

NCAA Relaxes Rules To Allow Players To Gauge NBA Draft

By **Zachary Zagger**

Law360, New York (January 14, 2016, 3:56 PM ET) -- The National Collegiate Athletic Association said Wednesday it is loosening rules for student-athletes looking to enter the NBA draft to give them an opportunity to gauge their draft stock amid legal actions over the treatment of student-athletes.

The NCAA Division I Council, which oversees the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, announced that it had approved rule changes to push back the date by which college basketball players, or student-athletes, had to withdraw their names to after the Draft Combine and to allow players to enter the draft multiple times without losing college eligibility. The rule changes take effect immediately, including players who may look to enter the 2016 NBA draft.

The move is geared toward giving college basketball players the ability to gauge if they will be drafted by an NBA team and where in the draft, which impacts the size of their potential contract, to give the players better information in deciding whether to remain in school.

"The rule is a good idea because it provides men's basketball student-athletes the opportunity to test their dream of going beyond the stage of amateurism into the professional level without completely sacrificing their collegiate career, should they find they are not as prepared as they had hoped for the next level," Cody McDavis, a former basketball player at the University of Northern Colorado and member of the Division I Men's Basketball Oversight Committee, said in a statement.

The rule changes come as the **NCAA faces several legal challenges** to amateurism in college sports and over the treatment of student-athletes, with some pushing for players to be paid or receive compensation for the use of their names, images and likenesses. The NCAA has fought these efforts defending the student-athlete amateurism model of college athletics.

"I think it is part of a global effort of the NCAA to take a hard look at those rules which restrict amateur status and to clarify those rules where they may be more restrictive than necessary," sports attorney Tyrone Thomas, a member of Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo PC, told Law360 Thursday. "It benefits the student-athletes by allowing them to get more information while giving them the option to return to school and complete their education."

Beginning this year, basketball student-athletes will have until 10 days following the NBA draft combine, which will be held May 13-17, to remove their names from the draft. The combine is an event that gives prospective NBA players the opportunity to show their skills to NBA scouts through sets of drills and tests. Teams use the performance at the combine to help determine which players they want to select in the draft.

NCAA rules had required players to remove their name from the draft prior to the spring new recruit signing period in early April, which usually came before the combine. Student-athletes will also now be allowed to enter the draft multiple times "without jeopardizing eligibility and may participate in the combine and one tryout per NBA team, per year," the NCAA said.

The players will also be allowed to continue working with their college coaches until withdrawing from the draft, capped at the in-season limit of four hours a day for up to 20 hours per week. Rules had more strictly limited the amount of practice time following the season.

However, rules prohibiting college players from signing an agent are still in place.

The rule changes will create some uncertainty for college coaches and could also adversely affect incoming recruits as they may not know whether some of the players they are looking to replace are returning to school or entering the draft at the time they can sign their National Letters of Intent. However, the rule clearly benefits the current players.

"I think for prospective student-athletes, it is a bit of a wrinkle, but for current student athletes, it is generally good," Thomas said.

--Editing by Rebecca Flanagan.

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