

# Reconsidering the Use of the Term *Student-Athlete* in Academic Research – Article Notes

---

- I. Interesting point: the article mentions how Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) adopted the use of “student-athlete” and some Canadian universities previously sought admission into the NCAA, but Canadian educators have “**concerns about the potential corrosive influence of the commercial and professional aspects of U.S. college sport**”

## **Student-Athlete: More invention than Accidental Convention**

- I. The term “student-athlete” evokes the concept that college athletes are students first and athletes second
- II. “Student-athlete” was not created because it was more precise than “college athlete” or because athletes preferred the term—it was designed and introduced by the NCAA
- III. The term was created to convince workers’ comp. boards and the public that scholarships athletes are just like every other student and not employees

## **Student-Athlete Contrivance ± College-Sport Propaganda = Manufactured Consent**

- I. In order for the term to acquire social meaning and capital, it had to be delivered to the American public through an elaborate propaganda machine that was located, in part, within institutions of higher learning in the formalized positions of sports information directors and a burgeoning sport-media complex”
- II. “Student-athlete” was “soon embedded into all NCAA rules and interpretations as a mandated substitute for such words as players and athletes. We told college publicists to speak of ‘college teams,’ not football or basketball ‘clubs,’ a word common to the pros”
- III. With every media deal the NCAA, the propaganda of the term “student-athlete” is perpetuated and entrenched into college sports
- IV. “In other words, if it takes calling players who are essentially compensated for their efforts ‘amateurs’ in order to justify college football, institutions will find a way to portray student-athletes as amateurs”
- V. “Every time I sit in an NCAA Tournament press conference and hear the moderator—under orders from the NCAA—ask if there are questions for the ‘student-athletes,’ I want to jump up and ask them exactly what they have done to be students while the multi-billion dollar extravaganza known as March Madness has been going on.” – John Feinstein in *The Last Amateurs*

## **A Case for Ceasing To Use the Term Student-Athlete**

- I. Some academics and journalists have begun to not use the term “student-athlete” and encourage others to do the same
- II. **The term “student-athlete” itself tells you college athletes are not like every other student, or else there would be terms like “student-musician,” “student-artist,” or “student-engineer”**

- III. The prefix of student before athlete is also not consistent with other similar terms—for example, a “student teacher” is someone studying to become a teacher and “student nurses” are training to become nurses**
  - i. For the term “student-athlete” to fit, universities must alter their mission to include preparing students to become athletes and offer a degree in those specialties**