

LHSAA ALLOWS STUDENT-ATHLETES TO RECEIVE NIL BENEFITS; PARTNERS WITH ECCKER SPORTS TO PROVIDE REQUIRED NIL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE STATE

BATON ROUGE, LA (April 7, 2022) – The Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) has voted to approve a positioning statement for its bylaws that allows high school student-athletes to receive Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) benefits, while also approving a state-wide partnership with Eccker Sports to provide educational services and resources to help high school leadership and students navigate the challenges that NIL contracts are bringing to high school sports. The courses are required for all school principals and athletic directors, while coaches, student-athletes and their families throughout the state will also have access to the programming.

NIL has been called the most disruptive concept in the sports market in 40 years and has quickly thrown the high school landscape into unfamiliar territory. It is why Joe Briggs, counsel for the NFL Players Association, recently told the Virginia House of Delegates that high school students shouldn't sign NIL deals because of the void in education and resources available to student-athletes and their families. The LHSAA has now moved proactively to remedy that.

“As an education-based association, I think it is imperative that everyone associated with high school athletics in Louisiana is properly educated and informed on Name, Image, and Likeness,” said Eddie Bonine, Executive Director of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association. “There is a lot to NIL and it's a moving target that we need to stay on top of. I am honored that Eccker Sports, with all their experience and everything they have to offer, has chosen to launch with us. The educational programming and toolbox they provide is going to be very valuable to all the individuals who participate in this and will benefit our students throughout the state.”

Eccker Sports, with more than 60 years of experience in the sports industry, has developed a four-pronged approach to helping the stakeholders in the high school market. First, a video curriculum with six module courses online will educate users on the history of NIL, key terms and concepts, and best practices. The first course will launch May 1, while the other courses will roll out shortly thereafter. Secondly, a Resource hub is available for users that contains vetted and up to date state-by-state information. Thirdly, coaches will find great value in Coach Assist, which offers high school coaches NIL presentation templates, one pagers and other tools to help them educate their communities. Finally, the company is building a network of legal, financial and tax experts to help families build and execute an effective NIL strategy.

“Our goal is to guide, inform and protect high school students and their families to help them thrive on their NIL journey,” Eccker Sports CEO and Founder Randy Eccker said. “By taking a proactive, impartial, and non-exploitive approach, we believe coaches, administrators, student-athletes, and their parents will be in a much better position to avoid trouble and succeed in this rapidly changing arena. We are proud to partner with the LHSAA and are eager to bring these important resources to the entire state of Louisiana.”

The fragmentation in high school sports across the country adds layers of complexity to an already challenging NIL environment. For example, there are currently eight states that have laws permitting athletes to profit off their name, image, and likeness, 16 states are considering adopting new laws, while 26 states prohibit it altogether. Add in all the different school bylaws for high school and college eligibility and you have a situation prone for mistakes. The LHSAA has now clarified the state's position on benefits for student-athletes through the following positioning statement:

LHSAA bylaws do not prohibit student athletes from engaging in certain commercial activities in their individual capacities. These activities, generally referred to as Name, Image and likeness (NIL), will not jeopardize a student athlete's amateur status if the student athlete complies with LHSAA Bylaw 1.25 on "Maintaining Amateur Status" as well as all LHSAA Bylaws, policies, and regulations. Compliance with LHSAA Bylaws regarding NIL does not ensure maintenance of eligibility under the eligibility standards of other governing athletic organizations (e.g. NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA, national sport governing bodies, etc.). Student athletes desiring information on the amateur rules of other governing organizations should consult with those organizations.

"We are proud that this Positioning Statement on NIL has passed our Executive Committee because it's the right thing to do for all high school student-athletes in Louisiana," Bonine said. "NIL is a moving target, which makes ongoing education so important for our entire high school community. We are taking a whiteboard approach to this with Eccker Sports so that as new rules are established and things change from state to state, our members will always have the most current information available to properly guide our kids and their families. We want everyone to be prepared because even if you don't have someone right now facing these challenges, you never know when you might, and we want everyone prepared when that time comes."

About the LHSAA

In October of 1920, a group of high school principals met in Baton Rouge to discuss ways to better regulate and advance high school interscholastic athletic programs. This meeting led to the formation of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association. Since then, its executive directors, staff, and member-school principals have led education-based athletics in the State of Louisiana.

About Eccker Sports

Eccker Sports is an information platform serving student-athletes, coaches, parents, and administrators navigating the disruption of NIL contracts coming to high school sports. They bring 60-plus years of experience mainstreaming new innovations in sports to help high schools guide, inform and protect their student-athletes on their NIL journeys. Their goal is to help schools create successful programs for their students rather than to represent any individual student in the NIL marketplace.

###