How NIL money is reshaping the NBA draft

BY AARON BEARD
AP BASKETBALL WRITER



Marcio Jose Sanchez, file/AP Photo

Texas Tech forward Darrion Williams (5) celebrates during the second half in the Elite Eight of the NCAA college basketball tournament against Florida on March 29 in San Francisco.

The ability of college athletes to cash in on their collegiate fame has led to fewer players jumping early to the NBA draft. Eighty-two players appeared on the list of early entrants primarily from American colleges along with other teams. That's down from 162 in 2024. Additionally, 46 early college entrants and international players stayed in the draft after withdrawal deadlines. That's down from 77 last year. College athletes were permitted to profit on their name, image and likeness (NIL) in July 2021. This week's draft begins days before the start of revenue sharing for schools to pay athletes directly.

Will Wade's work building N.C. State into an immediate winner included the pursuit of an entrant in the NBA draft, just in case he returned to college.

It wasn't a huge risk: With all the cash flowing in college, the number of early entrants to the NBA draft has continued to shrink. This year's draft starts Wednesday night with its lowest total of those prospects in at least 10 years.

"Now you can play the long game a little bit more," Wade told The Associated Press, referring to how college players can look at their futures. "Look, I can get paid the same I would get paid in the G League, the same I would get paid on a two-way (contract), some guys are getting first-round money."

And more money is on the way.

It's been four years since college athletes were permitted to profit off the use of their name, image and likeness (NIL), opening the door for athlete compensation that was once forbidden by NCAA rules. Next week, on July 1, marks the official start of revenue sharing where schools can begin directly paying athletes following the $2.8 billion House antitrust settlement.

For Wade, that led to signing Texas Tech's Darrion Williams after 247sports' fifth-ranked transfer withdrew from the draft.

"Basically now if you're an early entry and you're not a top-20, top-22 pick — where the money slots — you can pretty much make that in college," the new Wolfpack coach said.

It's all part of a seismic change that has rippled through college athletics since the pandemic, its impact touching the NBA. Players willing to "test the waters" in the draft before returning to school now have a lucrative option to consider against uncertain pro prospects.

And it shows in the numbers.

"With all the money that's being thrown around in NIL, you're having a lot less players put their names in," Detroit Pistons president of basketball operations Trajan Langdon said. "You're having pretty good players pulling their names out."

DECLINING NUMBER OF EARLY ENTRANTS

This year's drop is significant when compared to the years before anyone had heard of COVID-19. There was a spike of college players jumping into the draft in the pandemic's aftermath, when they were granted a free eligibility year to temporarily make even a fourth-year senior an "early" entrant.

But those numbers had fallen as those five-year players cycled out of college basketball, and they're now below pre-pandemic levels. That decline coincides with NIL's July 2021 arrival, from athletes doing paid appearances or social-media endorsements to boosters forming collectives offering NIL packages amounting to de facto salaries.

As a result:

- Eighty-two players appeared on the NBA's list of early entrants primarily from American colleges with a smattering of other teams, down 49% from 2024 (162) and nearly 47% compared to the four-year average from 2016-19 (153.5)
- Thirty-two remained after withdrawal deadlines, down from 62 last year and 72.0 from 2016-19.
- Adding international prospects, 109 players declared for the draft, down from 201 last year and 205.0 from 2016-19.
- And only 46 remained, down from 77 in 2024 and 83.8 from 2016-19.

MORE COLLEGE PLAYERS WEIGHING OPTIONS

Duke coach Jon Scheyer understands draft dynamics, both for no-doubt headliners and prospects facing less clarity. He sees college athlete compensation as a "legitimate gamechanger."

"Hopefully it allows players to decide what's truly best for their game," Scheyer told the AP. "It allows them to analyze: 'Am I actually ready for this or not?' Where money doesn't have to be the deciding factor. Because if money's the deciding factor, that's why you see kids not stick. The NBA's cutthroat. It just is."

The Blue Devils are expected to have three players selected in the first-round Wednesday, including presumptive No. 1 pick Cooper Flagg alongside top-10 prospects Kon Knueppel and Khaman Maluach. They also had players sorting through draft decisions.

Freshman Isaiah Evans — a slender wing with explosive scoring potential — withdrew instead of chasing first-round status through the draft process. Incoming transfer Cedric Coward from Washington State rapidly rose draft boards after the combine and remained in the draft.

"There's no substituting the money you're going to make if you're a top-15, top-20 pick," said Scheyer, entering Year 4 as successor to retired Hall of Famer Mike Krzyzewski. "But if you're not solidified as a first-round pick, why risk it when you can have a solid year and a chance to go up or be in the same position the following season?"

COLLEGE COMPENSATION IS RE-SHAPING THE DRAFT POOL

Langdon, himself a former Duke first-rounder, sees that evolution, too.

His Pistons had their first playoff appearance since 2019, but lack a first-round selection and own a single pick in Thursday's second round. Fewer candidates could make the already imperfect science of drafting even trickier in this new reality.

According to the NBA's 2024-25 rookie scale, a player going midway through the first round would make roughly $3.5 million in first-year salary. That figure would drop to about $2.8 million at pick No. 20, $2.3 million at No. 25 and $2.1 million with the 30th and final first-round draftee.

A minimum first-year NBA salary? Roughly $1.2 million.

"These NIL packages are starting to get up to $3 to $4 to $5 to $6 million dollars," Langdon said. "These guys are not going to put their name in to be the 25th pick, or even the 18th pick. They are going to go back to school in hopes of being a lottery pick next year. With that pool of players decreasing, it kind of decreases the odds of the level of player we get at No. 37, just the pure mathematics."

CURRENT NBA PLAYERS OFFER INSIGHT

Indiana Pacers big man Thomas Bryant and Oklahoma City Thunder counterpart Isaiah Hartenstein, who both played in the seven-game NBA Finals that ended Sunday, illustrate Langdon's point.

They were back-to-back second-rounders in 2017 (Bryant at 42, Hartenstein at 43), pushed down a draft board featuring early-entry college players in 33 of the 41 picks before them.

Bryant played two college seasons at Indiana before stints with five NBA teams, including Denver's 2023 championship squad. Would the ability to make college money have changed his journey?

"To be honest, I see it from both sides," Bryant said. "If you're not going to get drafted, you understand that a kid needs money to live in college and everything. So, I understand where they're coming from on that end.

"But for me, I took the chance. I bet on myself, and I believed in myself, and I worked to the very end. And the thing about me is that if I went down, I was going down swinging. I hang my hat on that. For some, it might not be the same case."

The American-born Hartenstein moved to Germany at 11 and played in Lithuania before being drafted. As he put it: "I think everyone's journey is different."

"I think you should have the right people around you to kind of guide you," said Hartenstein, a newly minted NBA champion. "I mean, I was lucky that my dad, who was a professional before, kind of guided me. Depending on your circumstances, it's hard to turn down guaranteed money. If there's an opportunity to get in a good situation in the NBA, you do that. But it's a hard decision."

St. Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church
198 N. Main St.
Pembroke, KY 42266
Eat/Love/Pray
Serve Sunday June 29th
FREE community meals provided with no "if" beginning at noon. Join us for Worship Sunday at 9 a.m. Serve 5th Sunday & Share the Love!

---- Public Notice ----

Notice is hereby given that the Kentucky Department of State Parks at 500 Mero Street Frankfort, Kentucky 40601, has filed an application with the Energy and Environment Cabinet to complete repairs on the dam at Pennyrile Lake within a regulatory floodplain. The Pennyrile Park Dam Repairs Project is located in Christian County approximately nine miles south of the town of Dawson Springs. The Pennyrile Forest State Park Beach will be temporarily used for equipment staging and construction access. Any comments or objections can be submitted via email to: DOW-Floodplain@ky.gov Kentucky Division of Water, Floodplain Management Section, 300 Sower Blvd. Frankfort, KY 40601. Call 502-564-3410 with questions.

FORSQ, Inc. hereby declares its intention to apply for a Special Temporary License no later than July 5, 2025. The licensed premises will be located at 110 W. 9th Street, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, 42240. The owner and president is James Graham, 103 S. Sunset Circle, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, 42240. Any person, association, corporation, or body politic may protest the granting of the license(s) by writing the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 500 Mero Street 2NE33, Frankfort, Kentucky, 40601, within thirty (30) days of the date of legal publication.

EMPLOYMENT

Administrative Assistant Position (Special Projects)

The Hopkinsville Surface and Stormwater Utility has an opening for an Administrative Assistant. The position will require an individual who will be able to communicate, interact and be responsive to the public. Candidates shall have problem solving capabilities and be a positive presence in the workplace. A general description of responsibilities will include, but not be limited to the following: typing, filing, answering phones, program management, database management, project implementation, and working with the public. Qualified candidates should have at a minimum an Associated Degree, have prior experience as an Administrative Assistant, have excellent computer skills, and be attentive to details.

The position comes with a competitive salary. The office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Monday through Friday. Interested candidates should apply by submitting their resume, three (3) references, and a cover letter to: Hopkinsville Surface and Stormwater Utility, c/o Administrative Assistant Search, PO Box 588, Hopkinsville, KY. 42241-0588. The position is open until it is filled.

The Hopkinsville Surface and Stormwater Utility is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

LEGAL NOTICE

Budget Appropriations Ordinance
Ordinance Number 2025-01

AN ORDINANCE SETTING THE ANNUAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2025 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2026 FOR THE CITY OF LA FAYETTE, KENTUCKY

WHEREAS, a budget proposal and message were presented to the legislative body on 21st day of April, 2025; and, 19 Day of May
WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on the proposed budget on the 21st day of APRIL, 2025 NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED BY THE LEGISLATIVE BODY OF LAFAYETTE, KENTUCKY THAT THE FOLLOWING BUDGET IS ADOPTED FOR THE FY 2025-2026 AND THE AMOUNTS STATED ARE APPROPRIATED FOR THE PURPOSES INDICATED.

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS	GENERAL FUND	MUNICIPAL AID	CEMETERY FUND
Cash	$134,000	$16,700	$30,000
CDs	$182,000		
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	**$316,000**	**$16,700**	**$30,000**
REVENUE	**GENERAL FUND**	**MUNICIPAL AID**	**CEMETERY FUND**
Insurance Premium Taxes	$25,000	$2,400	
Real Estate Property Taxes	$16,000		
Vehicle Property Taxes	$3,500		
Cemetery Donations/Plot Sales			$2,000
CD Interest	$7,000		
TOTAL REVENUE	**$51,500**	**$2,400**	**$2,000**
TOTAL ASSETS	**$371,800**	**$20,096**	**$28,800**

EXPENDITURES

CURRENT LIABILITIES	GENERAL FUND	MUNICIPAL AID	CEMETERY FUND
General Government	$1,600		$3,000
Advertising	$1,000		
City Clerk Bond	$40		
City Clerk Salary	$7,800		
Insurance	$2,500		
Attorney Fees	$1,500		
Auditor	$0		
City Improvements Maintenance	$20,000		
Mowing - Cemetery			$8,500
Mowing - City Park	$2,500		
Office Supplies	$500		
Utilities - City Water, Electric, Waste Management	$7,000		
Street Repairs		$10,000	
Flock Safety Camera	$2,000		
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	**$46,440**	**$10,000**	**$11,500**

DATE OF FIRST READING APRIL 21, 2025
PUBLICLY READ AND ADOPTED ON SECOND READING MAY 20, 2024.

APPROVED: _____ Jared Thatcher, Mayor

ATTESTED: _____ Wendy Hancock, City Clerk

This ordinance shall be in effect upon publication as required by KRS Chapter 424.

Kentucky New Era.

CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

PUBLICATION DATE	DEADLINE
TUESDAY	THURSDAY 3 PM
THURSDAY	MONDAY 3 PM
SATURDAY	WEDNESDAY 3 PM

Contact Customer Service at (270) 886-4444, Option 1 or classifieds@kentuckynewera.com Monday-Friday 7AM-3PM

Holidays advance deadlines by 24 hours.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO:

Respondent, DEANDRE DESHAUN HARPER, FATHER, MOTHER, the State of Tennessee, Department of Children's Services, has filed a PETITION TO TERMINATE PARENTAL RIGHTS AND FOR FULL GUARDIANSHIP in regard to the minor children, C.R., DOB 02/05/2018, M.H., DOB 03/11/2019, L.R., DOB 10/01/2020, A.H., DOB 04/23/2022, appears that ordinary process of law cannot be served upon you because your whereabouts are unknown. You are hereby ORDERED to appear in the Juvenile Court of Montgomery County, Tennessee located at 2 Millennium Plaza. Clarksville, TN 37040 on the **9th day of September 2025 at 1:30p.m.** to personally answer the PETITION TO TERMINATE PARENTAL RIGHTS AND FOR FULL GUARDIANSHIP. The trial shall be held before the Honorable Tim Barnes, Judge for the Montgomery County Juvenile Court. Failing to appear for the hearing on this date and time, without good cause, pursuant to Rule 39(c)(3) of the Tenn. R. Juv. P. will result in the loss of your right to contest the petition. You may view and obtain a copy of the Petition and any other subsequently filed legal documents at the Montgomery County Juvenile Court Clerk's Office located at 2 Millennium Plaza. Clarksville, TN 37040.

Entered this 20th day of May, 2025

/s/_____
Tim Barnes, Juvenile Judge

Prepared by:
STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
/s/_____
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