

NCAA takes pep out of cheerleading company Varsity Brands

By [Josh Kosman](#)

The governing body for college sports has stunted the growth of cheerleading company Varsity Brands, owned by private equity company Bain Capital.

For the past six years, Varsity Brands, which profits from cheerleading in high school and beyond, has been trying to persuade the National Collegiate Athletic Association to back a competitive cheerleading sport it created called "Stunt," which has teams competing side-by-side on pyramids, tosses and other acrobatics.

On Monday, the NCAA dealt a major blow to Varsity's sport by recommending universities add a competing sport called "Acrobatics and Tumbling," which is backed instead by USA Gymnastics, the organization roiled by ties to convicted serial child molester Larry Nassar.

If the idea is approved, acrobatics and tumbling will become an official NCAA sport starting on Aug. 1, 2020.

Already, 29 colleges have acrobatics and tumbling student-athletes and competitive teams.

Stunt this past season had 39 college teams, [but the NCAA could](#)

[hinder](#) future growth, experts said.

“I think the NCAA acknowledging acrobatics and tumbling as the true format for competitive cheer will be a hit to Varsity’s bottom line,” Kim Archie, founder of the National Cheer Safety Foundation, told The Post.

“Varsity copied the acrobatics and tumbling model so there is little chance Stunt will get approval,” she said.

“Whereas we were surprised by their decision ... we are thrilled with the continued growth of the sport,” said Varsity Brands Executive Director Lauri Harris.

Bain bought Varsity Brands last year in a roughly \$2.5 billion leveraged buyout.