Big Ten Conference – Student-Athlete Issues Commission

Dear President Charlie Baker,

As members of the Big Ten Student-Athlete Issues Commission, we are writing to share our concerns about the growing use of proposition ("prop") betting in college athletics and the threat it poses to student-athletes. We are advocating on behalf of our teammates, competitors, and student-athlete peers across the Big Ten and NCAA.

While we understand that sports betting is becoming increasingly more common across the country and allows for states to generate increased tax revenue, prop betting presents unique risks at the college level. These bets focus on individual and team actions and performances, leaving student-athletes directly at the center of gambling outcomes and exposed to potential backlash.

One major concern is the threat prop betting poses to the integrity of college sports. When bets are tied to individual statistics or plays, it creates pressure and suspicion around student-athletes' performance. Even when no wrongdoing occurs, prop betting can raise doubts about effort, decision-making, and fairness. This damages trust in competition and puts student-athletes in a vulnerable position.

Given the amateur status of student-athletes, external pressures associated with prop betting can be magnified. These athletes are often young and more susceptible to influence, including financial incentives that may encourage them to perform in a certain way or affect specific outcomes. Prop bets are relatively easy to influence on the part of the player, should they be involved or influenced by the wrong people, but eliminating prop bets would help protect the integrity of college sports and reduce the external pressure on student-athletes.

Just as importantly, prop betting exposes student-athletes to increased and aggravated social media pressure and harassment. Many student-athletes receive angry messages, threats, or public criticism from bettors when wagers do not hit. This kind of treatment is harmful, unnecessary, and often relentless. It negatively affects mental health and distracts from both athletic and academic responsibilities. Student-athletes should not be blamed or attacked for the outcome of someone else's bet.

There are fans that sit behind the bench yelling horrible things when expectations are not met, and the keyboard warriors not in attendance send cruel DMs to players when bets do not cash out. Prop bets are a direct avenue to the overwhelming number of death threats that student-athletes receive if they "ruin a parlay" or cause a fan to lose their bet. Sports betting does not give anyone the right to dehumanize athletes. We are human beings over everything else - more than a jersey number, a stat line, or someone else's wager.

We believe protecting student-athletes must be a priority. Limiting or eliminating prop betting on college athletes would be a meaningful step toward reducing harassment, protecting mental well-being, and preserving the integrity of college competition.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to student-athlete welfare. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective and welcome further conversation on this issue.

Kind regards,

Big Ten Student-Athlete Issues Commission

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