

There's little to cheer for as the college football season begins

A Maryland player's death, coaches' sky-high salaries and risk of brain disease make it hard to be a fan.

By Fred Bowen

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I like most sports, but I am not looking forward to this year's college football season. Here are some of my reasons.

The Maryland scandal: On June 13, University of Maryland football player Jordan McNair, 19, died of heatstroke. He had collapsed two weeks earlier after an offseason workout. It has been reported that McNair was required to run 10 110-yard sprints. When he arrived at the hospital, his body temperature was a dangerous 106 degrees.

There is an investigation to see whether the way Maryland coaches treated players contributed to McNair's death. Head Coach DJ Durkin has been placed on leave while the university looks into the matter.

We may find out more from the investigation, but the Maryland scandal is an ugly reminder that too many people in big-time college football put winning in front of everything else.

Coaches' salaries: Last season, at least 20 college football coaches made \$4 million or more. Head coaches at 75 top-level college football programs made at least \$1 million.

It doesn't seem right that a coach makes more money than the governor of his state or the president of his university.

And while players receive scholarships that cover the costs of their education, they do not get paid. It doesn't seem fair that the coaches make so much more than their players.

CTE: Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is a serious brain disease caused by repeated blows to the head that people get in rough games such as football, soccer and hockey. The symptoms of CTE include headaches, confusion, memory loss and lack of anger control. The symptoms usually get worse over time.

In 2017, a study by researchers at Boston University who examined the brains of 53 men who had played college (but not professional) football found that 48 of the players — or 91 percent — had CTE. (The percentage was even higher for athletes who played in the National Football League.)

This doesn't mean that everyone who plays college football gets CTE. The individuals whose brains were studied had shown symptoms of the disease. After they died, their families let doctors study the players' brains. And some college players never show any symptoms. Doctors haven't studied enough of those brains to determine whether they had CTE.

But the study shows that young men who play college football are at some risk of getting this brain condition. And remember, unlike the players in the NFL, college players are not paid.

Scandals, coaches who make outrageous salaries and the possibility of players getting a serious brain disease: Maybe now you see why I am not excited about the college football season.

My question is: Why is anyone excited about the upcoming season?

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