Should College Athletes Be Paid?: AFC Wimbly Womblys #85

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Hello and welcome to Hank Green games- Jo- not Hank. John. Manager. Wimbledon. AFC. Wimbly Womblys! Colchester. League one. Wimbly Lane.

(0:11) Um... Hi. That was a great intro. God, I'm so good at this job! I am the manager of the AFC Wimbledon Wimbly Womblys, a football team that exists inside of FIFA, to support an actual real life football team - AFC Wimbledon - in South London. That is my captain, Other John Green, who recently just declined a contract, worrisomely, as well as his husband did, Bald John Green.

(0:39) So for those of you who don't actually play FIFA, let me just tell you. Half of the challenge of playing FIFA is that your players are constantly trying to leave, um, as if they don't really love you.

(0:49) As you can see, we are hanging on in second place in league one. Um, the third tier of English football. We need to be in the top two places at the end of this season, because those are the automatic promotion spots, the promotions up to the championship, the second tier. Um... If we're in the third through sixth spots, then we have to uh, go to a play-off that is very nervous-making. And we have only done it once in my Hankgames history, and I lost.

(1:17) So! Um, I would really like to be in the top two spots. But! It is also March. Um, we have a very thin squad, and we had European football this year, as well as some pretty significant cup runs, so we are exhausted. Um, and that is not great for the team. Um, yeah.

(1:34) So we're really struggling right now, because we're tired and um, you know - it's just really hard to have- put out the same eleven to eighteen players every week. We have about eighteen players we can choose from. There is literally no left-back to back-up Callum Kennedy, so every week I'm just like, well, it's either gonna be a center back or it's gonna be you, Callum. So what do you want? And he just looks at me with his terrible haircut and he says "I guess play me, boss." Um, and then he says "can you please stop making fun of my hair?" And then I say "Yes! When you get a haircut."

(2:10) Um, so it's just- I dunno. I mean, we're gonna do our best, but like, this is always the difficult part of the season, um, for us, because- because we do have such a weak squad. So the run-in is always challenging... Particularly on world class skill level. But we're gonna do our best.

(2:29) Uh, today I'm gonna talk about whether college athletes should be paid. Um... This is a- I am not an expert in this - or anything - if you've watched me play FIFA, you know that I'm damn sure not an expert in FIFA - um, and uh... I also don't know the answer to whether college athletes should be paid, and I don't think it's, um... I don't think it's clear.

(2:50) I do think that they should get a cut of their jersey sales. They should be able to do paid autograph sessions. I mean, I think it's- I am troubled - and I think most people are - I am troubled by a business that is profitable to the tune of billions of dollars, in which the people who play the games that are um, that make the money, are not um, are not compensated for that.

(3:14) That said, I also think it's very complicated to figure out how to compensate them- some people would say they're compensated by getting scholarships to college, but that's obviously not in line with their value to the institutions. And they have to like, you know - I think it makes your academic life very difficult to have to play, um, play a major college sport, because, at that like, division one level, because there's- you know, there's a tremendous amount of time that's spent practising and spent traveling and going to games. And doing, you know, autographing sessions and whatever else you have to do as a member of the team.

(3:47) Um... So I think it's um, I think it is work, and I think it is work that's very lucrative. And I think it's work- um, and I think it's strange to do lucrative work and not get paid for it. Um, but there's also the question of, there's also, you know, this ideal that we've had for a long time, of the amateur athlete doing it for the love of the game. And um, there's something to be said for that.

(4:14) And there's something to be said for the idea that, you know, these aren't- these aren't people who are working supposedly. The people supposedly who are going to college! (laughs) Um... And, you know, people in college often have jobs, but they- you know, once we start paying uh, college athletes, you know- are there going to be more and more demands on their time, and less and less college? Now I think, to be honest, there's already maybe not enough college.

(4:40) Um, so I don't know! Um... There are a lot of things that clearly need to happen, and that are sort of scandalous that they haven't happened already, including um, you know, funds for healthcare - for long-term... If you get a long-term injury, um, and there's no disability insurance because you're not an employee of your university...

(5:01) Let's say that you're playing college football and you have a neck injury that results in you being disabled for life. Whether it's paralysis or just, you know- you can't- there's lots of kinds of work that you can't do because of your injury. Um, you know... You should- you- the college, um, or at least the NCAA should have a way of dealing with that. Um, they should have- and that should be true also for knee injuries - for any injury, um, you know. Those expenses should be covered. I think that's clear. And in a lot of cases, they aren't.

(5:37) Um. And then I also think- I also think that it's crazy that, you know, lots and lots of jerseys are sold for players, many of whom won't have professional careers, because um, you know, because of injuries or else because they aren't- um, you know, they don't have the right uh, set of talents that- that an NBA team is looking for, an NFL team is looking for... Um, and so, you know- their jerseys are being sold and generating millions of dollars of revenue, and they're not being compensated in that for any way. I think that's- that's problematic.

(6:13) Um. So I think- I do think that- basically I think "yes". I think if you're doing work for an institution, that's making that institution a lot of money, I think it's very, very strange all that you're getting in exchange is like, an ostensibly free education. Um... But of course, it isn't a free education. It's an education that, you know, is generating the university quite a lot more money than it's costing the university. So. That, to me, is not free.

(6:42) But I also- I also think that it becomes very difficult to figure out where- where you draw the line. Because there are a lot of college football programs, and certainly a lot of, you know, a lot of other programs, that aren't profitable. Like, you know, Butler University has a football team, um, here in Indianapolis, and that is not an institution that makes the school money.

(7:05) So... It's hard to um- it's hard to figure out where the line is, and then- and then- I guess the other risk is that college athletics becomes an even bigger business than it already is. It becomes even more revenue-driven. It becomes even more about um, even less about sort of, this very outdated but still somewhat powerful idea of um, of the amateur athlete, and becomes more and more about um, money.

(7:35) Um. And, you know, I think... Uh, you know, I'm not sold on- I'm not- it's a little strange- you know, in Europe, they don't have this idea. Uh, they don't have these huge businesses of college

athletics. If you wanna be a professional athlete, you go to a um, you sign with a club when you're quite young, and then you still go to school, and you still do school stuff... But by the time university comes around, you're either like, sort of on- you've either signed a contract or you haven't. Um, and then- you know, you choose your path based on whether you've signed a contract and... And it's- you know, that becomes your job.

(8:19) It's very strange that we have- oh! It has to be! And it is! Beautiful Bald John Green, from his husband! (sings) John Greens, John Greens, Bald 'n Other John Greens, they're the best forwards that Wimbledon has ever seen! (talks) I was trying to do a trick there but I obviously did it wrong. Anyway. Thanks for- thanks for- thanks for the goal, John Green and John Green.

(8:41) Oh, I love this team! And this is great news! To be one-nil up against Colchester is huge for us. It's exactly what we needed. It's the boost of confidence we've been looking for! Um, and there's Bald John Green. That get has no give-up in him!

(8:56) Um. So yeah, I think it's- I basically think it's complicated. Um, but I don't think that it being complicated is a reason to continue the status quo, which is clearly unfair.

(9:08) Ooh! (sings) Bald John Green, John Green, he gives it all for the team, upon his moustache we're keen, Bald John Green, John Green! (talks) That was a beautiful little celebration, wasn't it, Meredith? Where he played the violin? To the beat of my song. Well, I kind of- uh, yeah! He knows. He knows! He knows that I'm singing his name. He knows - he hears us. He hears us when we sing.

(9:41) Ohhh, it's two-nil. This is great! This is exactly what we wanted to do against Milton Keynes, but we lost our courage. I think really, like, the- the- the extent of the moment got to us. We never imagined um, we never dared to imagine, you know... That moving- kind of moving beyond- so far beyond that team that we'll never even play them again. We never even really have to think about them anymore. They're just a lower league club to us, hopefully in the future. And uh- that's assuming that we can get out of league one though, which is definitely not a decided thing.

(10:15) Um. Oh, it's a great move from John Green. Pass it! Mmm. I was thinking to- of a different pass. But! Never wrong to go to the patron saint of lost crosses. He knows how to cross it into the box! There's John Green with a- ahhhh. That was like some weird ninja stuff right there. I'd like to see a replay of that, because that did not seem physically possible.

(10:34) Um. So I- I think the- I understand- I guess I understand the argument on both sides, but I do think that it's really, really problematic to continue to offer so little- such little support to college athletes, who generate- who often come from low-income households, and who generate so much revenue. SO much money! Um, for the institutions they work for.

(10:57) I think that we need to take a long, long look at like- you know, is that fair? And if it's not, what is- what is more fair? Is it more fair to um, you know, to build a- uh, huge trust fund for medical expenses? And, you know, job training... Other- you know, other things. Is it more- is giving them a cut of uh, jersey sales, is that- is that okay?

(11:23) Would it be okay um- or would it be okay to just pay them a direct kind of stipend? Um, but if so, are you gonna base it on- you know, the size of the program... And then that just- it just- it's very complicated. So I don't know. I don't know the best way. But I know that this way is not a good way.

(11:41) Um. By the way, that's Mr Bean! He was on our team for a while, I think. Get there! Ohhh, dang it. I really wanna win three-nil so that our goal differential can get even better. We've got a fantastic goal differential though, 'cause when we lose, we usually only use by one, and when we win, we often win by a lot. Because we are the Wimbly Womblys! And when we start rolling downhill, we keep rolling!

(12:03) That was- narghhhhh! There is- (laughs) I mean, that's- you're interested in that guy, Meredith! That was very, it was like a- (laughs) that was a very strange- very, very strange thing that he just did. (laughing) It's sort of- it's sort of like a bond villain kind of gesture. Ohhhh, there's Mr- there's uh, there's Leonardo Moura. Oh, that's a Moura! And there's the great Seb Brown, also with a little bit of a weird hand gesture sort of creeping out.

(12:33) Ahhh, I love to give my players hugs! I love you guys! Give- yes! Congratulations, less Moore. And I like it when they give me hugs, too. It reminds me that they also love me. Maybe not as much as I love them, but they do love me.

(12:45) Thank you for watching! Congratulations to the Wimbly Womblys on a fantastic victory. Best wishes!