



NCAA vs. Alston: The Case That Changed College Athletics Forever

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NCAA vs. Alston began in 2014 when a group of NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division I athletes, under the name Alston, filed multiple anti-trust complaints against the organization, which governs almost all collegiate athletic programs and competition in the U.S. The athletes claimed the NCAA was violating the Sherman Antitrust Act, an 1890 law regulating interstate commerce and allowing the government to dissolve trusts and break-up monopolies.

In its initial ruling, the court for the Northern District of California issued a permanent injunction directing the NCAA to make their rules regarding financial compensation less restrictive. On appeal, the lower court decision was affirmed and the appellate court declared that the NCAA had violated the Sherman Antitrust Act.

Still unhappy with the outcome, the NCAA appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld the lower court decision – and ended the monopolistic restrictions on compensation for college athletes nationwide.

In his concurring opinion on the case, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh said, “Everyone agrees that the NCAA can require college athletes to be enrolled students in good standing. But, the NCAA’s model of using unpaid student athletes to generate billions in revenue for member institutions raises serious questions about anti-trust laws. In particular, it is highly questionable whether the NCAA and its member colleges can justify not paying student athletes a fair share of the revenues on the circular theory that the defining characteristics of college sports is that the colleges do not pay student athletes...”

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