



University of Utah athletic director Chris Hill says goodbye at the Huntsman Center on June 1, 2018, before climbing aboard a red Ute-branded Holiday Motor coach bus after 31 years on the job.

Monson

that they've come to some agreement. Basically, I don't like they're going to start paying athletes, and that's just the way it is, so may not like where that's going, but that's the reality. It becomes a professional look in some ways. But if they had some salary-cap pool of money that money needs to go through the universities so the schools have an idea of what their employees make, just like the professionals. But it's going to be divided up for gender-equity reasons. I don't see how that's going to end, unless the operation is separated. How you divide it will be related in that way.

Will the coming revenue-sharing with student-athletes, up to 25 percent of income, ruin some athletic departments?

That's a big fear. Or maybe it will do what we've all thought, that there will be 40 to 50 schools that are moving in a semi-pro view and the rest of the schools will be kind of back where they were. You can go through and distinguish the schools that are not semi-pro from those that are.

Where will the money paid to student-athletes come from?

Some realities — if it's a business, then it needs to be a business. Universities are going to have to consider not only where the money is coming from, but also where and how the money is being spent. For example: Do you need 85 scholarship — or I want to call them work-study people — for football or do you need only 65? The scholarship, in my mind, is awfully valuable. You've got places where it's an average of \$45,000 a year. And these players are going to have to go to school for a bunch of reasons, and does that count as some of their employment with that kind of money? And so, you know, it's going to be difficult to come up with. Schools are going to have to take a look at how they're spending their money and find other ways to generate more money. If you do it in the wild, wild west of NIL, maybe schools will feel that's going to have to be a part of where the paid money comes from.

Seeking sources for more funding to pay athletes and address other expenses to remain competitive, will private equity firms be welcomed as partners with athletic departments?

I've read a lot about that and I just feel like that's really going awfully far because I can't believe a private equity firm wouldn't want to have some say in how a college athletics department works. Administrators might be a little hesitant to allow a company to have a say in that extensive way.

Don't boosters already fill that role, play that intrusive part now?

It depends on what the AD's approach to it is, how they lay the groundwork and also what a president's support would be for that. I'm not naive about that. Boosters can have influence, but, at the same time, it's a whole lot different than them telling you what to do or how to do it. If the program's successful, boosters are going to support you. If it's not, they're not going to support you. But if they can outright make your decisions for you, you're done as an athletic director. I don't mean that in a flippant sense, it's just that if you're going to have someone not just make a recommendation on who you should hire as a coach, but straight tell you who to hire, if they have that kind of control, beyond just donating, it isn't going to work well for you.

What's the future of NIL money? Will athletes be university employees and get NIL money, too?

Answer: I think athletes will, in fact, be

university employees, and with NIL, it will be realistic NIL. Athletes won't get paid \$2 million for saying hello to somebody on the radio. It'll be legitimate advertising, then OK. Caitlin Clark, with her Nike deal, that's real. It's the ones that make sense, where the money is just transferred, that's not for what NIL was intended. If a player can have a legitimate advertising income, that's OK, in addition to the money they're making directly from the university.

Why have universities been hesitant to grant employee status to athletes? Is that a liability issue?

It's tradition. It's not popular to say this, but for the large majority of athletes, including football players, the academic model is important to them because if they leave college, even if they made money in college and some in the pros, when they're 26, if they don't have a college degree, all they have is a scrapbook in their hand, it's an old-school thing, people have hung onto it for a long time, but that's because it's true. For many years, we knew where all of this was going. The biggest problem is, universities move slowly, and they don't want to change. Where we are now is where we knew we'd be, at least at the top level. Not that people like it, but that's the reality and it should be accepted. It's a two-sided thing. Athletes getting paid and getting a college education can both be important.

You mentioned a salary cap. Will there be a salary cap? Can the money be balanced to make competition, especially in football, more fair? Right now, national champions come from a very small, select, predictable group of schools.

I don't think there's any way you can run college football without a salary cap. Lo and behold, the NFL has and is a fairly good business model. They have salary caps and I think that's the way you have to do it in college. Otherwise, it's the richest schools just buying teams.

Will cheating happen, regardless of cap rules?

They're going to have to take a hard look at that. What's funny is, where we were before, you couldn't buy a kid a hamburger and now they get a car. It's a lot different. But I do think there's going to have to be some control on the spending. If there were cheaters under an old system, there's going to be cheaters under a new system. You do your best to control it. Having some semblance of order with funding going through the university, at least it puts most schools on a level where they're competing in a fair way. But as I used to say to our staff, Ohio State, from the beginning of time, has more money than Utah and always will have more money. We just have to figure out how to get better players and better coaches to beat them.

You mentioned scholarships. Will there be limits on numbers of scholarships given or will it be limitless?

There will be limits. And I think there will be bigger scholarships for the non-revenue sports. That is, if it doesn't all fall apart and more universities simply drop sports. I like to think from the positive end that there will, in fact, have to be limits or there will just be warehouses of players stored up at certain schools. If a wealthy school has 55 players on a baseball team, that's a warehouse and that's just not going to work. Maybe that would prevent lawsuits. Well, there will be lawsuits, but hopefully not billion-dollar lawsuits that scare everybody away.

Will there be variances of pay according to the status of athletes and according to the sports they play?

If we're talking about business, and we are,

then, just like any business, the top-echelon players, the rainmakers for a company, they get paid more than the person who's on the line doing the work. In the football world, yes, you're going to pay a quarterback more than a third-string offensive lineman. The quarterback might be worth a ton, but most 18-year-old kids that are the other 80 percent of the team, then getting a \$45,000 scholarship and another \$20,000 to \$80,000 is pretty good. Players who are helping the team but not really moving the dial, will be treated differently than the top players. You can't have it both ways. If you want to make it a business, you've got to make the hard decisions on who gets paid what.

What will the conferences look like?

I've got my dream and I've got what the reality is. I'm hoping that football forms its own separate entity, complete with a commissioner. Do it that way, and somehow let the rest of the sports go back home with more money, maybe, but run within conferences like they once were. If presidents were to really look each other in the eye and say, "Am I doing the best thing for my softball team with what's going on now?" The answer is pretty simple that they're not. So, how do they maintain major football and have the other sports be more regionalized with their old league? Again, that sounds naive, but I think it's the right thing to try to do. Now, with this law case being settled, they're free to do some things that make sense. Separate football from the other sports. We all know football's a different operation that runs the deal. It should be separate.

Inside that equation, what happens to football teams outside the power leagues?

The same things that are happening now. They're not typically going to have the resources to beat those top teams, but they're going to have good competition among themselves. There are all kinds of schools that have good experiences paying their athletes and playing for championships. The gap is going to be bigger. The gap between the Ohio States, the Texas, and the Texas A&Ms that have over \$200 million budgets and the schools that have \$50 million budgets will widen. Now maybe it will be \$350 million versus \$55 million.

What will Utah and BYU look like in all of this? What about Utah State?

This is not I take a genius, but I think Utah and BYU will be in good shape because of where they are now and also because of their success and stability. Utah State will be the challenge. As it is now for them, though, that's not an arrogant thing, it's just the way it already is. Utah State has a wonderful program and they have support for their sports. Football has some good times. It will be hard for them unless they're willing to put a lot of university resources into a football program and the rest of the athletic department. But I don't see that happening. The reality is, the division is already there. It's just unofficial.

Will fans care or be troubled that college sports, or at least parts of it, is turning into professional sports?

There has to be an academic component. If there's not an academic component, then, it's just a company being run. I can't emphasize how boring saying that is for a lot of people, people who think it's all a fraud. But I can't tell you how many students that we had in football who graduated, who were first-generation graduates, and they didn't make it in the pros, but they like said, had a degree in their hand, not a scrapbook, and could help break a cycle of poverty or lack of education in their family. I found a social worker, but that's one of the great charges of the job, to see these kids come back, the ones who

maybe weren't the stars, it's a heck of a deal. I hope it's such that fans can still relate to players. The portal makes it a big difference, but if the fans can relate to the players, then I think they'll still be passionate and engaged.

Will the transfer portal, and its effect, stay as is?

The portal is a reality, but if you go to the pro model, you have contracts. And players will have to abide by them. Schools could develop some portal incentives. You go to the University of Utah, you play three years there, maybe you get another two years of an education or some kind of reward. Sometimes players switch to a major they really didn't want when they came in, and if they stay at Utah, maybe there's a way to incentivize them or help them get a degree in the area that they dreamed of having.

Are there additional or attendant things that will affect what college sports look like in the years ahead?

The money is going to make it difficult for a lot of universities, for a lot of sports. And they're going to be there, are they not going to be there? That's the thing that's on my mind. I don't want to be naive because that's a real struggle. How are schools going to maintain their sports with the challenge regarding where and how the money's coming. There's a thirst for sports in our country, especially college football. I don't want to discount that this is going to be a huge challenge, but finally after all these years there's a chance to try to go forward and get things done, to put up some guardrails on things, and also do what's right so we're not in this litigious [predicament] all the time. We've been in a kind of limbo, purgatory, whatever you want to call it, for years.

In the next 30 years will Utah or BYU win a football national championship, under these oncoming conditions?

Answer: I won't be alive in 30 years, so I don't worry about that. I don't care. I'll let that go for the younger guys.

Will Utah's population growth make a difference for Utah schools in their competitive success?

It definitely will make a difference. Some people come to Utah and they think we ride in hand carts, that we don't drive cars, but they stand and like it. As more people move here, there will be more eyeballs for TV, more money. Ten years down the road, it's going to continue to give the opportunity for schools to have more students, more interest.

Will the addition of more pro teams in Utah adversely affect college sports here?

Yeah, on the one hand, if we continue to grow, there will be more dollars, more opportunity for people to go to games, but if you add more teams, which is what people want, it cuts down the amount of recognition that goes to other teams. Each sponsor company has X amount of dollars to spend on advertisement, there's X number of people who can afford to go to games.

Are you certain the term "student-athlete" won't become more and more synonymous or hypocritical?

Because they're going to be a pro model of paying athletes, it doesn't mean you have to get rid of the student aspect of it. People roll their eyes when I say that, but, in fact, college athletes aren't as good as pro athletes. The product is different because you go to a university game with that connection to the school. The student-athlete is what makes it different. I like the term student-worker or work study. That's what it is. I've seen kids who come in and they're the first ones in their family to get a college degree. College sports can be a cycle-breaker. And that's big. That's what adds the romance to the games for the fans.

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