



The ATJ Weekly: Why Every Athlete Should Understand NIL

By Maria Trevino Nunez

Understanding NIL

Many athletes have heard the term NIL, but not everyone fully understands what it means or how it can impact their future. NIL has created lots of new opportunities for athletes to build their personal brand, gain exposure, and prepare for success beyond their sport. Understanding how NIL works is becoming an important part of athlete development both on and off the field.

NIL stands for **Name, Image, and Likeness**. It refers to an athlete's ability to earn compensation through their personal brand. This can be through social media partnerships, sponsorships, appearances, camps, and other opportunities. Although many people associate NIL with high-profile college athletes, the concept is much bigger than just endorsement deals. NIL is about understanding the value of your identity and how you represent yourself as an athlete. Opportunities in sports are always evolving, and athletes who learn how to build a positive reputation, develop their personal brand, and present themselves professionally will be better prepared to take advantage of future opportunities both during and after their playing careers.



NIL also encourages athletes to think about the more long-term impact of their actions and decisions. Every single interaction, social media post, and opportunity contributes to the way that others perceive them. While athletic performance remains important, NIL highlights the value of **character, leadership, communication, and professionalism**. Athletes who take the time to develop these qualities can create stronger connections with coaches, recruiters, teammates, and potential partners. Even for athletes who may not pursue NIL opportunities immediately, understanding how to build and manage a positive personal brand can be a valuable skill that extends far beyond sports and into future careers and professional opportunities. Learning about NIL now can help athletes make informed decisions and build habits that will benefit them throughout their athletic journey.

NIL in Action

Imagine two athletes with similar talent and performance levels. One understands how to present themselves professionally, maintain a positive online presence, and take advantage of NIL opportunities to build their personal brand, while the other does not. Over time, the first athlete will most likely have access to more networking opportunities, sponsorships, and career connections. Coaches, recruiters, and brands often look beyond statistics and athletic achievement when evaluating athletes. This is why understanding NIL is about more than earning money, it's about learning how to manage and represent your personal brand. Athletes that are intentional about how they present themselves can create opportunities that extend far beyond competition and to benefit them throughout their athletic and professional careers.

Key Takeaways

1. NIL stands for **Name, Image, and Likeness** and gives athletes opportunities to benefit from their personal brand.
2. NIL is about more than just earning money, it's also about building a positive reputation and having a professional presence.
3. Coaches, recruiters, and brands often pay attention to how athletes present themselves both on and off the field.
4. Understanding NIL early can help athletes prepare for future opportunities in sports, education, and their careers.



Take some time this week to learn more about NIL and how it can impact athletes at every level. Consider how you currently present yourself both on and off the field, and think about ways you can begin building a positive personal brand. The earlier athletes understand NIL, the better prepared they will be to take advantage of future opportunities.

To keep learning and stay updated on athlete development, follow A.T.J. Sports for more insights, resources, and guidance on building your athlete brand and preparing yourself for opportunities beyond the game.

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At A.T.J. Sports, we believe preparation goes beyond performance. We help athletes build their mindset, identity, and habits needed to succeed both in their sport and in their future.

Sign up for the A.T.J. Sports newsletter to stay updated on athlete development, NIL education, and tools to help you build your brand beyond the game.