

# SPORTS



**Former Utah prep star is fired up in Raiders camp**  
Former Corner Canyon High and University of Oregon offensive lineman Jackson Powers-Johnson learns the ropes with the Raiders. > C4

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Utah fans cheer ahead of a game against Colorado on Nov. 25, 2023. A settlement with the NCAA could change operating procedures for Power Four schools, forcing BYU and Utah to adjust.

BETHANY BAKER The Salt Lake Tribune

## Changing the game

Your favorite college football team is about to pay players. What can Utah and BYU afford?

By KEVIN REYNOLDS  
The Salt Lake Tribune

The day BYU entered the Big 12 conference, athletic director Tom Holmoe stepped away from a midday celebration and gave a candid assessment of the future. Sure, the Cougars had just made it to the Power Five. This was the acceptance into college football's elite he had craved. But Holmoe already saw changes on the horizon. The day's celebration shouldn't be conflated with stability, he said. To him, any admission to the elite was temporary. How well BYU adapted to whatever came next would determine how long the party lasted. "This is a time in college athletics where it is not normal," he said. "There are so

many new features. ... I'm asking for creativity in every area [to keep up]."

Less than a year later, the most significant changes in the history of college athletics are knocking at the door. Or, more accurately, change is kicking down the door after a string of lawsuits and a multi-billion-dollar settlement that will give players a direct share of their schools' revenue for the first time.

The NCAA and its power conferences on Thursday signed off on the settlement that paves the way for university athletic departments to pay players themselves for the first time. A salary cap could be put in place for different leagues. It would be the closest model to professional sports that college has ever seen.

And schools like BYU, Utah and the rest of the sport have to figure out how to make it work or get left behind.

### How did the NCAA get here?

Over the years, there have been dozens of challenges to the college athletics model. But none made it quite as far as the House v. NCAA case that is currently the catalyst for all this. It is a class-action lawsuit that demanded the NCAA pay damages to former athletes who could not profit from their name, image and likeness before 2021. The damages could apply to players dating back to 2016.

The second part of the lawsuit revolved around the future and how players could

get some cut of the revenue generated by massive television contracts inked by the SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 and ACC.

Losing the case could have cost the NCAA a reported \$20 billion. Instead, it's led to a settlement agreement, where the NCAA will pay \$2.7 billion to former athletes for damages.

### How much will future athletes make?

Then there is a possible revenue-sharing plan to satisfy the future athletes.

Essentially, Power Four programs — who are benefiting from the multi-million dollar television deals — can opt into

Photo by PAYING PLAYERS, C7



ANDY LARSEN

## What's to like and not like about the Smith Entertainment Group's plan to 'reimagine' downtown

The research is clear: Spending taxpayer dollars on building sports stadiums is a bad deal. It's something I extensively wrote about a few months ago when the Legislature's bills supporting new stadiums were first passed.

But in the months since, Ryan Smith's downtown arena plans have changed so much that they no longer resemble that research. There's no new arena being built at all, just one being renovated. The sports and entertainment district no longer surrounds the stadium,

but simply extends two blocks east from it. The district also renovates the Salt Palace Convention Center, potentially unlocking new acreage downtown.

So what is there to like, and not like about the new Smith Entertainment Group plan — or at

least, what we know of it? Here's my take.

### What to like

#### Renovating the Salt Palace

Earlier this year, I had the chance to visit the Seattle

Convention Center for a math teacher conference. Yes, it was a total nerd move. But I was struck by how the new center, finished in 2023, was designed: up, rather than out. It lies on just 5 acres — one half of one Salt Lake City block — but goes up five stories to accommodate more exhibit halls and meeting space. Meanwhile, the Salt Palace takes up nearly 30 acres of land.

Shrinking the footprint of the Salt Palace and using that land for bigger and better things makes a lot of sense. So I really like the idea of containing the Salt Palace within one city block, and using the rest

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