“One and Done”

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Abstract

This thesis project centers on the so-called One and Done Rule established in 2005 under the NBA’s Collective Bargaining agreement. The rule requires that an athlete must be 19 years old and one year removed from high school competition in order to enter into the NBA Draft. The thesis investigates the rule from the prospective of university officials, college coaches, and predominant media outlets.
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One and Done

Introduction

Lebron James was the most hyped high school basketball phenom in the country with all the power in his hands. The likes of Nike endorsements and ESPN tabbing him as the next Michael Jordan circled the media frenzy around him. His high school gymnasium is to small to hold a varsity game anymore so they played national televised games at Ohio St. University and other college campuses in the area. On top of that, the most prestigious basketball programs in the country such as Duke, UNC, Kentucky and Kansas are all vying for his services. Campus and in house recruiting visits by Roy Williams, John Calipari, Bill Self, and Mike Krzyzewski cumulate his Senior Year of high school. All this and then the chance to play in the NBA with the highest basketball gods of the world telling him that he’s ready for the NBA and don’t need college. This is the circus that Lebron James dealt with in his high school years and made the highly anticipated decision to skip college and Duke University to enter his talents in the NBA draft. Lebron was the last great high school player that proved college wasn’t essential in becoming a great NBA basketball player. With great NBA player’s like Kobe Bryant, Dwight Howard, and Kevin Garnett who also jumped straight into the NBA have led to the creation and label of the “One and Done” rule.
The new NBA draft rule was established in spite of the great amount of success high school players have had in the past. The NBA players’ union accepted the minimum-age rule in 2005, during the last collective bargaining negotiations. The rule, which went into effect in 2006, requires a non-international player to be at least 19 years old and one year out of high school before entering the draft. (Davis) Not only does this change the landscape of the NBA but more specifically colleges and universities, which have now started to see the effects academically and athletically. This new rule has been encapsulated in the phrase “one and done” throughout the sports world.

Four years into the new rule change, long-term effects haven’t been calculated or identified but the short term is littered with problems for Universities and the athletes themselves. However, the short term has provided evidence that it can benefit college basketball as well as the NBA. This controversial NBA policy has had major consequences for college recruiting and coaching philosophies, NCAA student-athletes, and the actual players involved.
The Effect of the Rule on Recruiting Philosophies

NBA Draft after 2005 Following the Rule

Kobe Bryant, Kevin Garnett, Dwight Howard, Al Jefferson, Lebron James and Josh Smith for example are perennial all stars that successfully made the jump to the NBA right out of high school. One player in particular, Kobe Bryant is one of the great icons in today’s game and is considered to be one of the greatest basketball players of this generation. His name alone sells the most jerseys worldwide. (NBA.com) Athletes who attended college but did not graduate such as Carmelo Anthony and Chris Paul, are regarded as top 10 players in the league. With the demand for extraordinary talent in the NBA today, faster and stronger athletes are being produced and the college level is a breeding ground for the NBA to salivate over these students.

Before 2006, it was a good bet that most of the most coveted high school basketball players in the country would forgo their freshman year of college and enter the NBA draft. Others would enter college to get better, gain more experience, and live the college life most kids do. From 2000-2005, “27 high school seniors were drafted in the NBA with the peak of 9 in 2005. Out of those six drafts, there was three first overall picks from high school as well as nine players that have been to at least one all star game to date (nbadraft.net).” That’s 33% of the high school players getting drafted from high school making an elite status in the NBA with many others contributing to teams around the NBA. These athletes were never seen on a college campus and have had success at the
high school level at age 18-19 years old. Since the rule was established, many of
the athletes entered college knowing full well that they would enter the NBA draft
the following year.

The immediate impact wasn’t evident in the first year with only two
freshman college players getting drafted in 2006. The real leap took place in
2007-2010 when 34 freshman players left college and got drafted. These “one
and done” players now realize they can play in the NBA after seeing their elder
counterparts having success in the NBA with little college experience. With the
alarming trends of players pursuing their NBA careers after just one year of
college ball, coaches realize that bringing in the best recruits could hinder long
term success at their schools. Others realize that stocking up these prized recruits
could realistically give their team a shot at a national title year in and year out.

**Coaches Philosophies**

Coaches across the country have different views on recruiting the “one
and done” players. John Calipari, a renegade for promoting and recruiting these
players, is all for bringing in these athletes. “What I do is recruit the best players
I can and if they’re prepared after a year to go, I influence them to go,” Calipari
told the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times. “Then you just keep reloading.” (Davis)

Calipari’s theory has essentially worked for him in the past few years at the
University of Memphis and most recently, last year at the University of Kentucky.
Calipari has seen six former players in the past few years leave for the NBA after
just one year of basketball. His image and persistence is attracting the best
recruits to play together for a year and try to win a national title may have started
to rub off on his fellow coaches around the Southeastern Conference (SEC). LSU coach Trent Johnson sees the winning approach by getting these players. “Those guys that are one and done usually help you win a lot of games.” South Carolina coach Darrin Horn says if the players produce the way the Kentucky players have, “then absolutely you take those guys.” The negative, Horn says, is replacing them after they are gone.

To the contrary, legendary coaches John Thompson III of Georgetown, Mike Krzyzewski of Duke and Jeff Capel of Oklahoma firmly oppose the rule and think it is sending the wrong message to the athletes and schools. Krzyzewski who has led the USA Olympic Team to a gold medal in the Beijing Olympics and the World Championships in Turkey along with several national titles at Duke has made a focus to not solely recruit these types of players. His philosophy is to build his teams through upperclassmen and focus on team unity and play. “Any player who is good enough should be allowed to turn pro directly out of high school. But if a player comes to college, Krzyzewski says, he should stay long enough to take the core courses that lead to a degree.” Adding to his argument is Capel who is more adamant about the integrity of the game and educational system. “It’s a bad rule. I think it’s a really bad rule,” Oklahoma coach Jeff Capel said. “In my opinion, it makes a mockery of education in college and also I think it’s condescending on the NBA’s part. To be honest with you, I’m not sure how much the NBA cares about college basketball. They’re in the business of making the NBA the best product they can make it. I think the NBA is happy with the way their rule is. They get to market these kids for a year (before they turn pro).”
Capel was successfully able to keep star sensation Blake Griffin for his sophomore year of college but recently lost Tiny Gallon to this past year’s draft.

Recruiting which players is the hot commodity in college basketball. Yes, schools want to attract the best players they can that fit their system and go on to compete for a national championship. The better recruits the better your team will be essentially. The question then is do freshman stars translate to championships?

**Effects on Team Play and Success**

The answer is an emphatic no. Since 2000, only one team (Syracuse) with freshman sensation Carmelo Anthony won a title with a freshman one and done player/s. The majority of the teams that win are upperclassmen laden teams that have relied on team chemistry and experience to fulfill their championship aspirations. The three teams there relied heavily on their freshman players in recent date where last year’s Kentucky team, 2008’s Memphis team and 2007’s Ohio St. In all three instances, the teams best player’s were freshman that all left after their first year of college and all got beat by upperclassmen lead teams. The biggest disappointment would have had to be last years Kentucky team. Lead by three starting freshman and their sixth man, Kentucky was the unanimous pick to win the championship. John Wall, Demarcus Cousins, Eric Bledsoe and Daniel Orton lead the number one recruiting class in the country that dominated the regular season and were out to prove that freshman “one and done” players could win championships. The season ended earlier than expected losing in the sweet 16 round against a tough West Virginia team that lost to eventual champion Duke
in the next round. Not achieving the goal of a championship was a let down for Kentucky but in many ways it brought many positives.

Kentucky reinforced the winning tradition at one of the most predominant schools in college basketball history and created a buzz that many schools try to strive for year in and year out. Although they didn’t win the championship, Kentucky showed that multiple freshmen could carry a team into the tournament and compete at the highest level. As the school keeps reaping the benefits, it encounters the biggest problem that is feared by the coaches and schools. The above mentioned freshman all entered the 2010 NBA draft in the summer and were all selected in the first round, leaving Kentucky in a huge bind for the upcoming season. This is exactly why some coaches can’t take the gamble on these prized recruits. Good news for Kentucky is that they have hauled in one of the top recruiting classes once again this season and already have the two best high school player’s for next year’s team signed. Kentucky will keep rolling the dice as long as John Calipari is the head coach and looking for that title that has eluded him.

Schools such as the University of Memphis have had some overall success since the one and done rule was established. If success is measured by national titles then technically they haven’t succeeded but Memphis has made it to the national title game in 2008 before losing to the senior laden Kansas squad. The 2008 and 2009 years were very good teams that were led by freshman standouts Derrick Rose and Tyreke Evans. Rose is already one of the top point guards in the league and Evans was last year’s Rookie of the Year. Both players brought
Memphis basketball back on the map and gave the school nationwide recognition. Memphis plays in Conference USA and is a step down from the traditional power conferences like the SEC, ACC, BIG 12, Pac 10, and Big East. The overall competition isn’t as high in the league and Memphis ravished through the conference going undefeated both year’s and making huge pushes through the tournament. These two players brought the notoriety needed to establish a powerhouse basketball program where they could compete with all the top teams in the country. Although Memphis was criticized for lack of competition during the year, they set tough pre-conference schedules to prove that they were no slouches. The resurrection of the team played dividends for fans of the team as well as the country.

The 2008 team finished with an overall record of 38-2 and a conference record of 16-0 (ESPN). The two losses came against a very good University of Tennessee team and the eventual nation champion Kansas Jayhawks. They team reeled off 26 wins to start the season before their first loss. All this happened with a freshman point guard who was considered NBA ready before the season even started. Calipari was the mastermind behind the success of bringing in these recruits and producing win after win. He set a standard of excellence at Memphis and started to recruit and rely on these talented incoming freshman who if had a choice, wouldn’t set foot on a college campus. The following year saw the departure of Rose as expected but the school reloaded with a top five player in Tyreke Evans and also highly touted Wesley Witherspoon. The recruiting class was ranked 14th by ESPN to start the year. The team ended up with a 33-4 record
and once again a perfect 16-0 conference record. Evans led the team to a number three ranking at the end of the regular season and made it to the Sweet 16 before bowing out to the University of Missouri.

With the inherited success of Memphis and Kentucky with freshman players, most critics feel that all is smooth and well. Since this is college and not the NBA, athletes are required to maintain a certain standard as a “student” as well as standards on the court. The term student-athlete has raised controversy among academic officials and athletic directors across the country on whether the student part of college is up to standards.

The Effect on the NCAA Student-Athlete Concept

The controversy among athletes attending class and satisfying the standards of being a student-athlete is a cause for concern. Advocates likes Krzyzewski and University of Connecticut head coach Jim Calhoun insist that if a player wants to play in the NBA then enter the draft but if you come to school you should be required to stay three years and work towards a degree to make the “student-athlete” work both ways. One year or three years it doesn’t matter, athletes aren’t getting degrees no matter when they leave school early to play in the NBA but athletic directors and NCAA officials have argued about the quality of the student-athlete across the country.

The purpose of going to college is not only to be a basketball player but also to be a “student-athlete.” A student-athlete is supposed to be someone who completes academic schoolwork in the classroom and also participates in a sport of choice. Yes, the term is “student-athlete”, not athlete. As universities and the
player’s get use to the new rule, the academic side of athletes has been made a mockery across the country for those who stay for one year. Some universities and coaches have strong feelings about the athletes not succeeding in the classroom or even attending class for that matter.

Athletic Directors and college officials have openly scrutinized the rule that allows many student athletes to treat academics like a secondary option instead of a priority. "A university is a place for education, not for merely showing off athletic wares and then leaving," says Alan Hauser, president of the Faculty Athletics Representative Association. "That makes it like a minor league sport where a (player) reads a book now and then." Harsh criticism by Hauser is one of the many officials who agree along the same lines that academics aren’t taken seriously. Guys like Jim Haney and Jim Livengood are in compliance with Hauser.

Jim Haney, executive director of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, is another advocate that sees the athletes mistreating academics. "A kid takes one semester of college work and in the spring semester, he's putting his name in," Haney says of the one and done athletes.

Jim Livengood, Arizona athletics director says "I'm not condemning the young student-athlete who is at that level athletically but we're talking one semester, the fall semester," that one-and-done players take seriously. That "has bad consequences for student-athletes" and colleges, says Hauser, faculty athletics rep at Appalachian State. If players "had to complete three or four years, they
know they're going to have to do academic work to stay eligible. … The rule, as it now stands, doesn't do a whole lot of good for anyone."

Gary Roberts, dean of the Indiana University law school, thinks the rule is good for most parties. "Is it good for the NBA? Apparently so, because they have" it, he says. "Is it good for the college game? I think it's good for the college game to have a Kevin Durant, or that caliber of player, even for one year … rather than not at all. "Is it better for the kid? There's probably a tiny percentage of kids who would be better off if they could quit the pretense of being a college student and go straight to the pros, but I'm not sure if the NBA should make its rules based on a tiny handful of kids who are going to eventually be in the NBA anyway." (USA Today)

Livengood is in complete disagreement with the notion that players benefit from a single year in school the way Gene Smith feels, the athletic director of Ohio St. Smith feels that it is a “fallacy” that students can’t thrive and be a successful student-athlete in just one year. I think at Ohio State, the people we had in our program are better off because we had them," Smith says. "There are always the Greg Oden’s of the world who, in all likelihood, wasn't going to return. But he was a great student. He was a great person. He contributed greatly to our campus culture.” (USA Today) Greg Oden is one of the three freshmen that left Ohio St. early for the NBA draft in 2007.

Smith also stated "I can go through each kid we've had. … They learned a lot. They were students; all of them made 3.0s or better. … For us to think that institutions at our level in basketball are just going to turn our backs on that type
of athlete, I just don't think that's realistic." Although Smith has had success doesn't mean that is the same for every school.

Livengood’s response was almost the complete opposite of Smith. "It becomes disruptive for the individual," he says. "It becomes disruptive for the team. And the biggest thing, in my opinion, is it really becomes disruptive for the institution, for your faculty, for your administration. … We're really doing a disservice to our institutions, to our programs and to the young person. I'm not smart enough to figure it out, but there's got to be a better way."

Whatever it may be, there is an alarming trend of players not holding the student end of the bargain. The contradiction to this argument is the actual fact that basketball teams are performing well in the classrooms. The NCAA released numbers under their Academic Progress Rate for coach’s report and surprisingly, universities and coaches that are producing and recruiting these one and done players received high grades.

The definition of the APR is as followed: “The APR is calculated by allocating points for eligibility and retention -- the two factors that research identifies as the best indicators of graduation. Each player on a given roster earns a maximum of two points per term, one for being academically eligible and one for staying with the institution. A team's APR is the total points of a team's roster at a given time divided by the total points possible. Since this results in a decimal number, the CAP decided to multiply it by 1,000 for ease of reference. Thus, a raw APR score of .925 translates into the 925 that will become the standard terminology.” (Brown)
This report isn’t targeted for just the freshman students who leave school early but the team as a whole. Having one and done players will however affect the overall score of the team. Of the top 25 teams that finished the 2008-2009 season, 13 teams received a perfect score and all four Final 4 teams were on the list. John Calipari earned passing grades, which isn’t comprehensible due to the fact that he has recruited multiple one and done athletes. Is the report skewed? Only time will tell when the basketball programs go through a cycle of one and done athletes in the next few years. Penalties have already been handed out for a highly recognized athletic and academic university.

In 2010, Syracuse University will be penalized for falling under the 925 mark. The penalty was caused because of three players, Johnny Flynn, Eric Devendorf, and Paul Harris, who all left early while still have eligibility left. Syracuse was the only major college basketball program to be penalized. Since the results were tabulated from 2005-2009, the evidence isn’t really all what it seems. After the big boom of freshman leaving the past two years, not many teams have taken a huge hit of multiple players leaving. I would suspect that the University of Kentucky would not fare well if 2009-2011 is implemented due to the large number of freshman leaving school early. Kentucky saw four freshmen leave last year’s team to the NBA Draft and between this year and next year’s teams; the school will see several more players leave for the draft. The APR will have a more profound impact in a few more year’s when the wave of freshmen leaving early is accounted for (orange basketball).
This new NBA policy has altered the college basketball landscape because of these athletes going to college instead of jumping right to the NBA. However, the NBA doesn’t run the NCAA and therefore doesn’t need to make sure the college game has a perfect system.
The NBA Prospective

From the NBA’s point of view, the rule change has done nothing but better prepare college athletes for the rigorous demanding game of the NBA and give them a chance to earn a degree. David Stern, who is the Commissioner of the NBA, implemented this rule in 2005. Stern created the rule so that the NBA could monitor the athletes before they entered the draft and uses it as a recruiting tool. Others say that the rule was implemented to better the interests of the NBA. Both are essentially right but it has become a fierce debate on why Stern created the rule and what it is doing to the college landscape.

Reported by USA Today, Stern was quoted saying that he originally asked for a two year out of high school rule but had to bargain with the NBA Union, which wanted just one year. Did Stern originally want the athletes to get some sort of an education and not make a mockery of the student athlete? It is irrelevant now because we do have the one and done rule. The situation is that the NBA is forcing athletes to go to one year of college under their own will or venture off into the world until they are 19 just so they can enter the NBA Draft. When you have athletes such as Derrick Rose, Kevin Durant, and John Wall attending college who clearly don’t belong in the college game, it does set up a debate whether this rule is harming college basketball.

The reality is that this one-year of college for the players can be a recruiting basis for NBA teams so they can make a better decision on what
players to draft. Having one year of experience can weed out the potential duds that have occurred in previous draft classes that had high school players not equipped for the NBA. Since this is the NBA, the league is trying anything they can to make it better and that includes making ramifications to tighten up kids that aren’t ready for the NBA. In the eyes of the NBA, getting a chance to see these players get a level of competition at the top colleges can in retrospect, further enhance their opportunities professionally. Since most of this thesis has discussed the consequences for recruiting, coaches, and the universities, the actual player’s themselves have transcended this rule and have made it such a heated debate.
Players and the Consequences

Among the many freshman that have entered the draft, a few players stand out that prove there is no reason why they should have to go to college and are NBA ready. The group of player’s analyzed in this section have mixed results and situations that have set precedence in their own ways. In retrospect, the college game has also benefited from these players because if not for the rule, the college game never would have had these guys on college campuses. These players among others are Kevin Durant and Derrick Rose.
Kevin Durant

Durant is one of the most accomplished freshmen to ever play college basketball and he only played one year. Durant was a prized recruit out of high school earning all-american status as a senior and signed with the University of Texas. His numbers at Texas are off the charts. Durant averaged a staggering 25.8 points, 11.1 rebounds and 1.9 blocks a game. With numbers like that, he earned National Player of the Year honors from The Associated Press, NABC, USBWA, CBS/Chevrolet and The Sporting News. The awards kept piling on as he also won the Adolph Rupp Trophy, the Naismith Award and the Wooden Award, becoming the first-ever freshman in NCAA history to win any of those awards (nba.com). To finish off his accomplishments he was a unanimous 1st team All American becoming only the third freshman to do so in NCAA history (Division by Durant).

The accolades for Durant were impressive and the Oklahoma City Thunder selected him as the number two pick in the 2007 NBA Draft. The theory that surrounded Durant was that by no means should he be in the college game because he was that dominant. So far in his three years in the NBA, he has backed this up with his play.

Durant has become one of the young great players in the league today. Fresh off helping the USA World Team win a gold medal in Turkey, Durant has established that he belongs. In his rookie season in 2007, he won Rookie of the Year and made the All Rookie First team. Two short years later, Durant led the league in scoring with 30.1 points per game. He became the youngest player in
the history of the league to do so. The accolades kept coming as he received 1st Team All League status, which is only honored to the top five players in the league. He has shattered countless records for a season by a youngster with all of his accomplishments coming before he was 21 (Division by Durant).

With everything that Durant has accomplished, people still bring up that he wasted one year at college. Whether or not his college career was a waste, you can make an argument that one year of competition helped his skill set and better prepared him for the NBA. When young kids see the success that Durant had in his one year of college and also so far in his NBA career, it solidifies the idea that there is no reason to stay in college if you can have that kind of impact. Coaches like Rick Barnes at the University of Texas love to have a guy like Durant but coaches across the country facing him realize that he is a major talent who shouldn’t belong in the college game. Durant is the most successful one and done player since 2005 but not far behind him is the talented guard Derrick Rose.

**Derrick Rose:**

Rose is a special talent much like Kevin Durant. Rose was another top prospect in the nation as a high schooler and chose to enroll at the University of Memphis and John Calipari. Rose was touted as a physical freak who was quicker, stronger, and more athletic then most his age. Rose didn’t receive the same accolades as Durant did mainly because most people thought that the college game wasn’t the right fit for him and that he would thrive in the NBA style of play. Nonetheless, Rose had an impressive freshman year in 2008 for Memphis. He led the team to the national title game and at times looked
unstoppable. This was one area that Rose surpassed Durant. Durant’s team wasn’t as successful but it would be contributed to less talent around him then Rose had at Memphis.

Rose was selected as a 3rd Team All-American as well as Conference Freshman of the Year and also Conference Player of the Year. His efforts in the final four earned him a spot on the final four all tournament team. Everyone around college basketball including his coach knew that Rose wasn’t sticking around for his sophomore year nor should he have. Rose became the 1st overall pick in the 2008 NBA Draft by the Chicago Bulls making him the second freshman to be taking 1st overall since the rule change (Division by Rose).

Rose has done some great things so far in his NBA career. He joined Durant on the USA World Team this past summer to capture the gold medal. He was the starting point guard for the team. Rose also was the Rookie of the Year in the NBA and almost led the Bulls to an upset of the number one team in the eastern conference; the Boston Celtics. Rose has become one of the young great, exciting point guards in the league and is yet another example of a budding superstar that had to go to college.

The accolades that both Durant and Rose piled up in college are no doubt impressive and both benefited from one year of college ball. In 2008, high school star’s began to explore and work around the new rule. Basketball was left with high school junior’s and senior’s going overseas to play professionally and then enter the NBA Draft. The leading renegade for the jump was Brandon Jennings.

Brandon Jennings
Brandon Jennings was as exciting of a point guard as you could get in high school three years ago. The product from the powerhouse Oak Hill Academy School that traditionally puts out elite college and NBA players was the 2008 Naismith and Parade Magazine Player of the Year as a high school senior. Jennings was an eccentric player on and off the court. His hairstyle belonged in the 1980’s but his game was definitely suited for the NBA right out of high school. Since Jennings fell under the new rule, his intentions were to go to the University of Arizona and possibly bring national prominence back to the school. In an unprecedented decision for the game of basketball, Jennings decided to forgo Arizona and be the first player to go play pro ball overseas. Jennings was the first to exploit the NBA rule and find a loophole so that he didn’t have to play college ball and also earn money in the meantime.

Lottomatica Virtus Roma was the destination for Jennings, which was an Italian pro team in a very competitive Italian League. Jennings would average 5.5 points, 1.6 rebounds, 2.3 assists and 1.6 steals in 17.0 minutes in 27 Italian League games. (nba.com) The controversy followed when Jennings decided to become pro overseas. A lot of critics felt that Jennings would get buried on the bench and not play enough to show NBA teams that he can play in the league. The critics were initially right considered Jennings only played 17 minutes a game but his 27 games played was a close representation of how many games he would have played in college. With those numbers alone on a college team, Jennings would not be drafted. What he had going for him was the competition that he was playing against, which happened to be very good pro ball.
Jennings overseas experience was good enough to get him drafted in the 2009 NBA Draft. He was drafted 10th overall in the first round by the Milwaukee Bucks. In his rookie season, he averaged 15.5 points, 5.7 assists and 3.4 rebounds in 82 games. (NBA.com) It was evident that Jennings could play in the NBA and his numbers showed alone that he could be a superstar. Jennings departure to Europe has a profound effect for the NBA. The rule doesn’t state that you need to go to college in order to get into the NBA but sending 18 year old kid’s overseas with no pro experience isn’t the image the NBA wants to put out. Essentially, having player’s go to school in the United States gives the general manager’s of the NBA access to the players but when overseas, there is a chance the player’s won’t succeed or survive.

The early success for Jennings so far shows kids that a decision to skip college and play overseas is a realistic possibility but Jennings has other thoughts. His experiences gave warnings to future high school seniors who are thinking about going overseas. In an interview with the NY Times, “Jennings said I’ve gotten paid on time once this year,” “They treat me like I’m a little kid. They don’t see me as a man. If you get on a good team, you might not play a lot. Some nights you’ll play a lot; some nights you won’t play at all. That’s just how it is.”(NY Times) Jennings exodus to Europe would set grounds for another high school player but with different circumstances.

**Jeremy Tyler**

Jeremy Tyler was considered one of the top high school juniors in the country in 2008. After watching Jennings make the move to Europe, Tyler set
another precedence for high school players. Tyler decided to forgo his senior year of high school to go play overseas. Tyler had averaged 28.7 points a game his junior year and had committed to play for Rick Pitino at Louisville. Like Jennings, Tyler backed out to accept a $140,000 deal with Maccabi Haifa of the Israeli Super League (ESPN News Services). The decision was surprising to everyone especially since Tyler wasn’t going to get a high school degree. He would also not be eligible for the NBA Draft until 2011, the same time it would have been if he completed his senior year of high school and freshman year in college.

Tyler didn’t last long in his first season overseas. He played in just 10 games averaging only seven minutes a game before quitting and heading back to San Diego. Tyler would find another home in the 2010 season; he is currently signed with Tokyo Apache of Japan's professional basketball league. Tyler so far is projected as a second round pick in next year's draft, which is a far cry from the hype he received in high school.

In no way would David Stern suggest to high school athletes to leave high school without a degree and go play professionally overseas until they are 19 and eligible. Tyler’s decision is puzzling to everyone in the NBA and college because he was such a great talent who would have excelled in college and eventually in the NBA. With the risk of playing overseas and not getting a high school diploma, Tyler has disappeared on most NBA team’s radar and could risk not being drafted. Both Jennings and Tyler are examples of high school players
working around the NBA rule to earn money and play professionally overseas in order to play in the NBA.

Five years into the new rule most high school player’s are either going to college or going to play overseas. As with Jennings who was the first to play overseas, Latavious Williams also set a first for working around the NBA rule.

**Latavious Williams**

Latavious Williams became the first high school player to jump straight to the NBA since the league instituted its age limit in 2005. There is a catch though; Williams got drafted in the NBA’s Development League, which is a breeding ground for player’s that are on NBA roster’s to get some work in if they aren’t getting any playing time. Williams was drafted 16th, the final pick of the first round by the Tulsa 66ers. Williams is the most recent example of a high school athlete getting around the system of the age requirements of the NBA.

The University of Memphis had a commitment from Williams but eventually backed out to enter the D-League Draft. Williams choose the D-League over playing overseas and going to college to better expose himself as a player and the best way to do that was right under the NBA’s eyes. The negative side of this decision is that the D-League is nothing more then playground pick-up games where there is no defense and it’s all about “me”. A year in the league would hopefully allow Williams to get drafted in the NBA draft in 2010, which is exactly what happened. Williams became the first high school player to get drafted from the D-League to the NBA. He was selected 48th by the Miami Heat and then was traded to the Oklahoma City Thunder, whose affiliate team is the
66ers (Jensen). Unfortunately for him, he didn’t make the 2010-2011 roster for the Thunder and is playing another season for the 66ers. He is now part of the NBA and can be brought up at anytime if the team chooses.

Williams was a groundbreaking player whose career path to the NBA was a first. Williams has excelled in the D-League and has shown no signs that his decision was the wrong one. If he went to college for a year, would he have gone higher in the draft and actually make a 2010 NBA roster? Hard to tell but by playing with NBA caliber player’s in the D-League gave him a better shot to see what he had against that type of competition.

Perhaps the most important person before 2005 was high school phenom Lenny Cooke. Cooke, like many others before attempted to enter the NBA Draft straight out of high school. His story however is how the greatest of talent’s blew it all away and gave some precedence for the NBA to establish the new rule.

**The Story of Lenny Cooke**

In July 2001 at the ABCD Camp in Teaneck, NJ, a match up between two great talent’s sent one into stardom and the other in the shadows of the depth. Lebron James was a 16-year-old kid from Ohio trying to make a name for himself against the top basketball player in the country, Lenny Cooke, from Brooklyn. Lenny had won MVP of the camp the previous year. Lenny had the hype, the game, and the swag that had everyone in the country salivating. The much-
anticipated match up on the last day of camp catapulted Lebron James into glory and left Lenny in his shadows.

Lebron scored 24 points in the match up and also hit a three pointer at the buzzer that gave his team a two-point victory over Lenny’s team. Lenny was held to just nine points. A devastating player on the court and all the athleticism in the world, Lenny began to hear the voices of the NBA ringing in his head. Basketball and school didn’t co-exist with Lenny as he often struggled to go to class let alone get good grades. He couldn’t take academics seriously and it derailed his career as a player. He bounced around from one high school to another but always had one common crutch to lean on; dominance on the basketball court. In his junior year, he dominated statistically with over 25 points, 10 rebounds, 2 steals and 2 blocks a game (hoopedia). Cooke then played in the famous Rucker Park Summer League and became MVP. At the start of his Senior Year, he averaged 31 points a game through the first eight games before he was deemed ineligible due to turning 19, which is a state law in New Jersey (hoopedia).

The incompletion of Lenny’s senior year of basketball ruined any chance to go to college. With atrocious grades and the habit of skipping school, universities such as St. Johns, Seton Hall, Miami, and North Carolina were no longer calling. With no basketball to play the rest of his senior year, Lenny went back to the rough neighborhood he grew up in. There is where he had street agents and hustlers telling him he would be a lottery pick in the draft. All the outside influences led him to move to the Detroit area to live with former

His determination to prove he could make it in the NBA ended abruptly when he broke his toe in pre-draft camp. The devastating blow disabled any chance he had to show what he could do on the court. The end result was every single team in the two rounds of the draft passed on him. The voices of stardom, money, and fame blew up in his face. The injury wasn’t the only reason why he didn’t get drafted. Coaches from the NBA said he didn’t have enough experience, lacked maturity, and had too much arrogance. All these factors could be contributed to not completing high school and listening to the hype machine that existed around him.

Lenny had the potential to be the best but that fateful day when Lebron outplayed him derailed any chance of success. Lenny has been anointed with: “He was Lebron before Lebron.” Since not being drafted in 2002, Lenny has never made it to the NBA and never made a substantial living playing basketball. With the rule in place today, it gives these athletes a chance to at least attempt college and if an injury does occur, academics are right by there side and they don’t get lost in the shuffle like Lenny Cooke.

With the analysis of the selected players throughout the thesis, all of them have encountered pressure to sign with agents and endorsements. Legally, a college athlete cannot be managed by an agent or receive any money or endorsements. Having said this, these rules are being violated every year because
the competition for acquiring the top talent gives the best chance for that big payday for agents and endorsements.
Follow the Money

Money and fame can drive an 18-year-old kid to do almost anything. With street agents and endorsement deals pushing a kid to make the quantum leap to the NBA, there aren’t enough people out there that drive these kids away from the illegality of it all. Anytime leading up to the NBA Draft and signing an agent, you can’t receive money, shoes, cars, apartments, clothes, and anything else you can think of. However, most of these kids don’t have thousands of dollars lying around nor do they have the great perks that can be provided for them. When you are a top-notch player in high school, you have many people trying to pull you into different directions and often kids accept what they are hearing.

Before 2005, no one claimed an elite endorsement status like Lebron James. Before Lebron even put a uniform on for the NBA, he signed a seven year, $90 million shoe deal with Nike (ESPN). This was an unprecedented signing for numerous reasons. First, Lebron hasn’t stepped into an NBA arena yet. Second, Lebron hasn’t even been drafted yet, which is a clear sign that he is being coveted by the top mogul powers of the sport (Nike, Adidas, Reebok). Signing an 18-year-old kid millions of dollars without knowing what he can do at the pro level tells you that he is a once in a life time kind of player.

Yes, $90 million is guaranteed to give Lebron and his family a very comfortable lifestyle but the fact of the matter is, he was able to pursue these types of luxuries and business deals because he didn’t have to worry about going to college. Since 2005, scandals have come out across the country about illegal
recruiting and benefits that player’s have received. More and more allegations are starting to come out about top recruits over the past few year’s, which further critiques the use of a student-athlete.

The biggest recruiting scandal to date has been with highly touted guard OJ Mayo from USC. Mayo attended USC his freshman year and then entered his talents into the NBA draft the following year. He had no intentions to even going to school let alone stay in school. USC is a great school with many legendary actors and athletes so it isn’t so far fetched to think that illegal activities are going on. Mayo was accused and found guilty of receiving improper cash and gifts while at USC. This investigation by the NCAA also coincided with another highly touted running back, Reggie Bush, who also received these gifts. The consequences were severe; the whole 2007-2008 season is vanished. No wins, no postseason recognition, no money from the NCAA tournament. The worst of the penalties was a postseason ban for the following year which effects the whole team long after Mayo has left.

Mayo isn’t the only one who has been caught nor is he the only one receiving benefits. Hundreds of player’s across the country are facing agents and people who want to be part of their fame and success. There is a fine line between what you can and can’t receive while you are in college but because of this new draft rule, players who wouldn’t be going to college in the first place don’t have to work hard academically and they often get benefits that are illegal.
What is the future of the collective bargaining agreement?

College and NBA basketball have both flourished in recent years due to great individual and team play that has excited the average fan. Player’s have made the game exciting again and in large part due to the success of the young high school and college player’s who elevate the level of play. With the implemented rule in 2005, the college game has been able to see the talents of player’s who are better suited playing in the NBA right away rather then explore a year of college. However, five year’s later and the player’s union is seeking to end the age limit rule in the next collective bargaining agreement.

A source from the national basketball association says, "The players have always been philosophically opposed to it. The vast majority of players feel a player should have the right to make a living. If he has the talent and wants to make money to help his family, he should have that right. It's just a matter of principle." (ESPN)

The NBA player’s feel its necessary for high school athletes who know they can compete at the highest level of basketball have the right to enter if they so choose. As mentioned throughout this thesis, players straight out of high school have thrived in the NBA and have revived the quality of basketball that the NBA has lacked since the 80’s and early 90’s.

Forcing high school athletes to go to college or wait one year of out of high school to enter the NBA draft doesn’t give these kids their own opportunities to excel. David Stern has been adamant about increasing the age limit to 20 instead of lowering the age requirement. With the NBA season looking at a
lockout for the 2011-2012 season, it may be a wise decision to make a strong statement to push the age limit back to age 20 so kids can participate towards getting a degree or banish the age requirement so that kids can pursue their career endeavors.

The future is uncertain for the high school seniors who look to explore their talents in the NBA and college but with the lock out looming, the college game could get a whole lot better if some one and done player’s decide to stay in college another year instead of the risk of playing no basketball come next season.
Works Cited


<http://www.nbadraft.net/>.


