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Sports & Entertainment Beat

From March Madness to Music Royalties: NIL Deals, Biggie's Legacy, and the Vedder Cup

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Welcome back to the Spotlight! Just as Spring arrived yesterday, so too did the NCAA's crown jewels: the NCAA Basketball Championships. The former has the potential to usher in hay fever while the latter has the potential to bring fans (whether alumni, or bracket pool participants) to a fever pitch. Undoubtedly, much of the allure about March Madness comes from overlooked and largely unknown schools and individuals who find themselves thrust into the national spotlight-and lucrative marketing opportunities. Usually, the individuals from these schools are the players who help teams play David to the Goliaths, but in the NIL era, it could apparently be a team manager. Case in point, the team manager for the McNeese State University Cowboys, Amir "Aura" Khan has seen his star rise in recent days, having signed first-ever student manager NIL deals with national brands Buffalo Wild Wings, TickPick and Insomnia Cookies. With the Cowboys' improbable victory over the Clemson University Tigers on Thursday-during which fans saw him energetically lead his team out of the tunnel (not to mention seeing his face printed all over a cheerleader's socks), his aura will continue to build as he looks to capitalize on his proverbial fifteen minutes.

- The Beatles' Paul McCartney trades songwriting for letter-writing, warning the Trump Administration against copyright reform that would allow artificial intelligence programs led by OpenAI and Google to train on copyrighted works, potentially stifling human creative innovation. After all, the copyrighted works you take are equal to the copyrighted works that you make.

- Primary Wave cuts a B.I.G. $200 million check to acquire the rights to the song catalog of Christopher Wallace (better known as "The Notorious B.I.G.," "Biggie Smalls" or simply "Biggie") from the late rapper's estate.

- Finally, blending endorsements, music and sports into one, Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder licensed his name to the MLB for a Seattle Mariners and San Diego Padres rivalry baseball series (the Vedder Cup). Given Vedder's history of having recorded the trilogy of famed songs "Once," "Alive" and "Footsteps" from a demo tape while in San Diego, and subsequently moving to Seattle, you could say that you can't find a better man after whom to name the series.

For inquiries and/or unabashed compliments, please feel free to contact me at josh.bloomgarden@foster.com or add me on LinkedIn.

Endorsement Deals, Sponsorships & Investments

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Celtics sold for record $6.1 billion, sources say
March 20, 2025 via ESPN – News

What Are Sports Investors Bullish And Bearish On In 2025?
March 19, 2025 via Forbes

Liquid Death and Kylie Kelce promote 'Kegs for Pregs' in latest collab
March 18, 2025 via Campaign Live

Sixth Street Buys 10% Stake in MLB's Giants, Real Estate Project
March 18, 2025 via Sportico

How Stanley became America's unlikeliest 'It' brand - and what's next
March 14, 2025 via The Drum

Sports

How new professional sports leagues like SailGP are putting women at the fore
March 19, 2025 via NBC News

NCAA agrees to lift name, image and likeness recruitment ban
March 18, 2025 via The Independent

Who will survive the boom of emerging sports leagues?
March 18, 2025 via Awful Announcing

Red Bull Adds 19-Year-Old Soccer Trailblazer Olivia Moultrie To Its Global Athlete Roster
March 18, 2025 via Forbes

EA College Basketball Game Still Sidelined as Football Expenses Rise
March 18, 2025 via Sportico

Betting on women's college basketball rides post-Caitlin Clark wave as NCAA Tournament begins
March 17, 2025 via Associated Press (AP)

Mariners, Padres create the 'Vedder Cup,' endorsed by Eddie himself
March 15, 2025 via LancasterOnline

Paige Bueckers is poised to be next face of women's basketball. And it might be in Dallas.
March 14, 2025 via Lancaster Online

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Music Biz

Confirmed: Primary Wave acquires stake in Biggie Smalls catalog in deal valuing artist's estate at $200m
March 20, 2025 via Music Business Worldwide

UMG strikes partnership with HEAT to bring Lil' Wayne, CG5 music to game developers
March 20, 2025 via Music Business Worldwide

Limp Bizkit's Lawsuit Against Universal Music Rollin' Ahead As Band Seeks $200M In Royalties
March 19, 2025 via Deadline

OpenAI is pushing for Donald Trump to weaken copyright protections in the US. Paul McCartney is fighting back.
March 19, 2025 via Music Business Worldwide

Film & TV

Roku Acquires 'Just A Bit Outside' From Producer Kelly Kahl; Doc Chronicles 1982 Milwaukee Brewers
March 19, 2025 via Deadline

NBA may bring back iconic highlight show 'NBA Inside Stuff'
March 19, 2025 via NBC News

TV Slips to Second-Screen Status as YouTube, Netflix Steal Share
March 19, 2025 via Sportico

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