

Strategic Assessment: Launching a College Baseball-Focused Sports App

Market Size and Fan Engagement

A Significant but Underserved Audience: College baseball's fanbase is larger and more passionate than conventional wisdom suggests. While it may not rival college football or basketball in raw size, it stands out among "niche" NCAA sports as a major draw with growing engagement. For example, the NCAA Men's College World Series (MCWS) is *not* a minor event – it regularly attracts national TV audiences in the millions ¹. In 2023, the MCWS averaged **1.65 million viewers per game**, the highest ever on ESPN's platforms ². The 2024 finals continued this momentum, averaging **2.82 million viewers** (with Game 3 drawing 3.34 million) even while competing against an NHL Stanley Cup Game 7 ³. These are *remarkable* figures, underscoring that college baseball can command attention on par with other major college championships. Notably, one MCWS game in 2022 between Ole Miss and Auburn topped **3.1 million viewers**, contributing to a cumulative **29.5 million households** tuning into that tournament ⁴. This broad interest builds throughout the event and **"invalidates any assumption that the sport's appeal is limited to a small subset of die-hard fans"** ⁵. In short, college baseball has a **national footprint** and a **dedicated following** – it's arguably the largest NCAA sport outside the "big two" of football and basketball.

Fan Engagement and Growth Trajectory: By several measures, engagement is on an upswing. The 2023 MCWS was the most-watched ever on ESPN ², and recent years have set viewership records, indicating **growth in audience interest**. College baseball also enjoys strong in-person support in certain regions: powerhouse programs in the SEC, Big 12, and ACC regularly fill stadiums with attendance in the thousands. This translates into substantial economic activity around the sport. Top college baseball programs like Ole Miss, Vanderbilt, Tennessee, and Texas each **generate over \$10 million annually in revenue** (tickets, merchandise, etc.) and carry operating budgets in the \$11–13 million range ⁶ ⁷. While these programs aren't typically profit centers (most college sports outside of football and men's basketball operate at a net loss ⁸), the *scale of investment* is telling. Universities allocate ~6% of athletic budgets to baseball on average (and as high as 14% at some schools) ⁹, reflecting the sport's importance for alumni engagement and school branding ¹⁰. In other words, **college baseball matters** to its institutions and fans – the passion is real, even if it flies under the national radar for much of the year.

Unmet Digital Demand (Especially on Mobile): Despite this sizable fanbase, there is evidence of a **measurable unmet demand** for better digital experiences tailored to college baseball. Fans today consume sports heavily via mobile devices, and they expect rich data and interactivity. Yet the current offerings are paltry. Users *routinely voice frustration* that the dominant NCAA sports apps treat college baseball as an afterthought. A common complaint is that ESPN's app is *"terrible when it comes to [college] baseball"* – lacking meaningful live stats, box scores, or even complete schedules ¹¹. Fans note that they often get nothing more than the score and inning, with no way to filter by team, conference, or ranking ¹². Making matters worse, college baseball content is **buried deep in navigation** (described as *"50 clicks down the list of sports"* in the ESPN app) ¹³. This poor discoverability and feature gap exist **despite** the sport's high viewership, underscoring a disconnect between fan interest and product support ¹⁴. The *chorus* of

complaints isn't new or isolated: fans have been clamoring for a "decent" college baseball app or site for years ¹⁵ ¹⁶ . The engagement is there – as seen in TV ratings, attendance, and active online communities – but the digital product experience is **lagging far behind** fan expectations. This suggests a ripe opportunity to capture an enthusiastic audience that is hungry for a better mobile platform.

Competitive Landscape

ESPN and Major Apps: Breadth Over Depth. The incumbents in sports media, led by ESPN, have a structural blind spot when it comes to niche sports like college baseball. ESPN's business model is built around being an **aggregator** of countless sports, but it prioritizes the *big revenue drivers* (NFL, NBA, top-tier college football/basketball) in its coverage and app design ¹⁷ ¹⁸ . As a result, sports outside the top tier suffer from a "mile wide and an inch deep" approach ¹⁹ . ESPN does hold extensive college baseball *broadcast* rights – over 4,000 games a year air across ESPN channels and streaming ²⁰ – yet its **digital support** for the sport is minimal. The ESPN app is essentially a funnel to drive viewers to ESPN+ streams and marquee content ²¹ . It treats college baseball as a low priority: the app interface for it lacks depth (no dedicated stats, news or community features) and, as noted, even finding the scores requires digging through menus ²² . This is a predictable outcome of ESPN's strategy: as a mass broadcaster, it devotes its development resources to the biggest markets and offers only **surface-level coverage** for everything else ²³ . In practice, ESPN behaves as a broadcaster-first, not a product-first company for niche sports. It is "**exclusive home**" to college baseball games on TV ²⁴ , but it has "*effectively abdicated ownership of the comprehensive data and community experience*" for the sport ²⁵ . The **consequence** is a gaping user experience gap. ESPN's dominance in rights might seem a barrier to entry, but here it becomes a vulnerability: their one-size-fits-all app leaves passionate college baseball fans underserved and frustrated ²⁶ ²⁷ .

Gaps a Startup Could Exploit: The lack of attention by major players is not necessarily due to lack of audience, but likely due to financial focus. The big apps may have *ignored college baseball for rational reasons* under their models – e.g. the sport's fanbase, while large, is niche compared to pro football, so ESPN sees limited ROI in building features for it ²⁸ . However, this **market neglect is a classic inefficiency** that a focused startup can target. A smaller company with a lean product can survive on an audience that might be too small to move the needle for ESPN. In essence, ESPN's strategic blind spot creates room for a new entrant who values depth over breadth ²⁹ ³⁰ . The incumbent's weakness is evidenced by user sentiment: fans clearly perceive that ESPN isn't meeting their needs (the "*low strategic priority*" is obvious to users ¹⁴). This kind of discontent is fertile ground for a newcomer to build goodwill by **actually listening to the community**. If a startup can provide what ESPN won't – e.g. full box scores, rich stats, intuitive scheduling, and easier access – it can quickly earn loyalty. It's worth noting that ESPN's neglect doesn't mean it will never react; but historically, big aggregators rarely drastically improve niche coverage unless a competitor forces their hand. Right now the competitive **white space is essentially vacant**, which is a striking opportunity ³¹ ²⁵ .

Existing Alternatives (or the Lack Thereof): Besides ESPN and similar aggregator apps (Yahoo Sports, CBS Sports, Bleacher Report, theScore, etc.), which all mirror ESPN's shallow approach ²³ , one might expect that a dedicated college baseball platform already exists. In reality, the "**field of alternatives**" is a **void of quality** ³² . The primary specialized competitor is the **D1 Baseball** app (affiliated with a popular D1Baseball website), but its execution has been *notoriously poor*. It has an abysmal **1.7 out of 5** rating on the Apple App Store ³³ , and user reviews label it an "*absolute scam*" and "*poor product*" ³⁴ . These harsh words stem from very real failures: D1's app tried to monetize hardcore fans with a confusing, **broken subscription model**

(requiring multiple separate expensive subscriptions for different content segments) ³⁴. In doing so, it alienated users. Moreover, it didn't even deliver on basic functionality – reviewers complain of a clunky, outdated interface and the absence of fundamental features like team pages, schedules, and sortable stats ³⁵. In effect, the *one* app targeting this community is so bad that it serves as an anti-example. D1's failure is **instructive**: it wasn't a lack of fan interest that doomed it (the audience is there), but rather a failure to understand user expectations and to provide value for cost. This leaves a clear opening for a startup that can avoid those pitfalls. The bar to outperform existing offerings is fairly low: even a halfway decent, user-centric app would vastly surpass ESPN's bare-bones coverage and D1's flawed product. The competitive takeaway is that **no incumbent is truly serving the dedicated college baseball fan** – not the big networks (due to structural focus elsewhere) and not the niche players (due to poor execution). This unserved gap exists perhaps for “valid” financial reasons in the eyes of giants, but it represents a classic *beachhead opportunity* for a focused venture willing to cater to a passionate niche.

Product Strategy Viability (Mobile-First and Data-Rich)

Alignment with User Behavior: A mobile-first, data-rich approach plays directly into how modern sports fans consume content. Today's fans (especially younger Gen Z and Millennials) practically live on their smartphones during games – checking live stats, social feeds, fantasy updates, and chatting with fellow fans. Sports media consumption has decisively shifted to mobile devices, so any new sports product **must** excel on mobile. The good news: user behavior strongly validates the idea of a richer mobile companion for sports like college baseball. Fans have demonstrated that when deep data and interactive features are available, they will engage heavily. Consider how popular the MLB's own app and stat services are for pro baseball fans, or how college basketball fans obsess over stats and brackets in March – these behaviors indicate a *thirst for data* and real-time info. Specifically in college baseball's case, we see fans explicitly *asking* for features like full box scores, play-by-play, and filtering by team or conference ¹². Delivering those in a mobile-first design would simply be meeting an existing demand. In fact, the frustration with ESPN's mobile experience is essentially **free user research**: it tells us exactly what the dedicated users want (and aren't getting) – e.g. more stats, better organization, and on-the-go accessibility ²⁷. A product built around those missing features is highly likely to gain traction among the core fanbase.

Evidence of a Broader Trend: The strategy of focusing on underserved sports with dedicated digital products is supported by larger trends in fan behavior. A 2024 national survey found that **70% of sports fans struggle to find enough coverage** of the less mainstream sports they follow, precisely because most media outlets fixate on one or two big leagues ³⁶. In other words, there is widespread *fan fatigue* with the “one-size-fits-all” coverage model. Many fans (including nearly **3 in 4 younger fans**) say they would consume *more* sports content if outlets covered a wider array of sports they care about ³⁷ ³⁸. This strongly validates the notion that a **deeper, niche-specific platform can thrive**, as fans are actively looking for alternatives to augment the shallow mainstream coverage. We're already seeing successful examples: **FloSports**, for instance, built a substantial business streaming and covering niche sports (from wrestling to track & field) and has reportedly grown to a ~\$100M valuation by “serving the underserved” sports community ³⁹. Another example is **EssentiallySports**, a digital media startup, whose strategy explicitly targets underserved fan segments; their survey results (cited above) show fans' pent-up appetite for more variety and depth in sports coverage ⁴⁰ ⁴¹. These cases illustrate that fans will flock to platforms that give *proper attention* to sports they love.

User-Driven and Data-Rich Features: A “user-driven” product likely means two things: personalization and community. Both are increasingly key in sports media. Personalized content (letting users follow their

favorite teams/players and get tailored news or notifications) is now expected – apps like Yahoo Sports, theScore, and Bleacher Report already do this for major sports. A dedicated college baseball app could take it further, with customization down to specific conferences or even players (useful in college where fans follow prospects). This personalization is **validated by user behavior** – fans of niche sports often curate their own experience through Twitter feeds, forum communities, and custom alerts because mainstream apps don't cater to their interests. Bringing that under one roof would meet an existing behavior pattern.

The “data-rich” aspect is especially fitting for baseball. Baseball is famously stats-heavy, and serious fans relish data (averages, pitching stats, historical comparisons, etc.). An app that offers comprehensive data – think live pitch-by-pitch updates, advanced metrics (for those available in college), and historical stats – can significantly increase engagement time. For context, when MLB introduced its detailed **Gameday** and Statcast data, it saw huge fan uptake; college fans have *never* had an equivalent at their fingertips. Furthermore, automated content generation (recaps, play-by-play, etc.) is a maturing technology that can help fill the gap in a cost-effective way. Even major outlets like the AP and Reuters use automation to cover lower-priority games ⁴². A startup can leverage similar tech to produce game summaries or player stat updates at scale, creating a rich content feed without a large staff. This plays into the *mobile-first consumption* habit – fans can get a stream of updates and stories on their phones immediately, rather than waiting for next-day human-written articles (which often don't exist for college baseball anyway).

Comparable Models in Underserved Sports: There are precedents for success with similar approaches. Aside from FloSports (which proved fans will **pay** for niche live content), consider the rise of specialized community platforms: for example, the soccer app **OneFootball** became hugely popular by focusing initially on a sport underserved in certain markets, providing scores, news, and community in one app – it now has global scale. In U.S. college sports, a parallel can be drawn to the myriad **fan sites and forums** (like 247Sports or Rivals networks for recruiting, or team-specific blogs) that attracted loyal followings by offering depth that ESPN did not. Those started as web communities but could be seen as early evidence that underserved fans seek out *niche platforms*. The difference now is the opportunity to integrate such depth with a modern mobile UX and real-time data. Another relevant case is **The Athletic**: while it focused on mainstream sports teams, its value proposition was depth and quality content for each team's fans – something the big media weren't providing. The Athletic amassed over a million subscribers by proving that fans will subscribe for better coverage of *their* team/sport. A college baseball app would be applying a similar principle (high-quality, in-depth coverage) to a sport that has none.

In summary, a mobile-first, data-rich, user-driven product is not only viable – it's *exactly* what the target audience has been begging for. All indicators (user complaints, survey data, analogies in other sports) suggest that if you build a robust app that truly serves the college baseball fan's needs, **they will adopt it** enthusiastically. The key will be execution: delivering a polished experience on par with what fans get for major sports, but tailored to this community.

Monetization and Expansion Potential

B2C Monetization – College Baseball as a Standalone: As a standalone vertical, college baseball can likely sustain a modest but real direct-to-consumer business, though perhaps not a massive one. The monetization model would probably be a mix of advertising and freemium subscriptions (a strategy hinted at in the “Diamond Insights” plan, which proposes a free ad-supported tier and a premium “Pro” tier later on ⁴³). **Advertising:** The user base, while niche, is attractive in certain ways – college alumni and sports enthusiasts are a demographic that advertisers (e.g. athletic apparel brands, alumni associations, local

businesses in college towns) may want to reach. With a mobile app, non-intrusive targeted ads (banner ads, sponsored content, etc.) can generate revenue. However, the *scale* is a concern: even if the app captured, say, 50,000 daily active users (which would be a significant portion of hardcore fans), advertising alone might only yield so much revenue in a niche context. The CPMs (ad rates) could be decent if the audience is highly engaged, but likely the app would need additional revenue streams as it grows.

Subscriptions: A **premium subscription** offering could unlock more stable revenue. The hardcore fans – the ones currently paying for patchwork solutions like D1 Baseball’s site or subscribing to team-specific newsletters – might be willing to pay for a well-crafted app that aggregates everything for them. The key is to keep it simple and valuable: unlike D1’s mistake of multiple costly subscriptions, a single reasonably priced **“all-access” subscription** could work. This “Diamond Pro” tier could offer features such as detailed analytics, historical data, personalized alerts, or an ad-free experience. The timing is important; as the strategy suggests, it’s wise to first **prove value and grow the user base** on a free tier ⁴⁴, then convert the most engaged users to paid. If even a few percent of users convert, it could be meaningful. For instance, 5,000 subscribers at ~\$5/month is \$25k/month, which can support ongoing development for a small team. It’s worth noting that *monetization in this niche will likely be slower burn*: college baseball fans have been burned by paying for bad products (hence reviews calling D1’s app a scam), so trust must be earned before many open their wallets. That said, the underlying indicators (TV ratings, merchandise sales, attendance) suggest these fans do spend on their passion, so with the right value proposition they *will* pay or generate value per user.

Standalone Financial Outlook: Financially, college baseball by itself is probably a **moderate opportunity** – large enough to build a sustainable small business, but maybe not a unicorn without expansion. The fanbase size is limited relative to pro sports, which caps the total addressable market for a single-sport app. There’s also a **seasonality factor**: interest peaks in the spring and early summer during the season and postseason, then drops in the off-season. That could lead to cyclic engagement and challenges in retaining subscribers year-round. The founder should plan for this (perhaps by providing off-season content like fall training updates, MLB draft ties, or historical features to keep users engaged). Still, as a startup beachhead, launching in a contained market has advantages – it’s focused and the community is tight-knit. If the app captures a lion’s share of die-hard college baseball fans, it could have respectable annual revenue through a combination of ads and a loyal subscriber base. **However**, it likely wouldn’t satisfy venture-scale growth ambitions if it *only* ever served college baseball. This is where expansion comes in.

Expansion into Other Underserved Sports: The real strategic play is to use college baseball as a **beachhead** and then replicate the model across other underserved sports. This approach is explicitly envisioned in the roadmap (Phase 2 in the strategy) ⁴⁵ ⁴⁶. It is logically sound for a few reasons:

- **Shared Characteristics:** Many other NCAA sports share similar dynamics with college baseball – they have passionate followings and marquee events but poor digital coverage. College softball is a prime example. In fact, women’s college softball has exploded in popularity; in 2025 its championship **outdrew the men’s College World Series in TV ratings** ⁴⁷, yet its digital coverage is equally lacking. Fans of college softball voice the same complaints about mainstream apps ignoring their sport. By conquering baseball first, the startup gains experience and credibility that can be applied to softball (which has a closely aligned calendar and fan culture). Other logical verticals include **college lacrosse** (a spring sport with pockets of intense support and minimal coverage), **college volleyball** (especially women’s volleyball in the fall, which is big at many schools), and even

niche sports like college hockey, wrestling, or track if one goes further. Each of these has a devoted fan base starved for attention.

- **Repeatable Playbook:** The strategy would be to **rinse and repeat** the core product framework: for each sport, integrate a reliable data source (stats, schedules, rankings), spin up the app section or a dedicated app with that sport's branding, and use automated content plus maybe a small amount of custom journalism to provide depth. Marketing can leverage the same "underserved fan" messaging that worked for baseball – essentially, *"[Sport] fans, here's the app you've always wanted but never had."* This can be done efficiently if planned right. In the document, it's described as a scalable "playbook for niches" – identify passionate fanbase -> deliver data + content -> address their pain points -> move to next sport ⁴⁸. Executing this sequentially means the business can **aggregate multiple niche audiences** under one umbrella, which over time starts to resemble a much larger user base. Dozens of smaller sports combined can equal a sizable total addressable market, while still maintaining depth in each community.
- **Synergies and Cross-Pollination:** There's also expansion potential beyond NCAA – for instance, if you master covering college softball and baseball, you might extend to minor league baseball or international baseball leagues that are undercovered. Or move into entirely different niches (the strategy memo even mentions possibilities like lower NCAA divisions or niche pro sports like curling) ⁴⁹. Each vertical added strengthens the overall platform's value proposition as the go-to place for **underserved sports fans**. Users might come for college baseball and end up following lacrosse or softball once those are offered, increasing engagement across seasons. This multi-sport approach could smooth out seasonality as well, ensuring the app has relevant content year-round (one sport's off-season might be another's championship time).

In terms of monetization, expanding to additional sports can unlock **new revenue streams** and economies of scale. The tech infrastructure and team expertise can be reused, but you gain new audiences that attract their own sets of advertisers and sponsors. For example, a foray into women's sports might attract sponsorship from companies interested in women's athletics. There's also the possibility of a *bundle* subscription – fans who are interested in more than one niche sport might pay a bit more for a package that covers, say, both college baseball and softball content. This mirrors what FloSports does (sport-specific subscriptions but also an all-sports option). A carefully executed expansion could therefore multiply the revenue potential and make the venture far more enticing from an investment standpoint.

B2B Content Licensing Feasibility: The question of B2B (business-to-business) opportunities – such as licensing data or content to other companies – is an interesting one. In the long run, if this platform becomes the authoritative source for college baseball (and other sports) data and content, there *could* be opportunities to sell or syndicate that content. For example, smaller media outlets or local college radio stations might license automated game recaps or data feeds to use on their own channels. The platform might also develop an **API** for college sports data that could be licensed to app developers, fantasy sports providers, or even sportsbooks (if college sports betting grows, accurate data feeds are valuable). However, one must temper expectations here: **ESPN's dominance** and the existing ecosystem mean the ceiling for B2B licensing is limited. ESPN and other major networks have their own stats partnerships (e.g. with Stats Perform or Sportradar) and generally wouldn't pay a startup for content they can produce in-house. If anything, a successful niche platform is more likely to be *acquired* by a bigger player than to become a long-term licensor to them. Additionally, the NCAA and conferences control official data to some extent and might be protective or have their own deals, which can be a barrier.

In short, B2B licensing should probably **not be the primary revenue assumption** – it's not very realistic to expect ESPN or large outlets to license content for a sport they've historically underinvested in. They either don't see the value (so they ignore it), or if they do see value (after a startup proves it), they might prefer to buy the startup outright or simply copy its approach. A more feasible B2B angle might be niche partnerships: for instance, partnering with a conference or the NCAA to power their official stats app (if such a thing ever materialized), or providing content to college-specific fan sites. These could add incremental revenue but likely not huge sums. Therefore, the startup's plan should be **self-sufficient via B2C monetization**, with any B2B deals as a bonus. Given ESPN's might, hoping to license content to ESPN in the long run is probably unrealistic – rather, beating them at user experience and possibly becoming an acquisition target would be the better outcome.

Risks and Founder Bias Considerations

It's important to critically assess whether the decision to start with college baseball is grounded in objective opportunity or influenced by the founder's personal biases. Some **potential red flags** include:

- **Overestimation of Market Size vs. Usability:** The founder's passion (say, being a former college baseball player or an avid fan) might lead to an overly rosy view of the addressable market. Yes, millions watch the College World Series on TV, but how many are *active daily users* in-season? The core fan base that follows college baseball week-in, week-out is smaller and regionally concentrated (e.g. strong in the Southeast and Texas, weaker in other regions). If the founder is immersed in a hotbed of college baseball, they may assume nationwide interest is at that same intensity. In reality, a lot of those TV viewers are casual fans or alumni who tune in mainly for playoffs. Converting a significant percentage of the *casual* audience into regular app users could be challenging. The business really will live or die by the **die-hards** – maybe tens or low hundreds of thousands of people – so the economics must be built around that reality, not the TV peak of 3 million viewers which is an outlier event. There's a risk of an optimism bias here, but it can be mitigated by sober market research (e.g. measuring active members on r/collegebaseball, or surveying how many fans would use an app). The data so far *does* show a passionate niche, but the founder should avoid conflating peak viewership with daily engagement.
- **Monetization Assumptions:** The founder's thesis might assume "because fans have no app, they will flock to mine and monetization will naturally follow." In practice, even if the demand exists, **monetizing niche audiences is tricky**. The D1 Baseball app fiasco is a cautionary tale: it shows that if you get the model wrong (overcharging or complicating the paywall), fans will revolt ³⁴. It's a warning that college baseball fans might be price-sensitive or skeptical after prior bad experiences. A founder *deeply in love* with the sport might underestimate how hard it is to get people to pay for content. They might also be biased toward features *they* personally want (e.g. very advanced stats) which could be expensive to build and not actually valued by the broader user base. Ensuring that product development is guided by broad user feedback (not just the founder's own wishlist) will be crucial. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the fact that **most college sports don't turn a profit** at the school level ⁸ suggests that pure spectator interest doesn't directly translate into profit easily. The founder needs to have a clear-eyed view of how to make money in a space that even big institutions treat more as a cost center for exposure than a revenue source. If the business plan leans too heavily on "we'll figure out monetization later because the fans are passionate," that's a red flag – it should be figured out *now*, with realistic adoption and conversion rates.

- **Founder's Personal Attachment:** If the founder has a personal background in college baseball, their **emotional attachment** could cloud strategic judgment. For instance, they might choose college baseball as the launch sport because they personally love it, even if another sport (say, college softball or hockey) had equal or better fundamentals. In this case, college baseball does appear to have strong fundamentals as a niche, but the founder should continually question: *“Am I prioritizing features or expansion plans that objectively make sense, or just because they appeal to me?”* One telltale sign of bias would be ignoring data that counter the thesis. For example, if early user acquisition is slower than expected, a biased founder might blame marketing or users “not discovering us” rather than reconsidering the value proposition. It’s vital to remain objective – if certain regions or segments of fans don’t catch on, the strategy might need tweaking (perhaps the app should focus on fewer schools at first, or include softball sooner, etc.). An overly rosy interpretation of all signals (“any growth is good, no matter how small, because I *know* this community needs us”) could lead to pouring resources into a stagnant concept. Basically, passion can turn into *stubbornness*.
- **Neglecting Competitive Responses:** There’s also risk in assuming the landscape will stay static. A founder biased by the belief that “ESPN will never care about college baseball” might be caught off guard if, say, in response to growing niche competition, ESPN slightly improves its app or a new entrant like CBS Sports decides to bolster its college sports features. While ESPN’s structural issues are real, a truly biased view would underestimate the possibility of competitive counter-moves. The strategy should account for “What if ESPN or the NCAA itself updates their digital offerings?” and have answers (e.g. by having superior community features or faster innovation). Betting wholly on incumbents staying weak can be dangerous if not continually re-evaluated.
- **Fiscal Discipline:** Founders driven by personal passion sometimes spend *too liberally* to build their “dream app” with every feature, which can be a fiscal red flag. The plan here involves data integration and potentially automated content – those have costs (licensing data feeds, computing for AI content, etc.). If the founder is biased, they might underestimate these costs or rationalize them (“we *need* this cool feature for the fans, no matter the burn rate”). It will be important to prioritize features that drive user growth and revenue, rather than nice-to-haves that gratify the founder’s inner fan but don’t move the business forward. Essentially, **discipline and data-driven decision making** are needed to complement the founder’s enthusiasm for the sport.

In summary, while the founder’s personal connection to college baseball can be a great strength (deep domain knowledge, credibility with the community, and motivation), it also requires a conscious check. They must ensure they are validating their assumptions with data from the wider market, not just their own anecdotal experience. Thus far, the thesis *does* appear grounded in solid research (e.g. using actual viewership and user feedback data ² ²⁷), which is reassuring. The key will be to remain open to course-correcting if any of those research assumptions prove off. There are no glaring deal-breakers in the strategy, but the founder should guard against **rose-colored glasses** – maintain realistic expectations about user adoption, be prepared for a grind in monetization, and be willing to expand or pivot if another vertical shows stronger signals.

Conclusion: Is College Baseball a Sound Launch Vertical?

As a Standalone Business: Launching a mobile-first, data-rich app exclusively for college baseball is a **strategically sound move** to address a clear gap. The college baseball fan community is large enough to

matter and demonstrably underserved in today's sports media landscape. Engagement metrics support that this is a real market (millions of viewers, strong school-level support, vocal fans online), and currently no product offers the experience these fans are seeking ²⁷ ¹³ . In that sense, a focused app could quickly become the go-to home for college baseball aficionados, capturing a loyal audience that the big players have left on the table. The concept aligns with broader trends of media unbundling – passionate micro-communities spinning off from the generic aggregator platforms to find their own space. If executed well, the app can achieve respectable user numbers and a devoted following, which can translate into steady if not spectacular revenue (through ads and a subset of paying super-fans). **The major caveat** as a standalone is scale: college baseball alone might cap out at a certain point (there are only so many fans), and it has seasonal lulls. So, as a *business*, it likely provides a strong foundation and proof of concept, but not the end game. It would be wise for the founders and investors to view it as the first chapter in a longer story.

As a Beachhead for Expansion: As a beachhead strategy, starting with college baseball looks **logical and potentially very fruitful**. It is an ideal pilot vertical – significant enough to prove the model (if you can satisfy college baseball fans, that validates the approach), but niche enough that incumbents won't fight you tooth and nail at the start. The learnings, technology, and user base from this launch can then be ported to other undervalued sports with similar needs. Success in college baseball can also build brand credibility that carries over (e.g. if "Diamond Insights" becomes known for great college baseball coverage, fans of college softball or lacrosse may welcome it next). There is a *repeatable opportunity* here to roll out the platform to multiple sports that suffer the same neglect ⁵⁰ ⁵¹ . Each new sport will open additional user and revenue channels, and collectively these niches could form a much larger enterprise – effectively creating a new multi-sport media platform from the ground up. This phased expansion is strategically sound because it's incremental (reducing risk by not doing too many sports at once) and data-driven (choose the next sport based on where the demand is highest, as noted in the plan ⁵⁰). If college baseball proves the thesis, scaling out to others would transform the venture from a single-sport app into a **full-fledged sports media company for underserved fans**.

Final Recommendation: The decision to launch with NCAA college baseball as the initial vertical is well-reasoned in terms of market opportunity and aligns with a sensible expansion vision. The fanbase is passionate, growing, and currently neglected by existing products – a classic recipe for a startup disruption ³¹ ⁵² . The mobile-first, data-centric approach fits the unmet needs of these users and matches how modern fans consume content. Competitive analysis shows a clear opening: the big players are effectively absent in quality, and the one niche competitor mishandled its chance ³³ ³⁴ . From a strategic standpoint, there is a strong rationale to seize this "low-hanging fruit" and then leverage that position into adjacent markets (softball, etc.), which could amplify the business's scale and value significantly.

However, it's crucial to approach this with **eyes open**. The founder and team should remain objective about the challenges – converting a passionate but limited audience into a profitable user base, keeping engagement high in off-seasons, and executing better than past attempts. The biggest risks lie not in the concept but in execution and focus: they must avoid being blinded by personal enthusiasm or early hype, and instead respond to real user feedback and usage patterns. If they do so – delivering a genuinely useful app and iterating based on the community's needs – there is every chance that this venture can both thrive in the college baseball niche and successfully springboard into a broader platform for underserved sports fans. In conclusion, starting with college baseball is **logically sound as a launch beachhead** – it addresses a real pain point and sets the stage for a scalable niche-sports media strategy. The key will be marrying that

vision with disciplined execution and a willingness to adapt as the company grows. The opportunity is there; it just needs to be captured with the right play.

Sources:

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- Competitive review of existing apps (D1 Baseball's failures) 33 35
- Survey on underserved sports fans seeking more coverage 37 55
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ESSENTIALSPORTS

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/sports-media-fumble-with-fan-needs-and-passions-says-new-survey-from-essentiallysports-302309654.html>

39 FloSports' Success Should Have Brands Looking at the Long Tail

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