head to head with a veteran professional. If an athlete is among the few who make it to the professional level and their time is cut short, they are barred from playing in amateur leagues. These young athletes need the development period to fine tune their talents before going pro. An age restriction would give these athletes a better chance.

An athlete should be afforded a chance to enjoy the monetary gains the accumulate for the colleges and universities. Also college isn’t for everyone. There are many successful athletes, CEO’s and entrepreneurs who either didn’t attend or finish college. The “fine tuning their talents” excuse is just a reason for other organizations to profit off of a player’s talents. This rule is not in the best interest of the player it is in the best interest of the college, universities and the NCAA. All of these organizations make billions of dollars off of athletes with little given back to the players in return. Yes, they get their names out there and an education but what happens if they get injured? If an athlete is no longer able to fulfill their school athletic contract they lose whatever athletic scholarship they had been given. Therefore, it is not in the best interest of the athlete. An injured athlete who cannot play in college will then lose out on playing professionally. The athlete loses out on their chance to profit off of their talents because of an age limit. If an athlete was to become injured while playing professionally they would still walk away with some form of monetary compensation unlike in college.

If an age restriction is going to be imposed give these athletes better incentives to go to college and receive a degree. College athletes are currently restricted from profiting off of their talents because of rules set forth by the NCAA and the major sports league affiliations. There are many scholarships available to student athletes but very few are full ride scholarships. These young athletes make millions of dollars for their respective Colleges and Universities but they don’t receive a share of that profit. Give these athletes better incentives to go to college and receive a degree or get rid of the age restriction. An age restriction does not benefit players. I think you can’t put a price tag on an education but that doesn’t mean it’s the right choice for everyone. Whether or not an athlete makes a career out of their talents it should be their decision to go to college or to join the professional sports world. An age restriction is not in the athlete’s best interest. It’s their lives, their bodies and therefore it should be their choice.

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