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Fans use of Twitter in College Athletics

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Fans use of Twitter in College Athletics

Abstract

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Fans use of social media to follow athletes is becoming more and more popular these days and fans often use this as a way to attempt to get recruits to attend schools that they themselves are a fan of. The reasoning behind the research is that not a lot has been done on this topic and with social media becoming more and more popular looking into the fans usage of social media towards recruits is worth looking into. The fact that professional leagues and the NCAA have attempted to implement and enforce a policy against the illegal tweeting practices going on in sports attest to the need for further research, even though the NCAA especially has found it very difficult to enforce such policy.

Looking into the top 100 athletes Twitter accounts of the 2015 class showed a good idea of fans investment in these recruits decision, with an overwhelming majority tweeting about how amazing the athlete is and how they should come to their school. These findings are important because it is showing that fans are using Twitter as a positive way to reach out to athletes and want to be involved in the process. Another reason that the research findings are important is because the NCAA and other leagues could potentially look to adjust their policy so that the fan and athlete can still maintain that positive connection, and potentially only penalizing negative tweets towards the athlete or school.

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Introduction

The world of College football is big business today. Football teams generate millions of dollars for their schools and help fund many of the other athletic programs at their school. The star players on these teams can generate millions of dollars as well for their school like Tim Tebow, or A.J Maccaron. Institutions try to one up other schools to get high caliber recruits that players like these were to win National Championships, but do fans show some interest as well? With the increase use of Social Media fans now have access to these potential recruits personal lives and will often tweet at players to entice them to come to their school.

This research is important for a couple of reasons, first of all what these fans are doing is illegal under the NCAA rules and regulations. Even though very difficult to enforce it is an NCAA rule that is attempting to leave these recruits alone and let them make their own decision. Another reason why this is important is to understand how these fans are displaying their investment and is it really amounting to anything? In a negative way a crazed fan could be one of the reasons why a recruit chooses not to attend an institution, or a fan may be a reason the recruit does. There is not a lot of research on this subject other than we know fans are tweeting at the recruits, we know there is a rule against it, but there is no research on what it all means and why is it important. My research question is how do fans display their investment in perspective SEC football players' decision making via Twitter. There has been very little research that has been done on the content of the fans Tweets and this will be very beneficial to

look at as technology increases and the more money these high caliber recruits are bringing to these school.

Lit Review 1

-Use of Social Media

The use of Social Media in Sports these days is becoming more and more prevalent. Rules are even being put into place about athletes not being able to Tweet until a certain period time after the game expires and we have even seen players be fined for using Twitter during games. We see players verbally bash each other via Facebook or Twitter to avoid face to face confrontation, or players Tweeting about a player while he or she is in competition or after an amazing play has occurred. Social media now has to be a huge concern for players now more than ever, one wrong Facebook post or one Tweet can send people into a frenzy and create a lot of controversy. We even see fans getting in on the use of social media in sports Tweeting about players or upcoming events that a team has, or even attempting to sway players opinion on which school or professional team to play for. In an article entitled Why We Follow: An Examination of Parasocial Interaction and Fan Motivations for Following Athlete Archetypes on Twitter by Evan L. Frederick written in 2012, we see that the article attempts to uncover why fans use Twitter to follow professional athletes. The author used purposive sampling and a survey link was posted on Twitter and Facebook,

and a survey was done and data was collected. The results were fans follow athletes for a variety of reasons whether it be because of consumption, and the fan can get information about this athlete that they may not be able to get anywhere else, or Admiration because of the athletes celebrity status, promotion is another reason and the fan keeps up with the athlete for business purposes or because they buy products that the athlete endorses, or it gives fans a sense of community because the fan feels like they are more of a fan because they are closer to the athlete. This is important information because this really gives us a true understanding of why fans use Twitter and social media to follow athletes and this information can be used by athletes and their organization to even further the fans experience in sports.

In another related article entitled Social Media and Sports Marketing: Examining the Motivations and Constraints of Twitter Users by Chad Witkemper written in 2012, he studies what motivates and constraints influence Twitter use in following athletes. According to the article just from 2008 to 2009 alone Twitter grew exponentially from 475,000 users to over 7 million this is a 1,400% increase, and by 2011 well over 200 million (Witkemper 2012). As we can see because of this astonishing growth of Twitter users this is going to impact the sport world with more and more fans now having Twitter accounts. According to the article every professional sport league in the United States uses Twitter in some way, and often have pages on their team websites where the fans can follow the team on Twitter, to help the team build brand strength and awareness (Witkemper 2012). The study conducted indicated a majority of Twitter users in the U.S are between the ages of 18 and 34, therefore this age group is the most sought after by Sport Marketers. The studied then found these as reasons Information

Motivation this was fans staying up to date on all things new about the organization and the athletes, Pass-Time Motivation since Twitter is only 140 characters this is an easy way for fans to simply pass the time and send out a quick tweet or just check in on their favorite athletes, Fanship Motivation or the degree to which the person considers him/herself a fan having emotional connection to a team or athlete, and finally the Entertainment Motivation, which was simply that a fan is motivated to use Twitter as a means to gain entertainment about the team or athlete (Witkemper, 2012). All these were found as reasons why fans would engage in Twitter usage. There are however constraints in Twitter usage that this article also discovered. The article found three main constraints from fan usage of Twitter in consuming sports, intrapersonal or individual psychological states like stress or anxiety, interpersonal like social interaction people believe social media takes away from face to face interaction, and structural or intervening factors between preference and participation like participation, accessibility, or financial reasons. These findings are important because this article not only shows what motivates fans to use Twitter in the consumption of sport, but also why they do not which in some cases can be just as, if not more important because this provides opportunities for an athlete or organization to help fans overcome these constraints. Now lets look at this from the athletes perspective.

In an article entitled Understanding Professional Athletes' Use of Twitter: A Content Analysis of Athlete Tweets by Marion E. Hambrick written in 2010, the author took 1,962 tweets by professional athletes and placed them into categories to better understand why professional athletes tweet and what they tweet about. The author placed them in six categories, interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content,

promotional, and fanship. The study found that a majority of the tweets fell into the interactive category, or conversing with fans directly, which made up about 34% (Hambrick, 2010). The athletes that had the most followers sent the most interactive tweets. Second most 28% was diversion tweets or athletes tweeting about something other than their sport or organization, and only 15% were actually discussing their own team or sports (Hambrick, 2010). This study was important because it shows the content of athletes tweets and gives us a better understanding of why the athletes tweet to fans, and surprisingly from the sample we see that not a lot of tweets are really even about the athletes team or sport, many tweets are being sent just to stay connected with fans and be interactive. Another reason why athletes are using Twitter is recognition however.

In an article entitled H.S. Athletes, Colleges Putting Twitter, YouTube In Game Plan QB Brown Also A Marketer Social media Presence has become a must in the sports recruitment game by Tony Kontzer written in 2011, this article studies the use of Twitter to get an edge in recruitment that makes it easier now more than ever. The author examines a High School player named Boeing Brown a Junior at Brookfield Conn. High School. In the past getting your name out there was dependent on local media, coaches, and even your parents to get your name out there to have any shot of getting noticed by big time D-I programs. Now, athletes can simply upload recruiting videos to YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter create their own highlight pages and recruiters are all becoming involved as well. According to an interview conducted by the author to Brian Davidson the V.P of social media for the National Collegiate Scouting Association, who helps connect athletes and recruiters he says "Every recruit or coach has some

sort of media presence”, (Kontzer, 2011). Brown has a Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channel and has already received interest from more than a dozen D-I programs and his name is spreading amongst coaches in D-I across the country, which he feels would not have been possible without the use of social media. This is an important finding because its important for up and coming athletes to know how to get their name out there, and fans and colleges so they do not break any rules and colleges can stay competitive for these athletes. As we can see There are plenty of positives and some negatives that go along with the use of social media in sports.

This final article entitled *The Positives and Negatives of Twitter: Exploring How Student Athletes Use Twitter and Respond to Critical Tweets* by Blair Browning written in 2012, the article showed why students use Twitter and the positives and negatives of using Twitter. The author took a survey of 20 D-I athletes and analysis reviewed that athletes use Twitter for three primary reasons, keeping in contact, communicating with followers, and accessing information (Browning, 2012). The research found suggested that overall Twitter is a beneficial communicative tool for student-athletes however, negatives being fans can easily attack them via social media like a fan who tweeted at Ray Rice after loosing a fantasy game because of Rice swearing at him and saying be a man and start becoming a real running back” (Browning, 2012), athletic departments and coaches need to be instrumental in teaching athletes ways to properly use social media and being very careful what they say in social media, like when Britney Griner was playing college basketball routinely was subjected to tweets like “you know why Griner is so good at women’s college basketball? is because she is actually a man”, (Browning). This abuse also comes from fans when a player has committed to schools

and players have even been known to deactivate their social media accounts because of angry fans being so upset that a recruit chose one school over another, typically rival schools.

As we can see Twitter use is very prevalent in the world of sports today both by fans and athletes alike. There are many reasons why athletes use Twitter and as we can see from some of the articles is not necessarily just to tweet about his/her sport, but mainly to connect with fans. Athletes are also using social media to their advantage to get their talents out there where maybe they would not have been noticed by some of those coaches otherwise by posting YouTube channels with highlight videos, or Twitter and Facebook accounts posting about their performance or mini clips of them as well. Athletes need to be careful however with their social media use, the things they say especially the more well know the athlete is can be blown out of proportion and subjected to a lot of scrutiny from fans and even league officials leading to fines or suspensions. We see fans using social media to stay connected to athletes and follow them on a more personal level in order to become a more in depth fan. Fans also use Twitter to follow teams and these teams are using this often to create a link on their website for fans to follow them to increase their brand power and awareness for their organization. Fans also can use social media to attack players or organizations in harmful ways if a player says something they do not agree with or signs with a rival team or gets traded to another team, which is obviously a concern for leagues and the NCAA because this is using social media to harm athletes and rules are beginning to be put into place even though the ages of social media in sport are still at its infancy. Overall, social media is only going to become more and more prevalent in sports today

and as long as there are rules that begin to be set in place, fans, athletes, and organizations can use social media as a great way to further their connection with one another and be a great tool for many years to come.

Lit Review 2

- Fan Use of Social Media in SEC Football

SEC Football is an FBS division that stands for the South Eastern Conference in college athletics. In SEC football it is split up into the SEC west and east. SEC football has been a very dominant powerhouse in football for the last 11 years due to factors like money, media coverage, coaches, but a large part of that is recruiting and the players these programs get year after year. Many Programs get these players from in state or states very close to them. There is a lot of competition for these athletes amongst teams inside the SEC and outside as well. Fans get in on the action as well becoming very passionate about these athletes and can attempt to be a motivating factor in these athletes decisions.

These recruits can use their Twitter account to let fans know which way they are leaning, which coaches have contacted them, and what scholarship offers have come their way. In the first article a five star recruit Tim Settle says that 800 of his 1,500 followers are fans and they do encourage him to go to different schools which is a NCAA violation (Sallee, 1). This is just looking into Tim Settle's Facebook and Twitter

Messages and this is important because this shows what kind of people are tweeting at athletes and how fans respond to athletes leaning one way or another or attempting to convince these recruits to go to their school.

Going off of that article another entitled “Tweeting at College Athletes Everybody’s doing it”, talks about an extreme case where a fan actually threatened to commit suicide if the player did not go to his school. Good Bull Hunting conducted a research of Twitter accounts of these 2014 recruits. They analyzed mostly uncommitted recruits because they perceived that the fans could then influence them one way or another. They found that most of the messages were positive towards the players and responses to media personalities (cuppycup, 1). This article is important because it shows the reasons for why the fan tweets at players and what the fans are saying.

Fans often are very supportive of athletes when they are going to commit to their school but often when a player changes his mind and commits to another school there is a lot of backlash from fans on Twitter. In an article entitled Inside Look at How fans React to a decommitment on Twitter, it shows examples of how when recruits change their mind and go to another school the consequences on their Twitter account can really take a hit. According to Erin Sorensen players often receive death threats people have threatened players and gotten so bad for some players that they often are forced to delete their social media accounts because it gets so bad (Sorensen, 1). This is important to know about because it really shows the dark side and the negatives of fan use of Twitter to these recruits especially when they decommit.

In an ESPN article Social Distortion it shows more of the dark side of Twitter and how the NCAA rarely enforces the rules about fan involvement of social media to

recruits that are looking to attend a particular institution. According to Mike Stoops response to fan involvement he says that “all the outside influences I don’t think any of us like that, they know what they are doing that night, what movie they are going too, we like to recruit guys like we always have by building great relationships with people, and getting to know people thats important to that young man” (Crabtree, 1). This article is important because it shows the fact that the NCAA does not hardly enforce rules against fans use of Twitter to recruits and this article also gives a perspective on a coaches view of fans use of social media and how it is not viewed very highly in a coaches eyes.

In the final article we see how schools are reacting to fans use of Twitter in an article entitled Fans interacting with football recruits on Twitter is fun, annoying, sometimes creepy ... and an NCAA violation, Oregon Senior Associate A.D was commenting on how a recruit was down to four schools and Oregon fans were by far and away the worst when it comes to Twitter, he frequently monitors fans reaction to Oregon recruits and will often send letters to these people especially boosters and tell them to stop. This associate A.D says he would prefer his coaches to recruit the players and not have fans involved (Daschel, 1). This article is important because it shows a school and A.D’s perspective on fan involvement in a recruits selection process.

Overall, a fans use of Twitter to recruits is often cordial in nature, fans are often supportive of an athletes choice and even though it is an NCAA violation fans and athletes often have a fun time going back and forth trying to get athletes to come to their school offering them things, throwing them parties, and many other promises fans attempt to make the athletes decision easier to come to your school. However there are

some negatives when it comes to fans involvement in Twitter athletes decommitting and fans sending death threats and even threatening to commit suicide if a player does not decide to go to their school anymore. We also see that coaches are not too thrilled on the new fan involvement with athletes and Twitter and wish it would go back to the way things were. We also see a schools perspective and specifically an associate A.D's perspective and we see his attempt to monitor their schools recruits and even sending out letters to boosters telling them to stop what they are doing and let the coaches do their job and recruit the athletes themselves so that is what they are trained to do. Overall fans use of Social Media like most things is both positive and negative and with the NCAA kind of backing off and not really enforcing any of their rules when it comes to fan involvement in recruits via social media it is often up to schools like Oregon to monitor their recruits and what fans are saying to them, even though the associate A.D admits it is nearly impossible to do.

Conceptual Framework

For my two concepts for my research question I have social media usage, and fan use of social media in SEC football. This first concept Social Media means communicating or distributing information to certain groups of people. Social Media relates to the RQ It is important to my study because it is important to know how college sports operates, specifically the recruitment process and the impact of social media on it, also the rules that are associated with it and how they are progressing and developing in the NCAA. For the second concept of social media in sports it is important

to my study to understand fan and athlete social media use, and positives and negatives that are associated with increased use, and how it impacts the athlete, the fan, the organization and the league that the athlete, fan, and team are involved in. For the third concept, the fan use of social media in college football the important things for the study is the positives and negatives associated with Twitter use to potential recruits, and the view from the fan, athlete, and schools perspective. I am going to be measuring the content of the tweets whether it be positive or negative, the number of tweets, and the number of prospective SEC commits that these tweets are being sent too.

The variables that are involved in my study are social media, and fan use of social media in SEC college football. Social media needs to be defined as fan Twitter and Facebook use, and social media in sport. Finally college football is the athletes, recruiting process, and fan involvement particularly in social media. For the intervening variables is the Perspective year in High School of the athlete, the time of year that the tweets are collected.

All the variables are related college sport is related to college football because college football is a major part of college sport and social media impacts college sport and college football with increased fan involvement and positives and negatives of social media are reasons why NCAA has created rules against fan use of social media to potential recruits, and why college football A.D's and coaches and even athletes have many positive and negative things to say about it.

Methods

For my research question I am trying to find out how fans display their investment in potential SEC football recruits decision to attend a particular school via Twitter. The type of research design I used is cross-sectional. What I want to know about the population that I sampled is if they really do affect these potential student athletes either positively or negatively. Lastly for the main things I would like to know is the content of the tweets, what they are saying to these athletes. I have divided up the content into several categories, Pro School, Pro Athlete, Negative School, Negative Athlete, Pro School/Negative School, Negative Athlete/Negative School, Pro Athlete/Pro School, and Negative Alum. Who I am trying to get is SEC fans that tweet out to potential recruits, and I would like to get around 3100 Tweets of these fans because I believe this will be enough to find a common trend amongst these fans. There are also other non-content variables I will be looking for which is the number of tweets collected, number of response tweets I collected, time of day the tweet was collected, the player position for tweet, positive emoticon, negative emoticon, and neutral emoticon. The typical SEC football fan is a white male age 18-34 that lives down south. According to SBRNT, in 2013 out of the 116,399 fans ages 13 and up that attended or viewed college football games , 13,000 of those followed college football on Twitter. Of these fans 7.4% of them use the computer to follow and tweet, 11.4% use a smartphone, and 7.3% use a tablet. The fans that use Twitter are also the same fans that are college football fans, white males 18-34 (SBRNT).

How I accessed this sample is I looked up the top recruits for the class of 2015 on ESPN. The reason I chose to look at the 2015 class is to avoid researcher bias on older classes since I am a Florida Gators fan, The inconsistency of Twitter, and the 2015 class has just been updated so fans are storming Twitter. Then I looked up the athletes that have committed to SEC schools which was about 275 and looked them up on Twitter and found the fans that were responding to these athletes tweets, and looked at these athletes accounts and what they were saying. The data I tried to obtain was primary qualitative data through choosing 10 Tweets a day at random from 100 of these SEC athletes. I was seeing data directly from the fans Twitter accounts and specifically what the fans were saying towards these athletes. The types of answers I got to my questions were mostly nominal and open ended questions, some examples of these questions were how old are you?, where do you live?, what is your favorite SEC football team?, do you have a Twitter account?, How many potential student athletes do you tweet at?, and how many tweets do you send out to these potential recruits?. What I did with my data when I got it is gather the responses to the questions and see if there were any similarities in responses from the various fans that were sampled. I also wanted to see what the fans were saying and if the Tweets were positive or negative and how they displayed their investment in an athletes decision.

Results Quantitative:

The data I received was from fans that posted Tweets on the top 100 athletes Twitter accounts. The characteristics that I know about my sample, were that they are college football fans primarily of the South Eastern Conference. A majority of these fans

of the top recruits seemed to not know the players as much when they were Tweeting at them, but when Tweets were uncovered from further down the list that were not as sought after it seemed that more people that knew the recruits personally were Tweeting at them. The sample was representative of the population because the overwhelming majority of the 310 Tweets collected were pro athlete and pro athlete/pro school, this trend would have continued. An adequate number of Tweets, 310, were collected that could show a clear trend in the data that all college football fans would Tweet likewise.

Coding:

In the collection of Qualitative, Secondary data the use of codes was not relevant in the data collection. Collecting Tweets and putting them into a spreadsheet does not need codes to help retrieve the data. The use of coding is primarily in interviews and trying to quantify data, in simply looking at fans Tweets on Twitter it is difficult to figure out codes that could be used to help retrieve the data. The categories that the Tweets fall under could potentially be examples of coding in order to retrieve the data more affectively. These categories also have numbers attached to them in the form of the amount of Tweets that fall under each category.

Themes:

- 1.) Fans displayed their investment primarily through Pro Athlete, or Pro School/Pro Athlete tweets. This makes sense because if fans are trying to display their investment in these recruits' decisions to attend a particular institution it would

make sense to be positive toward your school and the athlete. Ex: “If we had you Dontavious we would be playing for the title this year! #Baylor.”

2.) Fans were Tweeting positively about the recruits and about schools. There were very few Tweets that were bashing other schools, or potential recruits that decommitted which was an interesting conclusion to the study. Stories of college football recruits have talked about receiving death threats from student athletes picking certain schools have happened especially if it is a rival school. Ex: “Jake, help us win back to back titles!!! #GoNoles.”

3.) Fans Tweets that were collected were primarily fans of the South Eastern Conference, and a few from the other major conferences like the ACC, Pac 12 and Big 12. This makes sense because the SEC is the biggest and most successful conference especially in recent years and a lot of these top 100 athletes will want to go to these schools so SEC fans will be after them. Ex: “Crimson Tide, no place like Alabama!”

The final list of themes arrived after the data had been collected and they became more apparent. The data showed several common themes as the pro athlete theme was apparent throughout the data collection. The first theme was arrived at simply by looking at the final data collection and seeing that 165 Tweets a majority of the data fell into the pro athlete category. The second theme arrived from seeing that 304 of the 310 tweets were either from pro school/pro athlete, pro athlete, or pro school showing that fans are

Tweeting primarily positive comments to these athletes. The final theme was again found during the final stages of data collection and seeing that many of these fans would put #Roll Tide, or War Eagles, showing that they are affiliated with SEC teams.

Discussion/Conclusion

What was found was that fans display their investment in a positive way and they primarily fall into pro athlete, pro school/pro athlete, or pro school. These fans are trying to influence these student athletes' decisions to come to their school and help these fans have a successful team for the future. For the first Lit review the idea of social media in sport becoming more and more prevalent is discussed and how the rising number of Twitter users will have an impact on sport. According to an article by Evan Fredrick discussing why fans follow athletes there are several reasons. The following reasons are information gathering, gives a fans a sense of community, fans will feel closer to the athlete, and admiration because of their status (Fredrick, 1). In answering the RQ these fans primarily were displaying the admiration, and becoming more of a fan as a reason for following these athletes on Twitter.

In going along with fans reasons for following athletes on Twitter, the motivation for Twitter users to follow these athletes is information motivation which is the fans staying up to date on all things about the athlete. Entertainment motivation is strictly a way for fans to be entertained by the athlete or team. Finally Fanship Motivation which is the degree to the person considers him/herself a fan and having emotional connection to the athlete (Witkemper, 2012). This research showed all three with Fanship motivation being the most prevalent. As for the other two fans displayed

information motivation by seeing which athletes were visiting where, how athletes were doing in their state playoff games, and how they did in the UA All-American game. Fans displayed entertainment motivation by sending tweets that talk about how awesome the athlete is, how awesome their highlight videos are, and just overall tweets about how entertaining the athlete is.

The lit review goes on to talk about positive and negatives in athlete usage of Twitter. Potential recruits can use athletes as a way to connect with fans, give them information about the school they are thinking of going to, post highlight videos, and as a source of entertainment (Browning, 2012). In collecting these Tweets there was a lot of recruits posting highlight videos and information about their progress towards committing to an institution. Twitter however can get athletes into a lot of trouble by the things that they post, or the things that fans post towards them. One example a recruit tweeting to some of his recruit friends to all come to Tennessee so we can beat the S**** out of Alabama caused a bit of a stir. Fans also have been known to tweet negatively toward student athletes when they decommit, even sending death threats and causing recruits to deactivate their accounts. In answering the RQ this was not a common finding and out of many Tweets only one talked about how a player was called trash by a fan, but no death threats.

Limitations of the conducting of research is athletes not having a Twitter account or having their Tweets be private. Other limitations is the farther down the top 100 the less fans care about where that athlete goes and the harder it is to find relevant Tweets. Another limitation is the time the research was conducted a lot of the top 100 athletes have already committed somewhere and fans have stopped displaying their investment

since it is not longer beneficial. The delimitations of the study were purposefully only picking through the top 100 athletes because it was hard enough finding Tweets in the top 100 if all 300 were used it would be a lot more difficult. Only using 10 Tweets a day for 31 days, this gave an accurate and convincing trend in the data and the RQ was answered successfully without having to look for thousands of Tweets.

Recommendations for future research are depending on the time this research is conducted switching to a different recruiting class may be easier if the current class is all committed. Only looking at the top 100 recruits that are uncommitted since it will be easier to find fans that are still Tweeting at an athlete to attend a certain school. Finally potentially looking at after the college football season starts and if fans still want a certain player at their school or are tweeting at a player that they went to the wrong school, possibly do comparison before and after research.

Overall, fans do display their investment in potential recruits decisions to attend a certain school in primarily a positive way. Fans are praising an athlete for his athletic prowess, or enticing him to come to their amazing school, or a little of both. Fans primarily in this research use Twitter for fanship motivation and fans will feel closer to athlete which the research shows. For further studies of this nature being careful about the time the study takes place for recruits commitment day, and choosing the right amount of athletes Twitter accounts is very important to the success or failure of future studies.

Abstract

Fans use of social media to follow athletes is becoming more and more popular these days and fans often use this as a way to attempt to get recruits to attend schools that they themselves are a fan of. The reasoning behind the research is that not a lot has been done on this topic and with social media becoming more and more popular looking into the fans usage of social media towards recruits is worth looking into. The fact that professional leagues and the NCAA have attempted to implement and enforce a policy against the illegal tweeting practices going on in sports attest to the need for further research, even though the NCAA especially has found it very difficult to enforce such policy.

Looking into the top 100 athletes Twitter accounts of the 2015 class showed a good idea of fans investment in these recruits decision, with an overwhelming majority tweeting about how amazing the athlete is and how they should come to their school. These findings are important because it is showing that fans are using Twitter as a positive way to reach out to athletes and want to be involved in the process. Another reason that the research findings are important is because the NCAA and other leagues could potentially look to adjust their policy so that the fan and athlete can still maintain that positive connection, and potentially only penalizing negative tweets towards the athlete or school.

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