

NCAA Native American Mascot Controversy

☒ The world of intercollegiate athletics is an interesting stew to say the least.

It is a mixture of money, a smattering of egocentricity, a dash of concern for the student athlete, a yet smaller dash of perceived concern for said student athlete's actual academic progress towards a degree and then brought together with a healthy dose of public perception and dare I say EVEN MORE MONEY.

Back in 2005, the NCAA decided that it would institute a new rule:

It self-decided (as a PR move I believe) it would strong-arm schools with nicknames or mascots IT deemed "hostile or abusive"; they would no longer be allowed to keep these nicknames.

This was targeted at colleges and universities that were currently using a Native American derived name and/or symbols.

Most of these schools were small with no strong alumni bases or financial incentive to keep their respective name and made the change without any fanfare.

However, there were plenty of major universities that were presented with a proverbial pickle.

Schools such as Florida State (Seminoles), Utah (Utes), Illinois (Illini), and, to lesser extents, Central Michigan (Chippewa's), Miami of Ohio (Redskins) and North Dakota (Sioux).

The first three schools are traditional football and basketball powerhouses whose revenue annually adds tens of

millions to their athletic department coffers as well as hefty sums reaching the NCAA itself.

From the schools above, Miami has changed its name to "Redhawks" with little to no opposition; North Dakota is in the process of dropping "Sioux" after 81 years upon losing its final appeal to the NCAA after many years while Florida State, Utah, Illinois and Central Michigan have kept their names after receiving "waivers" from the NCAA by proving they (currently) have the blessing and written approval of those respective tribes (Seminole, Illini, Ute and Chippewa).

Ironically, these schools (save CMU) produce millions of dollars in athletic revenue through large gate attendance, huge TV contracts and merchandising. Even more "ironic" is the fact that the NCAA actually profits twofold. It is giving the appearance on one hand of being thoughtful, respectful and politically correct while the other hand is taking fistfuls of dollars looking the other way. If they are going to enact any rule, then it should apply to all schools regardless of their circumstances. If not, then retract it.

The truth (in my opinion and millions of other fan-based polls) is that the NCAA should be involved in other things like policing an ever growing number of student athletes being arrested (some multiple times), making sure progress is made in the classroom and that graduation rates are strong (things it was actually set up to do in the first place).

Schools along with their alumni and communities should be able to decide for themselves what they want to be called. If a school thinks its current nickname is somehow offensive, then let it decide (such as Stanford University did in 1972 all by itself in dropping the nickname "Indians" in favor of "Cardinal").

If a school has a relationship with a certain tribe and they mutually agree that the name is acceptable, again let them

decide. But to force schools to do what you want them to do and then go and break this rule yourself (as the NCAA is doing) AND then on top of that, still profit from it, this is ridiculous to say the least.

A final footnote to this article.

One school (the University of Iowa) has even gone a step further in this. They have now decided that they themselves will also police the ranks and will no longer schedule a school to any athletic event that still carries a Native American name and its most recent victim was the University of North Dakota.

Even though again UND is in the process of dropping the "Sioux" nickname, this is still not enough for the Iowa Hawkeye higher-ups. So, a potential track meet between the schools was recently cancelled.

Yet another "irony" is that Iowa plays in the same conference (the wealthy Big 10) as Illinois (Illini) and they meet in every NCAA sanctioned sport, every year.

FYI Iowa "enlightened" brass: the term "Hawkeye" originally appeared in the novel, "The Last of the Mohicans" written by James Fenimore Cooper. In the book, the character named Natty Bumppo is given the word "Hawkeye" as a nickname from the Delaware Indians.

Maybe the university should consider beefing up its own literature and history departments. Talk about hypocrites!!!

Fortunately, I graduated from a university where this was not an issue.

Our mascot was a feisty chicken bred for cock-fighting to entertain soldiers during the American Revolutionary War.

OOPPS, maybe I spoke too soon. Let's hope the NCAA and PETA don't read this.....shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh