

Soccer scholarship chase: fact & fiction

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SOCCER PLAYERS AND THEIR FAMILIES spend thousands of dollars each year on youth soccer in pursuit of athletic scholarships, but just what are the odds? According to NCAA figures released recently by [The New York Times](#), there is 1.4 women's scholarships for every 100 high school players and half that -- 0.7 scholarships for every 100 high school players -- on the men's side.

The figures show that \$78.2 million in women's soccer scholarships was awarded in 2003-04 -- the last year information is available -- putting soccer third among all women's sports behind only basketball and track & field. The value of a women's soccer scholarship -- how much each player earned on average -- was \$8,404, putting soccer 13th among all women's sports.

As for men's soccer, it ranked fifth among all men's sports with \$51.6 million spent on athletic scholarships but it was far behind the two giants, football (\$367.3 million!) and basketball (\$126 million). The value of a men's soccer scholarship was slightly higher than a women's scholarship -- \$8,523 vs. \$8,404 - - and ranked eighth among all men's sports.

"The youth sports culture is overly aggressive, and while the opportunity for an athletic scholarship is not trivial, it's easy for the opportunity to be overexaggerated by parents and advisers," NCAA President **Miles Brand** told the New York Times. "That can skew behavior and, based on the numbers, lead to unrealistic expectations."