

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Business buzz from around the region

A Bold Proposal

It's been two years since the NCAA decided to lift its ban on athletes earning money through name, image and likeness (NIL) endorsements.

Through the appearance of NIL, that's led to millions of dollars being given to college (and high school) athletes, sometimes as a recruiting inducement, which is still a no-no. In most cases, athletes are compensated by collectives that operate outside of university systems and are not subject to NCAA enforcement.

Big Ten commissioner **Tony Petitti** spoke out earlier this summer during Big Ten Football Media Days.

"I've learned a lot about what NIL is and what it is not," he said. "What it is is a great mechanism for student-athletes to benefit from their name, image and likeness through real marketing opportunities. As a conference, we not only support but celebrate unlimited benefits from true NIL.

"However, it is important to say that much of what is happening now under the guise of NIL is not true NIL but a move to a play-for-pay system that is driving recruitment and the transfer portal."

Most coaches support the idea as an opportunity for college athletes with the highest profiles to cash in on the value they bring to their schools. Revenue sharing with athletes may be a logical next step, given the massive television contract windfall finding its way to college athletic departments.

One year ago, the Big Ten signed a massive seven-year deal — worth a reported \$8 billion — with **Fox**, **CBS** and **NBC** to broadcast football and college basketball games.

Michigan head football coach **Jim Harbaugh** recently said that if athletes, specifically football players, are fueling those deals, they should be sharing in the money.

"I want them to be treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve," Harbaugh said. "What I don't understand is how the NCAA, television networks, conferences, universities and coaches can continue to pull in millions, and in some cases billions, of dollars in revenue off the efforts of college student-athletes across the country without providing enough opportunity to share in the ever-increasing revenues."

It's a complicated system to figure out — some advocate for Congress to get involved to legislate a national set of standardized rules.

Rogers attorney **Tom Mars** is Harbaugh's attorney. He's also a nationally known college sports advocate, a **University of Arkansas School of Law** grad and a former **Walmart Inc.** general counsel/chief administrative officer.

He is never short on opinions. On

Aug. 28, he posted one to X (formerly **Twitter**) for his suggested two-step solution to NIL:

1. Cancel the NCAA
2. Call the Walmart Home Office in Bentonville

"Every year, the Walmart CEO and his leadership team solve a number of complex, long term problems ('opportunities' in WMT-speak) that are larger, more complicated, and more challenging than NIL. And the Walmart leadership team has never run to Congress looking for solutions to these immense 'opportunities.' Great leadership, a sense of urgency, and the ability to win the confidence of others is paramount to the success of any organization. Maybe that's why Walmart's gross sales are now >\$600 billion and the NCAA is the laughing stock of college sports."

That's a radical suggestion, sure, and maybe a bit tongue-in-cheek. But when it comes to college sports headlines, not much is surprising anymore.

Builder Milestone

In its 10th year in business, Fayetteville-based homebuilder **Baumann & Crosno Construction** reached a milestone on Aug. 31 when it completed and closed its 1,000th house in Northwest Arkansas.

Mike Baumann and **Michael Crosno** started the business in May 2013. Crosno said the milestone build is in the **Towne West** neighborhood off Ruppel Road in Fayetteville.

"It's a home we will retain as a rental in our properties company," Crosno said.

Crosno said being in business for a decade is fantastic, but he assumes even fewer builders have closed 1,000 homes in our metro.

"The fact that we are not a production homebuilder and lean heavily on the semi-custom side means we have completed several challenging infill, customs and multifamily projects, which makes [1,000 closings] even more special," he said. "I rarely drive anywhere in NWA where I don't see or pass by a community in which we have built a home." ▶

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