Free Edition for the High School Athlete
An extract from The Athlete's Wealth Playbook

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE THE FIRST CHECK

Written for the 16-18 year-old reader
Read it on your phone in 30 minutes

FREE · KEEP IT · SHARE IT WITH ANY TEAMMATE

PHILIP A. BARATELLI
CPA, MBA · Founder, Baratelli Institute

BARATELLI
INSTITUTE

READ THIS FIRST

What This Booklet Is For

A short read written specifically for the 16-18 year-old high-school athlete who may be entering the NIL or recruiting world.

If you're a serious high-school athlete in 2026, money is showing up earlier in your life than it did for any generation before you. Some of it is real. Some of it is loud noise from people who want something from you. This booklet exists because you should not have to learn the difference the hard way.

It's an extract from a longer comprehensive book written for professional athletes and the people around them. We pulled out the parts that actually apply to *you, right now* — and added new material written specifically for the high-school reader. You can read this in 30 minutes. Keep it on your phone. Read it again before any meeting where money or contracts are on the table.

Two voices in this book

When you see **NAVY TYPE**, that's the formal voice — facts, numbers, rules. When you see *italic call-outs like this*, that's the truth-teller voice — the part that says what people around you may not say out loud. You need both. The formal voice tells you what's true. The truth-teller voice tells you what's *actually going on*.

SECTION 1

Five Money Truths Before Anyone Hands You a Check

The five things every high-school athlete should know before signing anything.

1. Money you receive is income. The IRS knows.

If a brand pays you $5,000 for a social-media post, that is taxable income. If a collective pays you $25,000 to commit to a school, that is taxable income. The school does not handle it for you. The collective does not handle it for you. **You** owe federal tax, possibly state tax, and possibly self-employment tax. If you don't file a return, the IRS will eventually find you. They are slow but they always find you.

2. The first $10K you make is the most dangerous.

Not because it's a lot of money — it isn't. Because it teaches you bad habits if no adult is watching. Buying a $4,000 chain with the first $10K you make tells your brain that money disappears. Banking 80% of it tells your brain that money compounds. The pattern you set at 17 is the pattern you will follow at 27.

3. Anyone who says 'don't worry about taxes' is lying.

If a marketer, an agent, a financial advisor, or a friend tells you that — they are either incompetent or trying to get you to sign before you understand what you're signing. Either way, you do not want them on your team. A real professional explains the tax consequences *before* the deal closes.

4. Free is rarely free.

Free training. Free apparel. Free advice from a 'family friend' who happens to be a financial advisor. Free dinner from an agent. None of those are free. Whoever is giving them to you is expecting something back, even if they haven't said so out loud yet. The price they will eventually ask for is usually a percentage of you.

5. The money is small. The decisions are large.

An NIL deal at 17 may be $5K-$50K. That's not life-changing money. But the people you meet, the agreements you sign, and the patterns you set in those deals can absolutely shape the next 20 years. Treat each early deal as a rehearsal for the bigger ones — because that's exactly what they are.

SECTION 2

12 Words to Know Before Your First NIL Meeting

If anyone uses these words and you don't understand them, stop the meeting. Re-read this page. Then continue.

NIL	Name, Image, Likeness. The legal right to be paid for the use of your identity. You always own this — but you can sign it away in pieces.
Collective	A booster-funded group, separate from the school, that arranges NIL deals. Not the same as the school. Their interests align with the school but are not identical.
1099	An IRS form showing you were paid as a non-employee. If you receive a 1099, you owe self-employment tax (~15.3%) on top of regular income tax.
Estimated tax	Quarterly payments to the IRS. If you don't make them and you owe more than $1,000 at year-end, you also owe a penalty. April 15, June 15, September 15, January 15.
S-corp	A type of business structure that can lower your self-employment tax once your NIL income passes ~$60K. Probably not relevant at 17. Definitely relevant later.
LLC	Legal entity that holds your NIL contracts. Provides some liability protection. Easy and cheap to set up. Often the right first step when income is real.
Exclusivity	A contract clause saying you can't work with competing brands. Read these very carefully. A 5-year exclusive can lock out millions of dollars of future income.
Term	How long the contract lasts. Watch for auto-renewal language. A 1-year deal that auto-renews to 5 years is a 5-year deal.
Termination	How either side can end the contract. If they can fire you for any reason but you can't leave for any reason, that's a bad contract.
Morality clause	A contract clause letting the brand fire you for off-field behavior. Standard. But the definition of 'behavior' should be specific, not 'whatever the brand decides.'
Right of first refusal	A clause forcing you to offer your next deal to the same brand before anyone else. Hidden in many contracts. Functionally extends exclusivity beyond the term.
Fiduciary	A legal standard meaning the advisor must put your interests ahead of their own. Not all advisors are fiduciaries. Always ask.

Important: don't DIY your first NIL tax return.

Once you start receiving NIL income, hire a real CPA — not a friend's uncle, an actual licensed CPA who has done at least three other NIL clients. The cost is $300-800. The cost of getting it wrong (missed estimated payments, wrong entity classification, audit exposure) is dramatically higher. Quick rule of thumb: $0-5K NIL income, TurboTax is fine; $5K-50K, real CPA, ask if they have sports clients; $50K+, sports-CPA only.

SECTION 3

How to Interview a Financial Advisor at 17

Eight questions to ask the first time anyone in a suit pitches you on managing your money.

You don't need a financial advisor at 17 unless your NIL income is meaningful (let's say more than $50,000 a year) or you've already signed a pro contract. But people will pitch you anyway. Here's how to handle the meeting.

1.	Are you a fiduciary, in writing, all the time?	If they hesitate, hedge, or say 'sometimes,' the answer is no. End the meeting.
2.	How exactly do you get paid?	Listen for: **fee-only** (best) · **commission** (red flag) · **fee-based** (mixed). If they earn commission on selling you products, every recommendation has a hidden incentive.
3.	What's your minimum account size?	If they tell you it's $1M and you have $50K, find out why they're meeting with you. They're either fishing for your future earnings or planning to refer you to someone less experienced.
4.	How many athlete clients do you have? Who are they?	You don't need names. You do need to know whether 'specializing in athletes' means 5 clients or 50 and whether they understand jock-tax allocation.
5.	Show me your Form ADV.	Every legitimate investment advisor must file this with the SEC. It discloses any disciplinary history, lawsuits, fees, and conflicts. They must give it to you. If they refuse — end the meeting.
6.	What's your investment philosophy in two sentences?	If they can't explain it simply, they don't understand it themselves, or they're hiding something.
7.	Who else benefits financially when you put me with this firm?	Sometimes a friend, a coach, or a family member is being paid a referral fee. You have a right to know.
8.	If I want to leave in 12 months, what does that cost me?	Surrender charges, lockup periods, deferred fees. If leaving costs you more than $0, you should know that *before* you sign in.

SECTION 4

Scripts for the Locker Room and the Family Group Chat

Lines you can borrow word-for-word when you don't know what to say.

When a teammate asks how much you got

"Family rule — we don't talk numbers. But yeah, it was a real deal. How was your weekend?"

Reason: any number you say will be wrong. Bigger than reality and you sound arrogant. Smaller than reality and you sound dishonest. The only winning move is not to play.

When a teammate asks you to invest with them

"I love you for asking, but my family has a rule that I have to run any investment past my advisor and my parent first, no exceptions. If it's a good deal it'll still be a good deal in two weeks. Send me the documents — I'll get back to you."

Reason: you're not saying no. You're saying not yet. That gives the people around you time to look at the deal. Real deals survive review. Bad deals fall apart the moment a real adult looks at them.

When a parent asks for a loan

"Mom/Dad — let me get my advisor on the phone with you. They handle all of this. I love you, but I can't be the one writing the check."

Reason: you keep the relationship intact. You move the conversation to a professional. The advisor can say no without you saying it. This is one of the most important sentences in this whole book.

When an extended family member shows up with a 'business idea'

"Send the deck and the financials to my email — my team reviews everything that way."

Reason: nine out of ten 'business ideas' that come through extended family never produce a deck. The request itself filters out the people who weren't serious. The one in ten who do produce a deck — that's the one your real advisor should look at.

When a coach pressures you to use a specific advisor or agent

"Coach, I really appreciate the introduction. My family has a process — I take three meetings before I pick anyone. Can I have their info?"

Reason: a real introduction will be fine with three meetings. A kickback arrangement won't be. The ones who push hardest for you to skip the process are usually the ones being paid for the referral.

When a brand wants you to sign 'right now, today'

"My parent and I sign all contracts together — we'll review tonight and respond tomorrow. If the deal can't wait 24 hours, it's not the right deal for me."

Reason: artificial urgency is the single most common manipulation tactic. Real opportunities can wait 24 hours. The ones that can't wait are the ones designed to keep you from thinking.

SECTION 5

If You're Signing Right Now — The First 90 Days

If you're about to commit to a college, sign your first NIL deal, or enter a transfer portal — here's the timeline.

Day 0 — The day you sign

Sign nothing else that day. Take photos of the documents. Email a copy to a parent or trusted adult. Do not post the deal on social media until the brand or school says you can. Eat dinner. Sleep.

Days 1-7 — The first week

Open a separate bank account for NIL income only. Don't co-mingle it with your personal account. Keep every email about the deal in one folder. Note the names and contact info of every person you've met since signing — write it down. You will forget.

Days 8-30 — The first month

If income exceeds $5,000, talk to a CPA — not a friend's uncle, an actual CPA who has done at least three other NIL clients. Ask three of them. Pick one. They'll set up estimated tax payments and tell you whether you need an LLC. Quarterly tax payments are due whether you've planned for them or not.

Days 31-60 — The second month

Now look at financial advisors — but only if you're going to keep more than $25K liquid. Below that number, a high-yield savings account does the job and costs nothing. Above it, interview at least three advisors using the questions in Section 3.

Days 61-90 — The third month

Run a personal financial review. How much came in? How much went to taxes (set aside 30-35% if you haven't already). How much went to spending? How much is sitting? Adjust. Repeat this review every quarter for the rest of your career.

One sentence to remember above all others

The first 90 days set the next 30 years. The habits, the people, and the patterns you establish in your first three months of serious money will follow you for your entire athletic career — and then for the 50 years after it ends. Take it slow. There is no deal that can't wait 24 hours.

PERSONAL FINANCE FOUNDATIONS

Money 101 for the Athlete Who Was Never Taught It

This section is for the reader who walked into a professional locker room or a college NIL office without having watched a parent open a brokerage account, balance a checkbook, or talk about a 401(k). It is the foundation the rest of this guide assumes you already know. If any of the words in the table of contents look unfamiliar, start here. Nothing in this section is below anyone. The athletes who keep their money are the ones who started with the basics and never let the basics slip.

Before You Invest a Single Dollar

Every story of an athlete who lost it all starts in the same place: not a bad investment, but the absence of four habits that should be locked in before any product is purchased. You can have the best advisor on the planet; if these four are missing, the money still leaks out.

1. A BUDGET YOU ACTUALLY USE

A budget is a written list of what comes in and what goes out, every month. The simplest version: every dollar that hits your account is split, before it spends, into three buckets. The rule of thumb that works for most NIL and rookie-contract athletes: **save 30%, hold 30% for taxes, live on the remaining 40%.**

2. AN EMERGENCY FUND

Cash you do not invest, do not lend to family, and do not touch unless something genuinely unexpected happens. Three to six months of normal living expenses, kept in a savings account you can reach in twenty-four hours.

3. TAXES SET ASIDE AS SOON AS THE MONEY LANDS

Move **25 to 40 percent of every deposit** into a separate tax-savings account on the same day the money lands. The IRS does not care that nobody told you; the bill comes the following April either way.

4. KNOWING WHAT EACH BANK ACCOUNT DOES

A checking account is for daily spending. A savings account is for short-term holding. A high-yield savings account (HYSA) at an online bank pays much higher interest — often four to five percent. A money market account behaves like a HYSA. Every dollar at an FDIC-insured institution is federally guaranteed up to $250,000 per depositor per bank. Table 0.1 below compares them.

Table 0.1 — Bank account types and what each is best at.

ONE MORE SECTION

OK, switching gears — and yeah, this last part is dry.

The grown-up money vocabulary, in case nobody ever sat you down and went through it.

Real talk: most of what you just read was about people, deals, and money about to land in your account. That was the urgent stuff. The locker-room scripts. The 12 NIL terms. The first 90 days. The eight questions for an advisor.

The next eight pages are the quieter stuff. Basic personal-finance vocabulary that most people never get explicitly taught. **Not because it's complicated.** Because nobody ever teaches it. Account types. Insurance. Bonds. The three-bucket investing framework. Five principles. Building a team.

Read it once. Then come back to it whenever something specific comes up — when a parent asks about insurance, when someone says 'put it in bonds,' when an advisor uses a word you don't recognize. It's reference material. It works that way on purpose.

The voice changes here. The next pages are pulled **directly** from the formal version of the playbook — the same tables and explanations a 32-year-old NBA veteran reads when he wants to understand what his advisor is actually doing. You're holding the same content he is. That's not an accident.

The voice changes on the next page. Keep reading.

Account type	What it's for	Typical interest	Access
Checking	Daily spending; debit card; bill pay.	0.0% – 0.05%	Instant; debit card; checks.
Savings	Short-term holding (under 12 months).	0.05% – 0.5%	Same-day transfer to checking.
High-yield savings (HYSA)	Emergency fund; tax reserve; near-term goals.	4% – 5%	1-3 days to checking; FDIC-insured.
Money market account	Same role as HYSA, sometimes with check writing.	4% – 5%	Same-day to next-day; FDIC-insured.
Certificate of deposit (CD)	Money you will not touch for 6, 12, or 24 months.	4.5% – 5.5%	Locked until maturity; early-withdrawal penalty.

Protect What You Have: Insurance

Before any investment grows, your *ability to earn* has to be protected. The body and the earning power are the largest assets most athletes will ever own. Insurance absorbs the cost when health, life, or property suffers the kind of hit that would otherwise erase years of earnings.

1. HEALTH INSURANCE

Covers doctor visits, surgeries, hospital stays, and rehab. College athletes: schools require proof of coverage; the NCAA Catastrophic Injury program covers career-altering injuries above a high deductible. Pro athletes: confirm year-round coverage and family inclusion.

2. DISABILITY INSURANCE

Pays you if injury or illness stops you from playing. The key term is **own-occupation** coverage — the policy pays if you cannot perform your specific sport. Three pieces: TTD (recovery-window benefit), PTD (career-ending lump sum or ongoing benefit), and Loss of Value (LOV) rider for pre-draft injury risk. Buy young and healthy.

3. LIFE INSURANCE

Term life is the right product for almost all young athletes — coverage for a fixed period at a fixed price, with no investment component. Permanent or whole-life policies pitched as 'tax-advantaged investments' carry high fees and long surrender periods.

4. LIABILITY AND UMBRELLA COVERAGE

Auto and home liability limits are too low for an athlete with a public profile and visible income. An umbrella policy adds $1M-$10M of protection for a relatively low premium.

5. PROPERTY AND CASUALTY (AUTO, HOME, VALUABLES)

Confirm high auto liability limits. Add scheduled personal property coverage for jewelry, watches, sports memorabilia, and equipment.

Table 0.3 — Insurance policies and where each fits in an athlete's protection plan.

Policy	What it does	Athlete priority	Watch out for
Health	Pays for medical care.	Essential. Year-round coverage.	Network limits; off-season gaps.
Disability (own-occupation)	Replaces income if injury/illness ends ability to play.	Top priority. Buy young and healthy.	Group policies often capped; NIL income often excluded.
Loss of Value rider	Pays the gap if a pre-draft injury drops you in the draft.	Pre-draft athletes with high projection.	Definitions vary by carrier.
Term life	Lump sum to family if you die during the term.	Strong if you have spouse, children, or dependents.	Permanent/whole life is usually wrong for young athletes.
Umbrella liability	Extra liability protection above auto/home limits.	Highly recommended once income is meaningful.	Coordinate limits with auto and home policies.
Auto / home / renters	Covers vehicles, residences, basic possessions.	Required by law and lender; raise liability limits.	State-minimum liability is far too low.
Scheduled personal property	Covers high-value items.	Useful as collection grows.	Requires appraisals; update annually.
NIL contract protection	Replaces NIL/endorsement income lost to injury.	Worth asking about for athletes with $250K+ NIL.	Newer market; not all carriers offer it.

Core Investment Products to Learn First

Once the four basics are in place, the next layer is investing — putting money to work so it grows on its own. Time is your single biggest financial advantage: money invested at 22 has 40+ years to compound.

INDEX FUNDS AND ETFS

An index fund owns a tiny piece of every major company in a market — the S&P 500 fund owns Apple, Microsoft, Nvidia, JPMorgan, and 496 others, all at once. ETFs are the same idea wrapped to trade like a stock. Diversified, cheap (0.03-0.10% annual fees), and supported by decades of evidence: more than 80% of professional stock pickers fail to beat a plain S&P 500 index fund over 20 years.

ROTH IRA AND OTHER RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

A Roth IRA is the most valuable retirement account for a young athlete: contributions are after-tax, but growth and qualified withdrawals are tax-free forever. The 2025 contribution limit is $7,000. Above the income threshold, use a backdoor Roth. NIL or self-employment income unlocks a SEP-IRA or solo 401(k) (up to $70,000 in 2025). League 401(k) plans with employer match are essentially free money — always capture the full match.

BONDS AND BOND FUNDS

A bond is a loan you make to a government or company in exchange for fixed-rate interest. Bonds are the calmer half of a portfolio — defense to stocks' offense. A young athlete with 40-year horizon needs only 10-20% bonds. Buy through a low-cost bond index fund.

Table 0.2 — The investment product ladder. Master each before moving to the next.

Product	Plain-English description	When to use	Watch out for
HYSA / money market	Bank account paying meaningful interest on cash.	Emergency fund; tax reserve; cash needed within a year.	Rates change with the Fed.
Stock index fund / ETF	Single purchase that owns hundreds of companies.	Long-term growth (5+ years).	Will drop 20-40% in bad years; do not sell in panic.
Bond index fund	Basket of loans to governments and companies.	Stability; income; ballast against stock drops.	Loses value when interest rates rise.
Roth IRA	Retirement account; growth and withdrawals tax-free.	Every year you are eligible.	Income limit; backdoor at higher incomes.
Solo 401(k) / SEP-IRA	Retirement account for self-employed/NIL income.	Years with significant 1099 income.	Requires entity setup; CPA needed.
Target-date fund	One fund holding stocks and bonds, auto-rebalanced.	If you want a single set-and-forget option.	Slightly higher fees than building it yourself.
CD	Bank deposit locked for a fixed term.	Cash you will not need for 6-24 months.	Penalty if you withdraw early.
Real estate (direct)	Property bought for rental income / appreciation.	After career is established.	Tenants, repairs, illiquidity, leverage risk.
REIT	Stock-like fund that owns commercial real estate.	Real estate exposure without becoming a landlord.	Trades like a stock; volatile in down markets.

Next-Level Products (After the Basics Are Locked In)

Once foundations are in place, the next tier opens up: target-date funds and robo-advisors for hands-off diversification, real estate when career and cash flow are stable, certificates of deposit for known short-term needs.

WHAT TO AVOID EARLY IN A CAREER

Individual stocks — gambling, not investing. **Cryptocurrency, NFTs, meme coins** — the volatility is real; the protections are not. **Private deals from friends, family, or teammates** — restaurants, nightclubs, app startups, real estate developments. Default answer: no, with a polite explanation about your written investment policy.

Five Principles That Tie It All Together

1. DIVERSIFICATION

Spread your money across many investments rather than concentrating it in one. Three of the largest companies in the S&P 500 in 1990 are no longer in the index. When you own an index fund, individual failures are absorbed by the successes of the others.

2. COMPOUNDING

Compounding is interest earning interest. The effect is small in years one and two and enormous in years thirty and forty. **$5,000 a month** invested in a stock index fund from age 22 to 62 at the long-run after-inflation average return of about seven percent becomes roughly **$13.1 million** in today's dollars. The same $5,000 a month from age 32 to 62 becomes only **$6.1 million** — a $7 million cost for waiting ten years. Athletes have a unique advantage: large cash flows early. Use them. Table 0.4 shows what monthly contributions at a range of levels produce over 10, 20, and 30 years.

Table 0.4 — Compound growth of regular monthly contributions at the long-run after-inflation average return of the S&P 500 (about 7% per year). Figures are in today's dollars.

Monthly contribution	After 10 years	After 20 years	After 30 years
$1,000	$173,000	$521,000	$1.22 M
$2,500	$433,000	$1.30 M	$3.05 M
$5,000	$865,000	$2.60 M	$6.10 M
$7,500	$1.30 M	$3.91 M	$9.15 M
$10,000	$1.73 M	$5.21 M	$12.20 M

3. RISK TOLERANCE AND TIME HORIZON

Risk tolerance is how much your investments can drop before you panic and sell. Time horizon is how long until you need the money. A young athlete with 40-year horizon can hold a stock-heavy portfolio because 30% drops have decades to recover. Money you need in two years should not be in stocks at all.

4. BUILD A TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS

By the time you are earning meaningful money, you need a team, and the team should grow with the career. The core early-career team is four people. As earnings grow, more roles come online. Athletes whose post-career business interests expand — multiple operating companies, media ventures, real estate portfolios, foundations — build substantially larger teams as the work multiplies. Table 0.6 lays out the typical roles by phase.

Table 0.6 — Professional team by phase. The team should match the size of the work.

Phase	Role	What they do
Core early-career team	Agent	Negotiates playing contracts; represents you with the team; often coordinates endorsement deals.
	Financial advisor	Asset allocation, portfolio construction, ongoing wealth-management discipline.
	CPA	Multi-state tax returns, jock tax planning, entity structuring for NIL and endorsement income.
	Lawyer	Contract review and basic estate documents: will, durable power of attorney, healthcare directive.
As earnings grow	Insurance broker	Health, disability (own-occupation), life, umbrella liability, scheduled personal property.
	Marketing / endorsement rep	Brand deals, content business, social platform monetization (if not handled by agent).
	Tax-and-business manager	Bill pay, cash flow operations, household payroll, day-to-day financial operations.
	Estate-planning attorney	Trust structures, sophisticated estate work — a separate seat from the contract attorney.
	Trustee or trust officer	Administers trusts; distributes under trust terms; coordinates with CPA and attorney.
As career interests expand	Operating-company managers	Day-to-day leadership of restaurants, franchises, real estate, media businesses you own.
	Real estate manager	Property management for direct holdings; tenant relations, maintenance, capital planning.
	Foundation director	Runs charitable activities, manages grant-making, handles compliance for the foundation.
	General counsel (fractional or in-house)	Coordinated legal work across the enterprise once activity scales beyond a single attorney.

What to look for in any professional you hire. (a) Written compensation disclosure. **(b)** Athlete experience — ask for verifiable current athlete clients. **(c)** Clean regulatory record — BrokerCheck, Form ADV, state bar records, professional licensing body. **(d)** References from people you actually trust — teammates, the players association, your league's player-engagement office. **(e)** A clear scope of work and a defined lane. The agent is not your money manager. The financial advisor is not your contract negotiator. The lawyer is not your tax planner. Chapter 16 walks through the full evaluation framework.

5. THE THREE-BUCKET APPROACH

Many advisors organize an athlete's wealth into three buckets, each with a different purpose, time horizon, and tolerance for risk. The discipline is filling the buckets in order: Bucket 1 first, then Bucket

2, before any meaningful Bucket 3 exposure. The athletes who lose it all almost always invert this order.

Table 0.5 — The three-bucket approach.

Bucket	Purpose	Where it lives	How much
Bucket 1: Short-term safety	Emergency fund and tax reserve. Money you may need within 12 months.	HYSA, money market, short-duration CDs.	1-2 years of living expenses.
Bucket 2: Medium-term growth	Long-term wealth growth. The compounding engine of the portfolio.	Diversified stock and bond index funds in taxable brokerage and retirement accounts.	Majority of total assets — typically 70-90%.
Bucket 3: Long-term / high-potential	Higher-risk, often illiquid bets that could grow large but could also fail.	Private investments, direct real estate, operating businesses, venture capital.	Rarely more than 10% of total assets, only after Bucket 2 is funded.

Estate Planning and Legacy — Yes, Even at 22

Estate planning is ‘deciding who gets what, and who decides for you, if you cannot decide for yourself.’ Documents matter most for athletes precisely because athletes face elevated risk of sudden, severe injury and are often the financial center of an extended family.

THE THREE BASIC DOCUMENTS

1. A will. Specifies who inherits your assets when you die. **2. A durable power of attorney (POA).** Names someone you trust to handle your financial affairs if you cannot. **3. A healthcare directive.** Records your wishes for medical care if you cannot speak for yourself, and names someone to make medical decisions on your behalf.

BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS — THE DOCUMENT THAT BEATS THE WILL

Most major financial accounts let you name a beneficiary directly. The beneficiary designation overrides anything your will says. Once a year, log into every account and confirm the name listed is the name you want.

TRUSTS — THE TIER ABOVE WILLS

A trust is a legal entity that holds assets and distributes them according to rules you set. Trusts keep affairs **private**, **protect** assets when structured properly, and **control** the timing and conditions of distributions to heirs. Cost is meaningful — $3,000 to $10,000 to set up — right time is once net worth crosses roughly $1 million.

Five First Steps for the Reader Starting From Zero

Step 1. Open a high-yield savings account at a reputable online bank. **Step 2.** Open a brokerage account at Fidelity, Schwab, or Vanguard; buy a single broad-market stock index ETF (VTI, ITOT, SCHB, FZROX, FSKAX). **Step 3.** Open a Roth IRA at the same brokerage. **Step 4.** Set up automatic transfers. The single most predictive variable for who keeps their money is whether the savings happen automatically. **Step 5.** Calendar a one-hour annual review every January.

THE FRAME

Athletes who succeed financially treat their money the way they treat their sport: as a discipline. Not as luck. Build the floor first.

READING PATH BY READER ROLE

Where to start in the full full playbook *based on who you are.*

The full playbook *covers the full life of athlete money. Most readers shouldn't read it cover to cover. The chart below shows where to start based on the role you're reading from. The rest of the book is reference \u2014 come back to it when something specific comes up.*

READER	READ THIS FIRST	READ NEXT	REFERENCE WHEN NEEDED
The Athlete (active) *College, rookie, mid-career, or veteran pro*	Ch. 0 Read This First Personal Finance Foundations Ch. 1-3 (Five Earning Years; How Athletes Are Taxed)	Ch. 4 Family + Pressure Ch. 5 Building Your Team Part II or III (NIL or Pro) by stage	Part IV when career income hits Part V Worked Archetypes Glossary, Index, Annual Checklist
The Athlete (career-end) *Within 3 years of retirement*	Part IV in full Ch. 13-14 Pension + Healthcare Worked Archetype #4: Recently-retired MLB	Ch. 16 Advisor-Selection Ch. 18 Family Trust Structures v2.1 Identity + Family Scripts	Part I-III as background Tax appendices, OBBBA-2025 sections Career-End 12-Month Reset Checklist
The Sports Agent *Player rep, contract negotiation, NIL*	Part III Pro Contract Mechanics Part II NIL three-track framework v2.1 §D Marketing-Rights Carve-Outs	Ch. 11 Signing Bonus Tax Ch. 12 Endorsement income Ch. 16 Advisor-Selection (brief your client)	Part I as client-context reference Part V Worked Archetypes AI Tool Prompts appendix
The Sports CPA / Tax Adviser *Athlete tax practice, jock-tax, S-corp*	Ch. 3 How Athletes Are Actually Taxed Ch. 11 Signing Bonus Tax v2.1 §E-G §199A SSTB, NY Convenience, IRS Audit	Ch. 8 NIL Tax + Compliance v2.1 §L §1031 + Opportunity Zones v2.1 §M-N OBBBA Sunset, Asset Protection	Ch. 18 Family Trust Structures Cohort sections (international/overseas) AI Prompts (jock-tax, NIL eval)
The Wealth Advisor / RIA *Financial planning for athlete clients*	Ch. 16 Advisor-Selection Landmine (read as audience) Ch. 15 Investment Policy v2.1 §I-K AUM Math, Fiduciary, Private Banking	Ch. 5 Building Your Team Ch. 18 Family Trust Structures v2.1 §H Players-Association Resources	Part III for contract context Part V Worked Archetypes by client type v2.1 §R Family-Conversation Scripts
The Family-Office Director *Serving athlete-principal families*	Part IV in full Ch. 18 Family Trust Structures v2.1 §M OBBBA Estate-Sunset Window	Ch. 4 Family + Pressure Dynamics Ch. 5 Building Your Team v2.1 §R Identity + Family Scripts	All technical chapters as on-demand Cohort sections by client sport Cross-ref Family Office Reference Guide
The Parent / Family Member *Of an athlete or aspiring athlete*	Ch. 0 Read This First Ch. 4 Family + Pressure Dynamics v2.1 §R Family-Conversation Scripts	Personal Finance Foundations Ch. 5 Building Your Team Worked Archetype matching child's situation	Tax + estate chapters as needed Glossary, Annual Checklist Cohort sections if applicable

READ NEXT

When You Should Get the Full Playbook

This booklet covers the basics. The full Athlete's Wealth Playbook covers the rest.

If any of the following are true for you, you've outgrown this booklet:

- Your annual NIL income passes $50,000
- You've signed (or are about to sign) a professional contract in any sport
- Multiple advisors, agents, or marketing firms are competing for your representation
- You're trying to figure out which state to claim residency in
- You're inside three years of retirement from the sport
- You're a parent of any of the above

The full Athlete's Wealth Playbook (234 pages) covers the full life of athlete money: NIL deal mechanics, professional contract analysis, jock-tax planning, signing-bonus structuring, post-career healthcare and pension, family trusts, advisor selection, and the politics of saying no to people who love you.

Available at **baratelliinstitute.gumroad.com**.

If this is free, imagine how much value is in the paid guide.

The 17 pages you just read are *excerpted* from the comprehensive main book. The Personal Finance Foundations chapter you got in full is one of nineteen sections. The Five Money Truths and the locker-room scripts are starter material — the full book has the actual jock-tax mechanics, NIL contract architecture, signing-bonus state planning, the advisor-selection landmine chapter, the four worked archetypes, glossary, and index. If this excerpt was worth reading, the full reference is worth keeping.

Pass this booklet on

This High School Edition is free. Forward it. Print it. Put it in the locker of any teammate who is starting to get noticed by recruiters or brands. The earlier a young athlete sees these scripts, the more time they have to internalize them before the pressure starts.

PART II.5

COMPLIANCE RAILS: 18 Recommendations from NCAA Review

Built from a three-voice NCAA Administration + School Compliance + Enforcement panel review.

This section implements 18 specific recommendations from a compliance panel review conducted May 2026. The source: Patricia Hollings (NCAA Administration / DI NIL working group), Marcus Trent (Power-5 compliance officer), and Diane Ortega (NCAA Enforcement / Eligibility Center). The goal: teach readers to think about NIL as a money-with-rails topic, not just a money topic. The single most important addition is the run-it-through-compliance-first workflow.

The Run-It-Through-Compliance-First Workflow

The single most important step. Every veteran compliance officer tells the same story: the worst eligibility cases are not bad deals. They are deals nobody asked compliance about. This workflow is how you change that pattern:

STEP 1: Deal Arrives. You receive an NIL offer from a brand, collective, or other party.

STEP 2: Forward to Compliance. Forward the full contract to your school's compliance office BEFORE signing. Do not sign first.

STEP 3: Compliance Review (SLA). Compliance reviews and responds within the school's stated SLA (typically 5-10 business days).

STEP 4: Response. Green = approved, sign. Yellow = approvable with amendments, negotiate. Red = ineligible, decline.

STEP 5: Execute / Amend / Decline. Based on compliance response, execute the deal, ask for changes, or walk away.

STEP 6: Disclose on Payment. Once deal is executed, disclose again when you receive payment per your school's form.

Why this workflow matters

School compliance offices are not your enemies — they're your insurance policy. A 15-minute conversation with compliance before you sign can save you from a 3-year eligibility issue. This workflow is used at every Power-5 program and most mid-major programs. You're not asking for anything unusual. You're asking for what every serious athlete should do.

A1: What Is a Booster?

A booster is not just someone who writes a check. Under NCAA enforcement, a booster is anyone who has: provided benefits to the athletics program, attended booster events, purchased season tickets at the school-defined level, or been identified by the institution as a booster. Once a booster, generally always a booster. The athlete's NIL counterparty matters enormously.

A2: Three Compliance Layers at Once

State NIL statute, NCAA rule, and school policy all apply simultaneously. Following your state's rules does not guarantee NCAA compliance. Following NCAA rules does not guarantee school compliance. You must follow all three.

A3: House Settlement Landscape

The House v. NCAA settlement (2024) reshaped college athletics: revenue sharing ($20K-$30K per athlete), roster limits, NIL Go third-party administrator review for deals over threshold, back-pay opportunity. You need vocabulary for this post-settlement landscape.

A5: Pay-for-Play Red Flags

Walk These to Compliance Before Signing

Payment conditioned on enrollment · Payment conditioned on performance metrics tied to team results · Deal paid by entity whose only commercial activity is athlete payments · Deal with no deliverable. None are always violations. All are warnings.

B2: School IP / Logo / Uniform Prohibition

You cannot use school marks, uniforms, or facilities in NIL content without a separate institutional license. This is the single most common first violation compliance offices catch.

B3: Disclosure Timeline and Deal Log

Most schools require disclosure within 7 days of signing and again on payment. Request the form on day one of enrollment. Keep a deal log: name, counterparty, amount, signing date, payment date, disclosure date.

B4: F-1 Visa and NIL Income Warning

If You're on an F-1 Visa

You face severe restrictions on US-source NIL income. Before any deal: talk to compliance AND an immigration attorney. The intersection of immigration law and tax law is where athletes on F-1 visas get into the worst trouble.

B6: Practice, Class, and Travel Conflicts

NIL appearances cannot conflict with mandatory practice, class, or team travel. Put this language in every deal: 'Subject to athletic and academic schedule.'

C1: NIL Agents vs. Financial Advisors

Not the same role. You may need both. Use the NCAA Agent Registry as a first filter, not a final answer.

C2 & C3: Eligibility Chains

Booster-as-agent chain: Family-friend agent was a booster → agent representation is impermissible benefit → eligibility issue. Remedy: ask compliance to vet agent before signing. **Joint-account chain:** NIL income in joint account with booster parent → impermissible benefit picture. Remedy: athlete's account in athlete's name, parents advisory only.

C4: Agent Fee Structure and Caps

Most states cap agent fees (often 5%, sometimes lower). Ask: What is the cap in my state? What is the agreement form? When is the fee earned? A 20% fee is a red flag, not a negotiation.

C5: Transfer Portal NIL Continuity

A deal signed at School A may not survive transfer to School B. Read the termination clause. Expect a transfer will reopen the deal.

C6: Crypto and Digital Asset Payments

Crypto raises three issues: tax (received-value rules), compliance disclosure, counterparty risk. The playbook does not say no to crypto. It says model the three issues before accepting.

C7: Power of Attorney / Account Control

If Someone Asks for POA

This is rarely necessary and almost always a bad idea. The difference between authorizing a tax filing and handing over account control is enormous. If someone asks for POA, the answer is no. If they push back, they're not the right advisor.

Disclaimer

Built to direct your professional engagement, not replace it. Not legal, tax, or financial advice for any specific person or institution.

FEDERAL POLICY UPDATE · MAY 2026

The Trump Executive Order on College Sports

What the April 2026 executive order does, what it might mean for high school athletes preparing for college NIL, and what to do about it.

WHAT THE EO DIRECTS

- **5-year eligibility cap.** Limits college athlete eligibility to no more than five years.
- **One-transfer rule.** Athletes may transfer schools only once before graduation without sit-out requirement. *Note: courts have already rejected the prior NCAA version of this rule on antitrust grounds; legal challenges to this provision are expected.*
- **Anti-fraudulent NIL.** Prohibits 'fraudulent NIL schemes' defined as paying above fair market value for athlete services in connection with intercollegiate athletics. The fair-market-value standard itself is undefined in the EO.
- **Women's and Olympic sports protection.** Funding requirements for women's and non-revenue Olympic sports at universities receiving federal funds.
- **Effective date: August 1, 2026.** Compressed implementation timeline; legal challenges expected to seek injunctions before that date.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR HS READERS

If you are a high school athlete planning to play college sports: **(1)** schools and collectives are reshaping how they price NIL deals to fit the EO's fair-market-value standard — the offers you receive in your recruitment may look different than what older players received; **(2)** the one-transfer rule could limit your flexibility once you commit, so the school choice you make matters more; **(3)** the women's and Olympic sports protections may improve funding and facilities for non-football/basketball programs at the schools recruiting you - this is worth asking schools about during your recruiting visits.

THREE THINGS TO DO RIGHT NOW

- **Document everything.** Every NIL deal you sign in 2025-2026 should have written support for why the dollar amount reflects fair market value - engagement-rate data, follower-count benchmarks, comparable deals from peer athletes. The 'fraudulent NIL' provision is the most likely enforcement vector; defensible documentation is your principal protection.
- **Stay close to your school compliance officer.** The operational interpretation of the EO will be developed at the school-compliance level before federal enforcement guidance arrives. Your school's compliance officer is the first-line authority on what's permitted in the period between now and August 1, 2026.
- **Monitor the legal challenges.** Multiple lawsuits challenging the EO are expected before August 1, 2026. The actual operational impact will depend on which provisions survive injunction and which do not. Front Office Sports, On3, and ESPN College Sports cover the developments daily.

FOR THE FULL OPERATING DEPTH

This callout summarizes the practitioner-level treatment in the full *Athletes Wealth Playbook* — Editorial Update 7 covers the EO mechanics, the SCORE Act legislative context, Title IX intersection, and four practitioner action items at greater depth. Available at **baratelliinstitute.com**.

Sources: White House Presidential Action 'Urgent National Action to Save College Sports' (April 2026); CBS Sports, ESPN, On3, Front Office Sports reporting (April-May 2026).

RESOURCES

Mental Health

Because the financial stakes don't take care of the human stakes.

Money is important. It's important enough to read this entire book. But money is not more important than your mental health. The financial stakes in athletic careers are real. The pressure is real. So is the mental health toll. If you or a teammate need help, here are the doors that are open.

NCAA SAAC Mental Health Resources

Your Student-Athlete Advisory Committee has mental health liaisons. Ask your compliance office or coaching staff for the contact. They are teammates trained to listen and point you to professional help.

NAMI HelpLine (1-800-950-6264)

National Alliance on Mental Illness. Free, confidential, staffed by people with lived experience. Can help you find local resources.

Hilinski's Hope Foundation

Focuses on student-athlete mental health and suicide prevention. Resources tailored to the athletic world.

Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741)

24/7 text-based crisis support. Often easier than calling.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call 988)

If you're in crisis. Free, confidential, 24/7. Also text 'HELLO' to 741741.

Your School's Athletic Department Mental Health Program

Most schools now have mental health support built in. Ask: 'What mental health resources do we have?' Programs vary by school.

You are not broken for needing help. You are human. And you are not alone.