

Analyze the Factors of Professional Athletes' High Income

Chenjin Chu

Hainan University, Hainan, Haikou, China

Keywords: Professional athlete, Athlete income, Salary, Factors

Abstract: In recent years, the high income of professional athletes has aroused concern in society. Whether professional athletes earn hundreds of times more than scientific researchers is reasonable has become a topic of widespread discussion. This paper aims to explain the phenomenon of athletes' high income from the perspective of their commercial value, the effort behind their success and the physical injuries suffered of the career.

1. Introduction

Lionel Messi topped the Forbes list of the highest-paid athletes of 2019 with earnings of \$127 million, according to Forbes on June 11, 2019. While, in China, the national per capita disposable income in 2018 was 28,228 RMB, according to National Bureau of Statistics. Obviously, there is a very huge difference between high-paid professional athletes and common employed people, which has attracted lots of people's attention. There is no chance for them to reach the same level salary of a professional athlete. Nowadays, this gap seems to be larger than ever, because of a surge in the price of television contracts for sports content. Are these professional athletes deserve thousand times more earnings than many other common jobs? This is indeed a problem worth thinking about and discussing. For me, I think that professional athletes deserve what they have been paid.

In today's society, most people still earn around the average wage. Mention to the high payment of professional athletes, some people who consider they work hard but their incomes are much lower than the professional athletes' may think that it will make an unfair situation in the whole society because the wage gap between them is too large. Actually, professional athlete is a kind of special job. Its wage standard is totally different from the common ones. Ordinary jobs are often paid according to work hours or job title, while professional athletes' income is more based on their commercial value.

2. Factors Influencing the High Income of Professional Athletes

The truth is that the commercial value of professional athletes is beyond many people's imagination. For instance, the basketball superstar, LeBron James, once attended a post-match conference wearing a black cap. After that conference, this common black cap spread widely on social media and sold out at a feverish pace. It is common that successful athletes who receive offers from brands. They have a huge sports fan base and countless crazy sports fans who will buy the goods that the star athletes wear or use. Ordinary people can not replace their huge influence. The commercial value comes from athletic achievements which is the very special kind of labor income. It

is also the reason why we can see countless advertisements featuring Cristiano Ronaldo on the cover, as he has been commercialized by Nike and other sports brand. And his endorsement fee is 47 million dollars in 2018 (“Cristiano Ronaldo”, 2019). These endorsement and promotion fees are part of the high income of these professional athletes.

With the development of China's market economy and the change of people's ideas, the concepts of commercialization of athletes are no longer rejected by Chinese people. In the meanwhile, the commodity attributes of athletes' sports services are gradually recognized by people. Chinese economists believe that the essence of sports training, sports performance and competition that professional athletes engage in is a form of labor that athletes pay (Wang & Liu, 2006). Actually this kind of special labor combines athletes' intelligence, psychology and physical strength. The price of professional athletes reflects the public's recognition of athletes' labor results, labor ability and labor value (Chen & Han, 2003).

Others who are against with the high payment of professional athletes may consider that the excessive income of professional athletes will bring the bad value orientation to the society, making people blindly follow the interests. In the end, this phenomenon may lead to the formation of the public's idea of entertainment first. But this wrong value orientation is guided by the social media to a large degree not the direct result of the high wages of professional athletes. In contemporary society, the focus of media attention falls into the trap of entertainment instead of sports.

Like Nobel laureate Herbert Simon once said, “With the development of information, what is valuable is not information, but attention” (Nie, 2013). At the Rio Olympics, the post-match focus of Chinese media was on a female swimmer Fu Yuanhui. During a interview, she was remembered by the public because of the rich face expression and her classic sayings. Subsequently, various social media platforms continued to forward and expand it. Media attention had also shifted from the competition to entertainment. The phenomenon of excessive entertainment in sports news reports is the bottleneck that restricts the development of major sports sectors in China (Wen & Wang, 2017). In this era of popular entertainment, the moral bottom line of the media is tested.

Sometimes social media only focus on professional athletes' high payment and privileged treatment to entertain public but these media ignore what they have paid for getting these rewards. Knowing how hard they train and what they put into their training might make people feel that the athletes deserve the high incomes. Famous swimmer Michael Phelps once described his training volume as: “I'm training 80,000 to 100,000 meters a week, seven days a week. By the time I was 14 or 15, I was training more every week, swimming 50, 000 to 60, 000 meters a day, with no days off. “. It is reported that Sun Yang's training volume is also quite large. The training volume for him is 15,000 to 20,000 meters every day. Instead of focusing on whether the high income of professional athletes will bring bad guidance to the society, all walks of life could learn positive life spirit such as never give up and keep working hard which all of the professional athletes insist. High income is just a reward for their long time hard work. Games and training take up all their lives and they have put numbers of efforts to improve themselves. People should pay more attention to the process rather than the final result.

In the meanwhile, on account of their training and competition, most of professional athletes get some serious and specific pain. They may need to use a large percentage of their incomes to treat diseases. Let us take Guo Jingjing for example, all Chinese have to admit that she is a pride in the history of Chinese diving. However due to the long time of training and competition, her eyes have serious deformation because we all know that when a person fall into the water from a platform, the impact of the water to his head is quite huge. The most direct impact is reflected in Guo Jingjing's eyes. Though surgery has tried to help her restore vision, it still just let her eyesight restore to 0.2. And because of the long-time soak in the water, she already had a very serious rheumatoid joint inflammation. The “diving queen” did own a lot of honors and money, but the physical harm has left

on her body forever.

Last but not least, someone argues that professional athletes do not contribute to the society as much as scientific researchers, university professors and the polices so athletes have no reason to earn more than they do. The truth is that excellent professional athletes are scarce resources for every country and they have done many kinds of social contribution that nobody can take place. The reason why professional athletes are treasures is that to be an excellent athlete not only requires the scientific training, but his own innate genetic factors. When professional athletes have been trained enough, they can represent their own country's highest level in some fields and own medals in the world-class competition for the whole country which is a huge social contribution. What's more, athletes use their competitive spirit to constantly challenge the limits of human beings, so that human beings continue to break their own. At the same time, because athletes for their breakthrough, their development also made a lot of contributions to high-tech which is related to sports. These are all the professional athletes' social contributions.

3. Conclusion

For the high payment of professional athletes, I count that people should not just focus on the wage difference but need to know the commercial value, the process of their training, and their social contribution. In the meanwhile, they are not normal people so we can not judge them by the normal rules. As far as I am concerned, I firmly deem that all the professional athletes deserved what they have been paid because of their commercial value, efforts and social contribution.

The high incomes of professional athletes are not unwarranted so the public should take it in stride. In the future, we hope that the government can work out a more perfect compensation and reward mechanism for professional athletes so that everyone knows clearly what they have gain from a competition or an event and why these athletes have been paid. Both the public and the government should make some changes. And then the development of the whole sports industry and society will become better and better.

References

- [1] Chen Y.&Han X. (2003). *The economic value of professional athletes in China -- a reflection*
- [2] a)on the theory of "human capital". (in Chinese). *Financial theory and practice*, (06): 114-116.
- [3] Cristiano Ronaldo's 10-year sponsorship deal with Nike was revealed to be worth 162 million euros. (in Chinese). (2019, September 7). Retrieved October 8, 2019, from <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2019-09-07/doc-iicezrzq4223304.shtml>
- [4] Wang L. & Liu Yi. (2006). Try to analyze the commercial behavior of Chinese athletes. (in Chinese). *Journal of military physical education institute*, (01):19-21+34.
- [5] Wen Z. & Wang X. (2017). Based on the problem - oriented network sports news thematic planning and reflection. (in Chinese). *New west (theory)*, (01):96-97.
- [6] Nie Z. (2013). *Economic category analysis of attention*. (in Chinese). *The financial times*, (17):246-249+255.