
The Recent Historical Development of the NCAA

SKIP APPLIN

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From its inception in 1905 as a governing body for intercollegiate athletics until the Second World War, the NCAA was basically a discussion body with little or no means of control. Following the war, the NCAA shifted from the role of discussion body to that of a full-fledged policing unit and back again within a two year span, 1948-1950. Not until sufficient coverage of athletic abuses indicated grave possibilities did the NCAA membership act to protect the integrity of intercollegiate sport. To maintain the good name and prestige of educational athletics, the member schools relinquished their individual autonomy, adopted an effective regulatory mechanism in the by-laws, and established a full-time administrative director's position. In essence this allowed a small group, if not one man, to exercise a great deal of control on the executive, judicial, and legislative operations of the Association.

Since the final movement toward regulation in the early 1950s, the NCAA has engaged in two general projects of major importance: the attempt to keep intercollegiate athletics clean, and the attempt to control all amateur sport. Whether this has been a conscious effort on the part of the leadership of the Association is debatable, but the actions do indicate, as others have suggested, that the NCAA closely approximates the operation of a business cartel.