

A Comparative Research Based on the Enrollment Policies of High-Level Athletes in Chinese and American Universities

Lipei Meng *

Department of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

*Corresponding author: 3190105718@zju.edu.cn

Abstract. The United States, one of the world's most prosperous countries in the development of college sports, has a relatively complete admissions policy. In order to ensure the overall quality of high-level athletes, it is essential to guarantee good enrollment. By comparing the enrollment policies of high-level athletes between Chinese and American universities, this paper examines the problems existing in the enrollment of high-level athletes in Chinese universities. It is found that in China, the first problem is the semi-transparency of the individualized admissions process of colleges and universities leads to unequal admissions; next, the schools give athletes candidates fewer majors to choose from; then, the unified national admissions will reduce the opportunities of candidates; finally, there is an information communication barrier between universities and candidates. Based on the above problems, this article, by referring to the admissions policy adopted by the United States, suggests colleges in China objectively judge the situation of candidates and formulate a reasonable enrollment plan. First, establishing a third-party organization and improving the supervision system; next, giving candidates more opportunities to choose majors; then, establish a communication platform between colleges and candidates, so as to promote the continuous positive development of high-level athlete enrollment in Chinese colleges and universities.

Keywords: Enrollment policy; high-level athletes; enrollment process.

1. Introduction

The United States has formed a set of standardized operating mechanisms through continuous practice in the process of recruiting college athletes. Although there were many problems and controversies in the USA in the early days, such as the non-standard recruitment mechanism of college athletes, the eligibility of student-athletes, and the illegal operations of college admissions officers in the selection process of student-athletes, etc., under the guidance of the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), American colleges and universities have gradually developed and formed an operating system that is in line with the all-round development of student-athletes, which protects not only the interests of athletes but also the interests of colleges and universities. From the management experience of American college athletes will provide a significant reference value for China to improve the management of college athletes.

At present, there are researches on the mechanism of recruiting high-level athletes in academia. The research status of foreign scholars mainly focuses on the research on the development process of student-athlete enrollment and selection in American colleges and universities, the research on the influencing factors of student-athlete admissions in American colleges and universities, and the research on the recruitment of student-athletes in different channels in American colleges and universities. In comparison, the research status of Chinese scholars mainly focuses on the analysis of the enrollment policy of high-level Chinese athletes, the current situation and innovation of the enrollment mechanism of high-level athletes in Chinese colleges and universities, and the influencing factors of the construction of Chinese college athletes. Therefore, scholars at home and abroad have different emphases, but they all pay high attention to relevant policies.

China and the United States have different environments and enrollment methods. However, both the United States and China hope to select athletes with good development prospects among the many athletes in their own countries and improve the quality of school students. In fact, the research on the controversies and existing problems caused by the enrollment of college athletes is essential to face

up to the education and development of college student athletes, and plays an important role in the development and education of high-level athletes in Chinese colleges and universities.

Therefore, this article will use literature analysis, logical analysis, and comparative research methods to summarize the problems existing in the enrollment of high-level athletes in Chinese universities and put forward improvement measures and suggestions, mainly from comparing Chinese and American systems, Chinese policy requirements, and Chinese enrollment methods.

2. Enrollment Policies for High-level Athletes in the United States

2.1 Student Source Channels

According to the origin of students in American colleges and universities, student-athletes can be divided into three categories. One category is students who directly enter a four-year university from high school or preparatory courses; the second category is student-athletes who transfer from a two-year community college to a four-year university. Meet the standards of colleges and universities, so they can improve their cultural level while studying in community colleges and use this as a springboard to transfer from community colleges to four-year universities; the third category is international student-athletes specially recruited from other countries. The United States has different admissions channels and admissions processes for different types of students.

2.2 Examination Format

The United States does not have a unified standard for the enrollment process of college athletes. American universities have the autonomy of enrollment, and each school can formulate its enrollment plan and admission standards according to its needs and conditions. Governments at all levels in the United States will not intervene too much in the admissions work of colleges and universities. However, governments at all levels in the United States can still guide and supervise the admissions work of colleges and universities, especially public schools, through financial appropriations and legislation.

2.3 Enrollment Method

The National Collegiate Athletic Association was established to be responsible for the special recruitment of high-level athletes. The National Office of the Federation regulates the entire enrollment process from a macro level but is not responsible for the qualification review of specific candidates for examinations; The qualification review committee is responsible for reviewing the qualifications for applying for high-level athletes; the national office of the federation will generally grasp and coordinate the sports events of high-level athlete applicants every year and control the reasonable distribution of students in different sports according to the project focus of the member colleges; The member college service center of the federation is responsible for assisting the qualification review committee in recording the situation of high-level athletes, enrollment system, transfer regulations, etc., and provide free application guides and other information to applicants; Under the unified coordination of the national office, the admissions college conducts interviews (meetings) and evaluations of quasi-high-level athletes who have passed the qualification review, and decides whether to admit them; the Southeast League is responsible for the signing of the national letter of intent [1].

Moreover, the NCAA has clearly limited the time for the enrollment activities of each member school and divided the time of enrollment activities into four stages: the contract period, the evaluation period, the quiet period, and the restricted period according to the main tasks of different periods [2]. In the stage of contact, the staff of the sports department of American colleges and universities can formally meet with student-athletes, and this stage is for communication and consultation. In the evaluation stage, the staff of the American college sports department will evaluate the student-athletes objectively and fairly through the level of sports and academic qualifications. At this stage, it is prohibited for any college athletic department staff to make informal contact with

student-athletes. During the quiet period, college athletic staff and student-athletes will only have informal contact within the college. During the final restricted period, college athletic staff and student-athletes will not be allowed contact of any kind on any occasion.

3. Enrollment Mechanism of High-level Athletes in China

3.1 Student Source Channels

At present, the types of athletes who can apply for the high-level athlete examination in Chinese colleges and universities are roughly divided into the following four categories.

The first category is first- and second-tier athletes who retired from the national team and provincial and municipal sports teams. Most of these athletes chose to leave professional teams due to injuries and return to school to participate in further studies. Most of these athletes are the main force of college sports teams and have played a role in promoting college sports [3].

The second category is athletes from youth sports schools. The strong support of national policies has brought youth sports into a stage of rapid development, and a large number of young people with sports potential have entered professional sports schools for training [4].

The third category is ordinary high school sports students. This type of athlete is a semi-professional student with outstanding sports performance and ideal academic performance. The main goal is to take the high-level college entrance examination and enter the ideal university.

The fourth category is ordinary high school students. These athletes sign up for competitions and organize their training.

3.2 Examination Format

In the past, colleges and universities had greater independent enrollment rights in China, and colleges and universities could formulate special tests for their own schools based on enrollment requirements. However, due to the lack of unified monitoring, many violations have occurred. Therefore, on November 11, 2022, the General Office of the Ministry of Education officially issued the "Notice on Enrolling Some Special Types of Ordinary Colleges and Universities in 2023", which clearly requires 11 items, including football, table tennis, badminton, swimming, track and field, martial arts, taekwondo, fencing, baseball, beach volleyball, and ice and snow will be subject to national examinations. The relevant sports special examination methods and scoring standards of the General Administration of Sports will be uniformly used for scoring, and colleges and universities will no longer organize school examinations for related items. According to the previously released high-level sports team reform policy, the number of items in the unified national examination is gradually increasing, which is the general trend. As of November 2022, China's only remaining high-level sports teams are basketball, volleyball, and tennis, which still retain the school examination form. From 2024, the cultural test scores of high-level sports team candidates will all use the national unified college entrance examination cultural test results, and all special tests will be included in the unified national examination. It will be implemented by the General Administration of Sports of China, and colleges and universities will no longer organize relevant school examinations. The unified national examination means that all candidates for the project in the country will be tested at the same place and under unified rules.

3.3 Enrollment Method

The recruitment process for high-level sports teams in China is divided into the following steps. First, colleges and universities release high-level sports team enrollment brochures; second, athlete candidates who meet the admission examination requirements for high-level sports teams register in accordance with the enrollment brochures issued by each college; third, eligibility checks for candidates; forth, carry out special tests, which take the form of unified national examinations or college entrance examinations; fifth, publicity of the eligible list is generally publicized on the institution's official website or the Sunshine College Entrance Examination website; sixth, confirm

the colleges and universities you intend to enroll in; seventh, fill in the college entrance examination volunteer; eighth, receive admission letter.

4. Comparing China and the United States and Discovering the Problems in the Chinese System

4.1 The Opacity of Chinese University Admissions

Compared to the United States, which has played a supervisory role in recruiting high-level athletes, in China, when high-level universities recruit high-level athletes, the referees often sent are admissions officers from other schools. In many cases, the admissions officers will know each other, sometimes leading to some unwritten cooperation between those specially hired admissions officers and the admissions schools. During the examination process of candidates, it helps the students whom the admission school wants to enroll to gain an advantage in the examination to varying degrees. Many colleges and universities set up competition scores, objective physical fitness test data, and some items that require admissions officers to score candidates' technical movements in the recruitment items of high-level admissions exams. Inevitably, the scoring process will be more or less subjective, which will also affect the fairness of the candidates' competition. Take tennis, for example; although some candidates' movements are not beautiful enough, they hit the ball very well. At this time, the emphasis on the admissions officer's scoring determines the level of the candidate's score. This needs a more precise for the candidate. In the admissions brochures for high-level athletes in colleges and universities for several years, there needs to be an obvious and specific evaluation standard in these admissions examination regulations that have the admissions officer's scoring test items.

In addition, after reviewing the recruitment brochures for high-level athletes in colleges and universities in recent years, the author also found that some schools divide the high-level admissions examination into two stages. For example, the tennis test process in the "Nanjing Agricultural University 2022 High-Level Sports Team Enrollment Test Candidates Notice": the first stage of the test is a physical fitness test: (1) Men's parallel bar arm flexion and extension test/women's 1-minute double-fly rope skipping test;(2) male and female "fan" type running test. Basic technique test: combined shots, including forehand and backhand volleys in front of the net, high-pressure shots in the half-court, mid-air shots (forehand or backhand) in the half-court, and forehand and backhand shots from the baseline. The second stage of the exam is a competition. Among them, Article 4 of the "Tennis Exam Instructions" points out that the final score of candidates is composed of the sum of the first and second-stage test scores. However, this does not give a specific percentage of each stage in the candidate's total score. This also gives the recruiting schools more room to maneuver. This leaves an opportunity for recruiting schools to adjust the proportion of the first and second stages in the total score on the spot to recruit candidates they are more interested in. Although this reflects the autonomy of the school in recruiting students, it should publish more comprehensive and detailed admissions provisions in the admissions brochures in advance rather than after the admissions process or after the end of the admissions process. This will bring unfairness to other candidates.

4.2 Give Athletes Candidates Fewer Majors to Choose from

In many universities in the United States, high-level athletes can have majors for athlete candidates to choose from. Although not all majors are available, a specific range of choices is given. Because the purpose of the NCAA is to maintain the amateur nature of competitive college sports and ensure the realization of the educational goals of higher education, the NCAA believes that student-athletes are students first, and the status of athletes is only a special status after student status. However, among the colleges and universities with high-level athletes in China, only a few schools have given athletes candidates the opportunity to choose their majors. Some athletes and students with higher sports performance will choose schools with higher professional selection among schools with the

same reputation. This will lead to a higher attractiveness of schools with a higher degree of professional choice. This will also lead to the fact that these schools with a high degree of professional choice have more outstanding athlete students, which will increase their attractiveness to students, and even the emergence of sports team giants, which will affect the fairness of college sports competitions. Liu Bo, Director of the Sports Department of Tsinghua University, believes: "Some schools do not have sports specialists.

They do not meet the application conditions; although some schools have sports majors, they are not attractive enough, and these schools may not be able to recruit students [5]. In addition, athletes may also be in particular need of counseling for a variety of additional stress-related concerns, including time management, burnout, fear of failure, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues [6]. Based on China's domestic environment, the employment situation of fresh college students is under more significant pressure. Most student-athletes with good athletic talents will be given heavier competition tasks by the school team during their college years. Therefore, the proportion of time and energy invested in academics will be smaller, and most student-athletes with high levels of athletic talent will enter lower grades than students who enter colleges and universities through regular admissions, and they will not be as academically outstanding. In this case, being forced to choose a designated major will reduce students' enthusiasm for learning, resulting in insufficient in-depth study, and it is difficult to find their own specific employment direction after graduation.

4.3 Unified Enrollment will Reduce the Chances of Candidates

Compared with the enrollment model adopted by American college sports teams, China will fully implement the national unified enrollment model in 2024. The General Office of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China officially issued the "Notice on Doing a Good Job in Enrolling Some Special Types of Ordinary Colleges and Universities in 2023", pointing out that from 2024, the cultural test scores of high-level sports team candidates will all use the national unified college entrance examination culture test and professional tests are all included in the unified national examination, which is organized and implemented by the General Administration of Sport of China, and colleges and universities no longer organize relevant school examinations. The unified national examination means that all candidates for the project in the country will be tested at the same place and under unified rules. In this way, there is only one chance for candidates to enroll students in colleges and universities each year. Compared with the previous school recruitment, candidates can choose several schools through the registration platform to participate in several admissions exams at different times, but now there is only one chance. Once there is a mistake in the exam, they will have to retake the exam next year. Although there is only one chance to take the exam compared with the college entrance examination for cultural subjects, the difference from the college entrance examination for cultural subjects is that competitive sports have the risk of injury and the factors of state. The unified examination will be more advantageous for sports that do not require confrontation, such as the high jump, long jump, 100 meters. These events are more of a contest between themselves. However, events such as table tennis, basketball, need to be confronted with opponents, and the probability of accidental occurrence will be greater. For candidates, assuming that it is a test for the high jump group of a high-level sports team, the candidates' special sports abilities can be sorted in order through the test. Still, if it is a test for the tennis group of a high-level sports team, examiners cannot use a clear score to judge the candidate's sports level, like the high jump event. Usually, the test is conducted in the form of a competition. At this time, candidates with excellent physical performance may meet prematurely during the competition, resulting in the failure of some of the candidates who should have been admitted. Such candidates will lose more opportunities than school recruitment. In addition, injuries and illnesses will inevitably occur during the test process. If school recruitment is adopted, candidates will have the opportunity to recover from the gap between schools and schools, and they will also have the opportunity to take exams from other schools. The unified national enrollment is cruel to those injured candidates.

4.4 An Information Barrier between Colleges and Candidates

Some athletic departments do not welcome input from student affairs administrators and faculty. But engaging in purposeful conversations with athletic personnel could ease access [7]. Compared with the admissions of high-level sports teams in American colleges and universities, the staff of colleges and universities can contact and talk with candidates at a specific time and place. However, in China, there needs to be a clear policy in the released information that students who participate in high-level sports team examinations can contact colleges and universities in some form. China lacks an information communication platform where a third party participates in supervision and management, which will make it impossible for candidates to fully understand the teaching philosophy of the university, the idea of building a sports team, the competition plan after entering the university, the conditions for postgraduate education, etc. This will affect, to a certain extent, the candidate's choice of school, as well as their own career planning after entering the university.

5. Countermeasures and Suggestions

5.1 Establish a Third-party Organization and Improve the Supervision System

As the translucent individualized admissions process of colleges and universities leads to the emergence of unequal enrollment, China can follow the US enrollment model and create a third-party supervision organization. From the candidate's athlete qualification review to the high-level sports team test process to the review and disclosure of test results, participate in the operation of each link to protect the interests of candidates. Limit the behavior of recruiting schools and test athletes to avoid improper behavior in the recruiting process. When candidates have objections to the test results, the third-party organization will disclose the details of the results immediately. Through the third-party supervision organization, the admission details and process are made transparent.

5.2 Give Candidates More Opportunities to Choose Majors

Chinese colleges and universities should give candidates more opportunities to choose majors and respect students' future career plans. From 2024 onwards in China, among the students admitted to high-level sports teams, students whose scores in cultural subjects in the college entrance examination are not lower than 20 points below the admission score of the relevant majors of the recruiting colleges and universities in the province of origin can apply for the corresponding general majors. The remaining students are limited to majors in physical education and, in principle, cannot be transferred to other majors. This is more difficult for those athletes with outstanding sports performance, and the professional selection requirements for those athletes with excellent sports performance can be appropriately relaxed because for candidates who participate in high-level sports team enrollment, the first identity to enter a university is a student, followed by athletes. Whether the country cultivates high-level athletes or high-level athletes continue to study further, the ultimate goal is to obtain employment and serve the society [8]. Sports are just hobbies, and attention should be paid to the educational needs of students to prevent the right to education from being deprived. The focus of any initiative must be on improving the academic experiences of student-athletes. Successful initiatives will include integration of the athlete into the campus community with a focus on outcomes that will lead to degree attainment [9]. Colleges and universities can adopt "wide entry and strict exit" requirements for such athletes. While giving them the right to choose majors, they can be encouraged to achieve more academic achievements.

5.3 Establish a Communication Platform between Universities and Candidates

The NCAA played a role in all of the participants' recruitment because it set parameters about how the coaches could communicate with potential student-athletes [10]. China can learn from America. Through the joint organization of the Ministry of Education and the State Sports General Administration, with the participation of provincial and municipal education bureaus and sports

bureaus, China can build a platform for high-level sports teams to enroll schools and exchange candidates. During the application and enrollment stages, colleges and universities can publish enrollment brochures and test notices on the platform. Candidates on the platform can submit their applications for the exam in a simulated manner between admissions exams. Universities or candidates can also pre-select their favorite candidates or universities through the platform's convenient screening and comparison functions. Through guidance, recommendation and self-selection, colleges and universities can issue invitations to candidates, and candidates can also submit applications to colleges and universities. If both parties are interested, they can conduct short practical training or exchanges under the supervision of a third party. This will help reduce the cost of information communication between universities and candidates and improve the rationality of resource allocation. The convenient and efficient two-way selection mechanism for candidates and colleges will help meet the real needs of both parties and enrich the structure of college students.

6. Summary

The United States has a relatively complete recruitment policy for high-level athletes compared to China. This standardized and systematic enrollment mechanism protects the interests of athletes and candidates and the interests of recruiting colleges. Of course, the admissions policy of American college sports teams is not perfect, but through the comparative study of the admissions policies of high-level sports teams between China and the United States, the author summarizes the following problems in China:

At the end of this article, the author also puts forward his own countermeasures and suggestions for the enrollment policy of China's high-level sports teams.

The first is to establish a third-party supervision organization and improve the supervision system; the second is to give candidates more rights to choose majors; the last suggestion is to establish a communication platform between universities and candidates.

Of course, this study also has the following problems:

First, this article adopts the method of document analysis, which still needs to improve in collecting and sorting out documents, and there will be deviations in translation and understanding, and there may be some omissions. Additional supplements are needed in the study of foreign literature.

Second, this study is to compare the enrollment policies of high-level sports teams in Chinese and American colleges and universities; because there is no opportunity to visit American colleges and universities to participate in the investigation and research, which also potentially reduce the practicality of the article.

Third, this article mainly aims to research the problems in recruiting high-level sports teams in China. The analysis of the recruitment mechanism of high-level sports teams in the United States needs to be more comprehensive and needs to be further refined.

References

- [1] Zhang Yong, Fan Yinghua. A Comparative Study on the Enrollment Mechanism of High-Level Athletes in Chinese and American Universities. *Journal of Beijing Sport University*, 2005, (04).
- [2] Ling Ping, Zhang Zhu. Research on the Management System of Enrolling Student-Athletes in American Universities. *Journal of Shandong Institute of Physical Education*, 2002, (03).
- [3] Qiu Zhouliang. The Current Situation and Mechanism Innovation of Enrollment for High-Level Sports Teams in Colleges and Universities. *Chinese Sports Coaches*, 2022, 30 (01).
- [4] Qian Chenxiang, Fu Chao. Research on the layout and development of high-level sports teams in Chinese colleges and universities. *Sports Culture Guide*, 2016(3).
- [5] Wei Hua, Wang Jingyu. Recruitment of high-level sports teams in colleges and universities has reached a crossroads. *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, 2022-06-23(011).

- [6] Murray, M. A. The counseling needs of college student-athletes. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 1997, 58, 2088.
- [7] Howard-Hamilton M F, Sina J A. How college affects student athletes. New Directions for Student Services, 2001(93): 35-45.
- [8] Zhai Zhaojuan. Analysis on the enrollment policy of high-level athletes in my country in recent years. Sports Science and Technology Literature Bulletin, 2014, 22(11):86-87.
- [9] Sanders V L, Gardner H A, Jones J. Recruitment, admission, and retention of first-year student-athletes. College student-athletes: Challenges, opportunities and policy implications, 2009: 93-108.
- [10] Bentzinger, Eric Ryan. "International student-athlete experiences at the NCAA Division I level." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Iowa State University, 2016.