

In the Rhino's latest, amid the backdrop of the Final Four, he talks about the tyranny of the NCAA, who profit immensely off poor college athletes, the vast majority of whom won't go on to riches at the next level. The Rhino also references a bombshell of a story that came out this week. Allegedly, there was a NCAA basketball team that was set to refuse to play in the title game unless each player received \$50,000. Wha-wha-what? An interesting read.



Allen L. Sack and Ellen J. Sack

While checking out the SportsFilter site the other day, I came across [this critique](#) of March Madness by former New York Times

columnist Robert Lipsyte. While Lipsyte mostly rehashes criticisms of the NCAA tournament and big-time college sports in general that have become clichés over the years, there's a bombshell in the last paragraph.

According to Lipsyte, he once mentioned to hoops godfather [Sonny Vaccaro](#) that his fantasy was that the two teams slated to play in the NCAA championship would tell officials right before the game that unless each player received \$50,000, the teams would not play. Vaccaro responded that this came very close to happening a few years ago. In fact, according to him, one team had "t-shirts and statements" ready to go. They were apparently upset in the semifinal, so this never came off. Vaccaro didn't identify the team, saying that it was "their story to tell."

Now, I certainly can't vouch for Vaccaro's credibility, and a lot of basketball people think he's the devil incarnate. But I guess the credibility of his story doesn't matter to me--even if he was just blowing smoke up Lipsyte's ass, it's still one of the best ideas I've ever heard. I think it's criminal that everybody makes huge money off of big-time college sports except for the people who play them. If any team actually had the courage to do something like this, I think it would be the kind of earth-shaking event that people would ultimately compare to Curt Flood's [decision](#) to fight the reserve clause.

Oh sure, the chattering classes would probably react to something like this as further evidence of the growing rot in college athletics, and wax nostalgic for a more innocent time that never really existed in the first place. But despite that likely reaction, I've got a feeling that

once somebody stood up to the tyranny of the NCAA and the college sports establishment, the world of college sports would change pretty quickly, and for the better. Why? Because for the first time, we'd all be living in a reality based community when it comes to college athletics.

Acknowledging that college sports at their highest levels are big business and should be subject to the same rules as any other business is infinitely preferable to the current regime. At the very least, openly paying athletes for their services would put an end to the [cynical expressions](#)

of "shock" from big time coaches and athletic departments who discover that their star players are receiving "improper benefits" from boosters. It would also end the injustice of meting out severe punishment to the athletes involved in these scandals, while allowing the schools and coaches to escape responsibility for them. Last but not least, paying players would allow us to retire the Orwellian

[doublespeak](#)

that plagues college sports, most notably the use of the the absurd term "student-athlete."

The problem is that the current system works well for everybody except the 18 year olds who make it run. Until they force change, there won't be any. Final Four players of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains.