

Bohls: NIL and transfer portal impacts? Good for the athletes, bad for college athletics



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- Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick calls the current college sports landscape "a mess" and is troubled by the future.
- The NCAA is bound by state laws that vary widely and still wants federal intervention from Congress for help.
- Former Longhorn assistant athletic director Arthur Johnson, now the AD at Temple, said Vince Young would have commanded up to \$10 million in NIL market.

SAN ANTONIO — Grey Giovannine has been around the coaching block. A few times.

The 63-year-old former head basketball coach at Lamar and Division III power Augustana retired three years ago after spending a fourth of his 39-year career in Texas. He can still remember assisting Scott Thompson at Rice when the Owls knocked off Tom Penders' Longhorns at a wild Autry Court in 1992.

“Yep, March 5,” Giovanine recalled. “My wife’s birthday. It was 107-93.”

After moving on and taking Augustana to 17 NCAA Division III Tournament wins in five years — one more than North Carolina and Gonzaga in Division I — he stepped aside to enjoy life and work for a company that arranges team basketball trips to France and Spain and even a couple to China.

But he’s not so keen lately about the landscape of basketball and college sports in general because he sees an industry in distress.

He’s hardly alone as the sea change of name, image and likeness money and the ever-growing transfer portal have caused a whiplash transformation that has left many — maybe even most — coaches, athletic directors, university presidents and fans troubled by the direction college sports is headed.

Asked about the radical changes that are engulfing college sports, Giovanine said, “*Nobody* likes it. Nobody. I talk to basketball coaches all the time, big-name coaches, and not a single coach I’ve interacted with likes what’s going on.”

Nobody, he adds for emphasis.

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At least 52 companies set up exhibits for the trade show at the NCAA Convention — everything from Topspin360 pushing training devices to increase static and dynamic neck strength to private jet companies.

MOGL was the only NIL-focused company shilling its service on site, although chief athletic officer Brandon Wimbush estimated that 150 such firms have put their toes in the NIL waters.

Texas entered a deal last spring with Opendorse, probably the leading marketplace for NIL business because it has partnered with up to 206 schools at all levels, according to its website.

“We’re kind of the new kid on the block,” said Wimbush, a Notre Dame quarterback from 2015 to 2018 before transferring to UCF for his final season.



MOGL CEO Ayden Syal touts his company as the leading NIL tech solution firm and can point to its award as last year’s South by Southwest Pitch winner among its credentials. The company has signed up athletes from mostly smaller schools such as Winona State, Lincoln University and the College of Southern Nevada — but also Longhorns receiver Jordan Whittington — after going to about 10 trade shows a year around the country.

Syal says MOGL better positions athletes for the future as well as current earnings and focuses on its clients’ professional skills and individual platforms and issues such as contract reviews, merchandising and brand-building.

“It’s like LinkedIn for athletes,” Syal said. “When NIL continues to expand exponentially, our athletes will be more equipped in the knowledge of their value.”

Bohls: Chris Del Conte reminds coaches to show good behavior

They see the open playing field where rules are made up as they go. Wimbush said the two guiding rules are no inducements to sign or transfer — cue the laugh track — and no pay-for-play for on-the-field performances, such as a thousand bucks for a touchdown.

But when will come the first test case for a school that goes on probation for breaking either of those two regulations? It’ll happen.

“Somebody will be made an example of,” Syal said.

“When some school says here’s \$5 million to come play for our school, it’s scary and risky,” Wimbush said. “That can put a player’s eligibility and career in jeopardy. Hey, look at Drake Maye.”

Mack Brown’s quarterback at North Carolina was offered as much as \$5 million to transfer, Pitt coach Pat Narduzzi said publicly. Yet Maye denied it and stayed with the Tar Heels, maybe in part because he figures to be the No. 1 pick of the 2024 NFL draft and is also a legacy recruit.

“For me, I think college football is going to turn into a mess. They’re going to have to do something,” Maye told Sports Illustrated. “There was nothing to me or my family directly offered from any of these other schools.”

And what would Wimbush have been worth, starting at such a prestigious national school with its outreach?

“Any Notre Dame-playing quarterback would make you worth at least \$75,000 just for the platform you would have,” he said. “Hey, if I had even \$50,000 when I came out of school, that would have been a life-changer. But right now

it's as murky as you can get. NIL brought everything under the table to above the table, and that's good."

With limits perhaps. What table?

No one's really sure what's beyond the horizon, but they all hope it's better than this crisis.

"All of a sudden, the genie got out of the bottle," Giovanine said. "And there's no putting it back in."