Literature Review

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Author Note

Literature Review

For students involved in travel baseball or various other sports programs, the recruitment process to play sports at the higher level, college and beyond, can be very stressful. Playing baseball or other sports at the higher level requires a combination of the right mindset, field performance, hard work, and awareness of one’s own aims and goals playing at the next level. However, there are a number of other factors at play that are beyond the student’s control that has to deal with recruiter or coach’s discretion, the environment and the corporate issues involved, as well as whether investing into travel baseball or school sports programs provide sufficient returns. To investigate the multiple factors that affect the recruitment process for students to play baseball at the next level, a range of recent literature will be systematically reviewed to identify major themes which govern the process.

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## Recruiter Issues and characteristics.

#### Social Effectiveness and Personality.

In a study by Magnusen, Kim, and Perrewé (2014), the relationship between recruiting outcomes and recruiter characteristics are explored in Division I of NCAA. The researchers further examine how social effectiveness in terms of the recruiter's political skill determines the outcome of the recruiting relationship. For this purpose, the study measures two variables indicating recruiting outcomes, subjective and objective. Subjective outcomes include the recruiter's self-rated performance and satisfaction with the recruiting class, while the objective outcomes included the quality of the class which was recruited. The underlying factors were tested empirically through interviews of coaches and review of earlier literature regarding a variety of sports programs. The findings indicated that the social effectiveness, or the political skill, of the recruiter, was positively associated with the overall quality of the class they recruited. It was also associated positively with their own subjective performance in terms of satisfaction and performance effectiveness within the cycle of recruitment. Secondly, it was also found that behavioral traits and personality of the recruiter played an important role, in which attributes such as affectivity, trustworthiness, and knowledgeable-ness played a significant role, among which the personableness or affectivity was positively linked to recruitment outcomes.

#### Recruiter Assessment of Talent and Intuition

In a similar study, Gines (2017) attempted to identify how baseball coaches and scouts take decisions based on player attributes to eliminate or identify prospects for junior players. The study aimed to find out these attributes and talents that scouts are particularly looking for which indicate performance expertise among baseball players. For this purpose, the author used qualitative interviews from professional scouts who disclosed their psychological makeup and provided their views of what baseball talent is which influence selections of players for a higher level. An analysis of key themes from their insights revealed that the three particular aspects defined what talent meant for scouts. These included the dispositional mindset of the player with regards to their visual knowledge and comparative recall. The extra effort, adaptability, intellect, and instinct that the player demonstrates, and thirdly, the intuition, instinct or gut feeling about the player through carrying out a visual assessment of the player's general traits. Together these traits influence selection and are important factors to consider for students looking to play baseball at the higher level. Hence, selection by scouts involves reflective, intuitive, and visual components along with performance and statistical measurements.

## Financial considerations and Corporate Influences.

#### External Influence.

The role of external influences on college and high school sports is addressed by Dalton (2017) in this study, as to whether recruitment choices for higher levels are based on player characteristics alone or whether external influences are also involved. To be selected for a college game requires that the young athletes have distinct amateurism, however, corporate actors which provide sponsorship to teams, such as Adidas or Nike, often cover salaries of coaches, and travel expenses for players. These funding issues create issues with regards to fairness of recruitment and legality of the practice according to NCAA rules. The author suggests that NCAA principles which protect amateur players from exploitation by commercial and professional enterprises have to be followed to prevent any external influences in affecting recruitment and selection. Therefore to maintain fairness in player selection within college sports programs, any coaches or recruiters who violate these rules should be investigated and held accountable. According to Dalton (2017) preventing corporate greed from becoming further associated with college sports programs are important to end corrupt practices, in order to uphold the spirit of these games, and prevent exploitation and unfair selection of young athletes.

#### Cost of High Competition

In the study by Cox (2011), the role of organized youth sports in the U.S. is analyzed in terms of its emotional costs and strain on young kids and athletes, who are increasingly pressured to perform like pressures in order to generate bigger business. Although sports competitions are part of American culture, student and youth sports programs are initially intended to provide physical and mental health benefits to the participants. Studies indicate that student’s opinion of their coaches or the sport itself did not change from number of losses or wins. The type of coach and his personality was more important to young players then being on the losing or the winning team; however, findings from the study indicate that young players feel more liked by their coach and parents when on the winning side. Thus, winning is more important for adults than it is for the young students who increasingly want to see them play like professionals. As a result of the corporate and social expectations involved, the skill instruction and encouragement desired by young players is replaced by the need to ‘perform' in these events. This indicates that there are more forces at play than just competing to gain skill and play at the higher level.

#### Effect of Environment.

In this study, the effect of construction expenses of stadiums is examined in terms of attendance and team performance in travel baseball and college baseball events. Popp, Richards, & Weight, (2018) examine whether remodeled and improved facilities for baseball improve home winning percentages, recruiting rankings and attendance and whether any difference in these variables arise from building new stadiums for college baseball events as opposed to renovating existing facilities. For this purpose, the researchers used a sample of 41 Division I, NCAA baseball programs for which either a new stadium was built or a major renovation had been performed for an existing baseball facility, during the time between 2007 and 2013. The findings from the study indicated that improving facilities helped more recruits who played at the higher level commit to their programs; however, it also correlated with a decreased average ratings of the same recruits. Moreover, winning percentages were not impacted by construction projects; however, it managed to bring a significant change in terms of attendance. This implies that for students or travel ball players looking to play at a higher level, improved facilities are not as significant in terms of enhancing player skills or performance

## Importance of Travel Baseball

#### Success at Higher Levels

One of the most significant studies in this regard was conducted by Ogden and Warneke (2010) who tested the assumption that travel baseball or select baseball serves as an avenue for students to play at the higher competitive level, and whether travel baseball serves as the beginning of the pipeline for students to play baseball at the college level and beyond. The study comes in the wake of the findings that parents and institutions allocate a significant amount of time and resources to accommodate participations of students. For this purpose, the authors surveyed 488 players within 18 universities and colleges across the nation and found that almost 90% of the players at higher levels had played travel baseball when they were young. Hence, there is a clear indication of the fact that travel baseball or select baseball is the route students need to take to reach higher competitive levels. The findings also indicated that the basic skills and knowledge needed to play baseball at the higher competitive level required position-specific skills, such as for pitchers, catchers, and shortstops to develop at an early age. Therefore, coaches, coordinators as well as parents should let young athletes take advantage of the opportunities from travel baseball to reach higher levels.

#### Cost-Benefit Analysis.

Jackson (2016) studies the cost-benefit analysis of the spending on college sports. Travel baseball is considered as unfair that not every family is able to shell out a lot of money for travel sports of their kids to provide their child with better opportunities for making school teams. Travel sports include expenses of being on a team because it needs uniforms, equipment cost and the cost of travel such as hotels and lessons cost. The truth about travel sports is that it is just the symbol of status, encouraged by parents and justified by the fees collector, which makes the baseball the game of wealthy suburbia. However, in some cases travel sports investment is worth the risk to provide the child with the opportunity to participate in sports in college and eventually in the leagues. The results of the study reveal from the numbers that 88.5% of the students not even going to college to participate in baseball, so it is not useful to spend about $40,000 on travel sports rather save them which guarantees the child that he would be able to play baseball at college one day.

#### Politics within student level baseball

The study by Spearman (2013) aimed to understand the requirements needed to compete at the developmental level of the game, for this purpose qualitative approach was employed which explored the training background of baseball players at 10 NCAA Division I. To proceed with the research following questions were used, a-what is the background of players in terms of their training, b- how do the players reflect on the unequal distribution, exclusivity and privilege of meritocracy and resources, c- what is the participant’s observation of themselves regarding the impact of training on their abilities? The study used semi-structured interview protocol to get the participant’s reflection of their training background in baseball at the developmental level, and certain themes were obtained from the thematic analysis of interviews. The results of the study indicate that politics impact developmental baseball, class privilege and unequal distribution of resources but hard work was the firm belief of participates. This research study also adds to the other fields such as recreation and leisure studies, sport management and sociology. Developmental Baseball can be made more inclusive based on results from the study.

## Benefits of Baseball Programs

#### Leadership and Interpersonal Skills

Baseball camps provide the service of baseball recruitment and instructions, and these camps are organized for three seasons winters, fall, and summer. The objectives of summer camps are designed to teach the basic fundamentals of the game to youth. The existing goals of these camps are to seek the prospective players for NC State Baseball and to break even in income. The study sought to discuss the numerous benefits of camps and the methods to market these camps (Pridgen, 2009). The primary aim is to prove that the sport-based camps are helpful in the mental and physical development of youth. These camps are run throughout the country by different organizations such as high schools, colleges, and recreation leagues. On the basis of the results of the study, the sports staff is recommended to put a marketing plan in action in an organization. A mission is needed in the camp to give a vision to the players. These sports camps can give guidance to players and can teach them leadership, teamwork and communication skills. Camps are an opportunity to guide youth in the area and allow them to expand their learning more than a sport.

#### Racial Divide

In the study by Ogden (2002), the researchers seek to explore the different concepts of the low incidence of African American adults participating in the game and a shortage of interest in pick-up-ball. Both concepts signal a changing relationship between society and baseball. These changes can be sensed by the coaches and officials as revealed by the interviews. They are able to sense the consequences and outcomes in lack of both African-Americans playing the game in reality and spontaneity. The infrequency of pick-up ball may hint that youngsters are losing interest in sports and it is no more considered as a tool for building relationships and interpersonal skills. This can be correct for African-American youth, some of those who either formally or informally play baseball or join to watch professional games with families. It is highly difficult to predict the influence the lack of exposure and interest will have on interest in baseball in future. The study has revealed that those who play games as a kid, in comparison with those who did not play are more interested in attending the professional game and the likelihood of finding those games boring and slow is also low.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the review of various studies and underlying themes indicate that there is a gap in our understanding of how significantly various factors interplay together to influence the process of recruitment of young baseball players to play at the higher level. There were few relevant studies in this regard, while the existing studies point to the presence of factors other than the player’s personal characteristics, but require further empirical studies using primary data to confirm these results.

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