

ADmission

FALL 2022

VIRGINIA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC
ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER





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VIAAA Partnerships



PLATINUM PARTNERS

Ticket Spicket

GOLD PARTNERS

Herff Jones
BSN Sports
Musco Lighting
Neff
Mledtech LLC

SILVER PARTNERS

Daktronics
Virginia Lottery
Final Forms
Pepsi Cola
Field Turf
Hudl
Dick's Sporting Goods
Gipper Athletics
Schutt
Score Shots - Presto Sports
Dynamite Sports

BRONZE PARTNERS

RSchool Today
Dodson Pest Control
Varsity Athletics
Time Technologies/Fairplay
Big Teams

PATRON PARTNER

VACorp
Jostens



President's Message

Christopher Felton, CMAA
President, VIAAA

#BTY – Better Today Than Yesterday (Jon Gordon).

This simply means we must take each day as it comes and set our intentions daily. We won't fix all the issues in one sitting and solve all the problems of the world in two-minute conversations. But we must take everything we learn from yesterday and all the progress we made to make today better. This is the theme/mantra I have chosen for the VIAAA this year.

I consider myself exceptionally blessed to be able to represent all the amazing Athletic Administrators of the Commonwealth of Virginia as I serve as VIAAA President during the 2022 – 2023 school year and work with the Executive Committee and Board of Directors (<https://viaaa.org/bod-info/viaaa-board>). Please do not ever hesitate to reach out to any of us with questions, concerns, or ideas you have for the organization as we work together this year.

I have grown-up, literally and figuratively, in this organization and been given so much from so many while learning how to be a better man and Athletic Administrator. I look forward to celebrating the rich heritage of this organization, the VIAAA, at our 50th Anniversary/Conference in Short Pump (April 25 – 28, 2023) PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW for April 26th and 27th which is when most conference activities will occur. We will host our Leadership Training Courses all day on the 25th and in the morning of the 28th. More specific information will be out soon. We hope you will make every attempt to join us, you won't regret it and it will be even better with you in attendance.

The challenges I have set out for our organization this year all revolve around our core purpose – Professional Growth.

- I challenge each of you to go up one level in Certification
 - o If you have no certification, start taking courses or continue taking courses and apply for your RAA.
 - o If you have your RAA, submit your PDF and take your exam to get your CAA (<https://viaaa.org/professional-dev-t/caa-exam>).
 - o If you have your CAA, submit your PDF and present your project to get your CMAA. Also, take LTC790 to become an instructor.
 - o If you have your CMAA, be sure you have taken LTC790 and become an instructor; work towards your Quality Program Award (QPA) through the NIAAA for your school; adopt someone that needs to get their certification.
- I challenge everyone will take at least two courses
 - o one in-person and one webinar/online course this year. (<https://viaaa.org/professional-dev-t/fall-spring-institute> or <https://viaaa.org/professional-dev-t/lti-classes>).

Please be sure you have logged into your Final Forms account and filled out all your forms and know when your VIAAA/NIAAA membership expires (all your

areas should be green) (remember we are a Dual Member State – you MUST be a member of both organizations). Please remember to allow at least 30 days for Membership payments to process. All Membership Information is located at <https://viaaa.org/membership>.

There are plenty of invigorating initiatives on the horizon from our organization from many of our committees and our partnerships with the VHSL and VISAA. Some of these are featured in this issue of this publication.

Again, THANK YOU for the opportunity to serve this organization and all its tremendous members. I hope to make you all proud and leave the place better than I found it! Thank you for all you do for your students and communities, and I look forward to seeing many of you throughout the year or at the National Conference or our State Conference. #BTY

www.viaaa.org / Twitter: @VIAAA95 / IG: @VIAAA1995 / Podcast: On The Road With the VIAAA - <https://viaaa.org/highlights/on-the-road-with-the-viaaa-spotify-podcast> ■

Executive Director's Message

VIRGINIA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION VIAAA



Bob Stratton, CAA
Executive Director



Remarks from the Executive Director

The VIAAA Officers and Board of Directors have been planning the 2023 VIAAA State Conference April 25 - 28, 2023 at The Short Pump Hilton Hotel where we will be Celebrating 50 Years. Major changes have been made to the schedule to include additional professional development opportunities on both Tuesday April 25th and Friday April 28th. The conference will be a 2 day conference Wednesday/Thursday April 26-27. Also, there will be sessions and activities where we recognize and Celebrate 50 Years of Excellence! Please go to the VIAAA website, viaaa.org to become a VIAAA/NIAAA member. Registration for this years conference will be available starting November 1st.

In closing, I want to thank each of you for what you have done since March 2020 and the start of Covid. Your dedication to the students, parents and community in which you serve has allowed us to get back to in person education and extra curricular athletics/activities. Because of each of you at the end of the day "We can only hope we have made a difference. On behalf of the VIAAA and myself Thanks to each of you from the bottom of my heart!

I thought the following would be a good reminder of all everyone of you accomplish every day to make a positive difference in the lives of young people.

Success With Honor
Joseph Vincent Paterno

Besides pride, loyalty, discipline, heart, and mind-confidence is the key to all the locks. The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital. Take care of the little things and the big things will take care of themselves. When a team outgrows individual performance and learns team confidence, excellence becomes a reality. Today, you've got a decision to make. You're going to get better or you're going to get worse, but you're not going to stay the same. Which will it be? Hustle! Something good will always happen if you only hustle. Fear no one but respect every competitor.

You need to play with supreme confidence, or else you will lose again. And then losing becomes a habit. The minute you think you have it made disaster is just around the corner. Be humble in victory and gracious in defeat. Losing a game is heartbreaking. Losing your sense of excellence or worth is a tragedy. You're never so good as you think you are when you win; and you are never as bad as you feel when you lose. Excellence on the inside is far greater than success on the outside. ***Believe deep down in your heart that you are destined to do great things.*** Greater things lie ahead for you.

VIAAA Executive Committee Summer Retreat

The VIAAA Executive Committee held their annual Summer Retreat on July 26th and 27th. The Executive Director of the VIAAA, Bob Stratton, graciously hosted the retreat at his house on the York River. The weather wasn't great, as we had strong storms rolling through the Commonwealth both days, but that didn't dampen our spirits.

The committee met and discussed many topics, such as the VIAAA Strategic Plan, POP Manual updates, the standing committees of the VIAAA, to name just a few, in preparation for the year ahead. We talked

about what has went well in past conferences, and what we can do to improve future conferences.

In addition to the tasks we had on our agenda, we also enjoyed a great time of fellowship and relaxation. The weather did cause the cancellation of a boat ride that was planned, but Mr. Stratton was still able to grill out for the committee. We accomplished a lot during the short time we were together, and hopefully in the process got a recharge of our individual batteries as we move into the 2022-23 year. ■

VIAAA Membership Report

As the Membership Committee Chair, I'm excited report that as of 9/9/22, we have 482 active members within the VIAAA. Of these, 244 are VIAAA lifetime members and 64 retired. I would like to welcome the 75 new members who have joined us within this past year.

We are a dual membership state. When you join the VIAAA, you are also joining the NIAAA and will receive benefits from both organizations. Those benefits are listed below.

NIAAA/VIAAA Membership Benefits: (dual membership)

- Interscholastic Athletic Administration, a quarterly professional journal written by and for athletic administrators
- VIAAA ADmission, professional magazine
- \$2,000,000 student injury and property damage liability insurance while performing the duties of an athletic administrator (see below)
- \$2,500 term life insurance
- Ability to purchase Long Term Health Care at discount rates, as well as discounts on Cancer Insurance and Accident Insurance

- Complimentary tickets to numerous state, college, and universities games
- Discount on registration fees for the National Athletic Directors Conference in addition LTI classes, certification, and other services
- Opportunities to serve in the NIAAA and VIAAA professional organizations.
- Opportunity to annually nominate students from your school for the NIAAA Scholarship
- Opportunity for national recognition through the NIAAA Awards Program
- Providing at the annual VIAAA Conference, college credit opportunities, staff development, leadership training classes and the CAA exam

NIAAA Member Liability Insurance

The NIAAA provides each regular member excess liability coverage for their duties as athletic administrators, athletic directors, coordinators, or supervisors up to \$2,000,000. Excess means coverage beyond any liability coverage through member's employer, and any additional personal liability coverage held. This liability insurance covers

the members for claims or lawsuits involving bodily injury of an athlete (spectator or participant) involving negligence charged on the part of the directors of athletics, or property damage to a third party. This liability policy does not cover lawsuits for such claims as discrimination, wrongful suspension of a coach or athlete, harassment, personal dismissal, coaching, teaching or principal duties, or any other claim not involving bodily injury or property damage. Suits for such claims occurring during employment would have to be covered by the employer.

Reminder that all renewals and changes to one's membership is done independently through the VIAAA online portal. To access your account, click on the ACCOUNT ACCESS link on the VIAAA Membership webpage. If you are a Lifetime VIAAA Member (offered prior to 2019), I encourage you to join the NIAAA as well to access all the benefits listed above.

On behalf of the membership committee, we are looking forward to a great year. ■



VISAA” Kemper’s Korner”

Adam Brick appointed Executive Director of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association.

Executive Committee of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) has selected Adam Brick as its next Executive Director. Mr. Brick succeeds Dick Kemper, VISAA's founding Executive Director who led the organization for 25 years.

“We are extremely fortunate to have Adam Brick take the VISAA helm,” said Eric Gobble, Director of Athletics and Wellness at The New Community School, and chair of the search committee that presented Brick to the VISAA Executive Board for approval. “Dick Kemper is an icon in high school sports and is entering a well-deserved retirement with the VISAA on very solid ground. We are incredibly grateful for Dick’s tenure.” Gobble added that, “The school heads and athletic directors on the VISAA Executive Board went through an exhaustive search process over several months. We received applications from impressive candidates throughout the mid-Atlantic. Adam Brick’s energy, education, and experience stood out throughout the process.”

Brick’s background in athletic administration spans thirty years and includes experience in higher education and non-profit management. Brick began his career at his alma mater, Georgetown University, where he served in a variety of roles in athletics, including NCAA compliance, legal affairs, and sport administration, culminating his tenure as the Director of Athletics in 2004-05.

After Georgetown, Brick led the external relations team for the intercollegiate athletics program at George Mason University. He was a member of the leadership team that secured the naming rights for EagleBank Arena and he was a key figure in the university’s move to the Atlantic 10 Conference.

During his time in college athletics, Brick served on several NCAA committees including the Men’s Basketball Rules Committee, the Academics, Eligibility & Compliance Cabinet, the Legislative Review & Interpretations Committee, and the Agents & Amateurism Subcommittee. He also served as the tournament manager for the first and second rounds of the NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship.

Most recently, Brick led Arlington Soccer Association, a non-profit youth sports organization serving 9,000 players. As the Executive Director, he managed a \$5 million dollar budget, partnered with the Board of Directors on strategic initiatives, and successfully navigated the club through the challenges of the pandemic.

Brick is a member of the Virginia State Bar and received his Juris Doctorate and BS in Marketing from Georgetown University. He worked as a consultant and taught Sports Ethics, Sports Marketing and Sports Law at several universities. He is also an accomplished high-school basketball referee and worked numerous state tournaments.

Upon his selection, Brick commented, "I am honored and excited to lead VISAA into its next chapter. I am in lockstep with VISAA's core values (integrity, sportsmanship, and leadership) and believe in the integral role that athletics plays as a part of the student experience and teaching life lessons. I have high regard for an association of 100 schools that serves nearly 20,000 student-athletes across the Commonwealth. Dick Kemper is an icon in high school athletics, and I am humbled that the Executive Committee has put its faith in me to help build on the vision Dick created and has nurtured for the past 25 years. I look forward to working with the staff, committees, and member schools to provide outstanding experiences for the student-athletes and coaches of VISAA."

About VISAA: The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association provides accredited member schools with the resources and competitive environment in support of education-based athletic programs that establish a foundation for excellence founded on integrity, sportsmanship, and leadership. The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association will develop athletic programs that are nationally recognized and provide student-athletes with quality opportunities for participation, competition, achievement, and the development of character.

VISAA officers' goals for 2022-2023:

- Complete the transition and realign staff and infrastructure
- Strengthen the relationship between the Executive Committee and sport committees
- Create and implement tournament structure using the new divisional alignment
- Cultivate a new and diverse group of candidates for the Executive Committee and sport committees
- Add additional sport championships (Mountain Biking, Competitive cheering, 8-player football)
- Strengthen the relationship between VISAA and VCPE, VHSL, VIAAA, and VAIS

VISAA Mission Statement:

The VISAA will provide accredited member schools the resources and competitive environment in education-based programs that establish a foundation for excellence founded on integrity, sportsmanship, and leadership. ■

NIAAA Section 2 Updates

Greetings Section II,

I hope that you were able to spend some quality time with your loved ones this summer and also get some much-needed rest and relaxation to recharge for the new school year. Now that we are back into the full spring of the school year, I trust that you are having a great start to your school year. I am honored to begin my twenty-seventh year in education and my twenty-third year in athletic administration. I get to serve as your section II board of director's representative for the NIAAA and hope to be a resource for you. Below are some updates for the NIAAA. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance to you in any way.

NIAAA Board Updates:

We are fortunate to add two Assistant Executive Directors to the NIAAA staff. Both began their new paths with the NIAAA on August 1, 2022. Please join me in welcoming Rich Barton and Becky Moran to the NIAAA. They both bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the NIAAA office and will prove to be a valuable resource for all involved in the NIAAA. With Becky Moran moving to the NIAAA Office, Damian Frassinelli from Connecticut was elevated to President-Elect and Tina Woolard from Illinois will replace Becky Moran as the At-Large C representative.

Leadership Training Courses:

The NIAAA is launching two new courses at the National Athletic Directors Conference in Nashville.

- LTC 638 Creating Awareness of Diverse Groups within Athletic Programs
- LTC 704 Recruit/Hire, Mentor, and Retain Coaches

Section II Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to our section II scholarship winners. Our female winner was Rebecca Grunkemeyer from

Beechwood High School in Kentucky and our male winner was Kaden Jared Childs from Caesar Rodney High School in Delaware.

Section II Frank Kovaleski Winner

Congratulations to Scott Morris, CMAA from Fluvanna High School in Virginia who was selected as our Section II winner for the Frank Kovaleski Award. Scott's name was submitted to the pool with other national winners for final selection by the NIAAA awards committee.

State Award of Merit

As a reminder that all nominations for the State Award of Merit are due to the NIAAA by October 1, 2022. Nominations are based on the calendar year and not the school year.

National Athletic Directors Conference

Please make plans to join us for the National Athletic Directors Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. The national conference is a great opportunity for professional development and to network with athletic administrations from across the world. Please visit <https://www.adconference.org/register> to register for the conference. If you need to book a room, don't delay, rooms are filling up fast. Use this link to make your room reservation for the NADC. <https://www.adconference.org/hotel>

City, State	Location	Dates
Nashville, Tennessee	Gaylord Opryland	December 9-13, 2022
Orlando, Florida	Marriott World Center	December 16-19, 2023
Austin, Texas	JW Marriott/Austin Marriott	December 13-17, 2024
Tampa, Florida	Marriott/Embassy/Conv. Cntr	December 12-16, 2025

NIAAA Membership

Please check your membership portal to ensure that your information is listed accurately. Know that the NIAAA membership surpassed 13,000 members during 2021-2022. There are about 19,500 high schools in the United States belonging to their state associations.

NIAAA Committees

Anyone interested in participating on one of the NIAAA committees, please complete the interest application which can be found here. Completed applications should be sent to the NIAAA Secretary, Lauren Otero <lauren.oter@hcps.net>

Section 2 Committee Representation	
Accreditation	Holly Farnese, CMAA - Pennsylvania
Awards	Jamie Tallman, CAA - West Virginia Scott Morris, CMAA - Virginia
Certification	Carol Callway, CMAA - Virginia; Tony Butler, CMAA - Kentucky
Coaches Education	Jeannie Prevosto, CMAA - Maryland
Conference Advisory	
Credentials	Mike Wagner, CAA - Delaware; Brad Criss, CMAA - Maryland
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Kevin Adams, CAA - Virginia
Endowment	Serena Henry, RAA - Pennsylvania
Hall of Fame	Tom Nerf, CMAA - Ohio
Membership	Paul Powers, CAA - Ohio
Mentoring	Tim Leach, CAA - Virginia
National Initiative and Assistance Network (NIAN)	Brian Geyer, CAA - Pennsylvania
Professional Development	
Publications	Danielle Turner, CAA - Pennsylvania; Dennis Ziegler, CAA - Ohio
Resolutions	Marianne Shultz, CMAA - Maryland
Retired	David Bell, CMAA - Ohio
Sports Facilities	Greg Whitley, CAA - Maryland; Jonathan Vincent, CAA - Kentucky

USCAH – US Council for Athletes’ Health

The National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) and U.S. Council for Athletes’ Health (USCAH) are proud to announce the NIAAA/USCAH Health, Wellness, and Safety Webinar Series.

Throughout the 2022-2023 school year the USCAH team will conduct monthly webinars with timely health, wellness, and safety topics to specifically assist NIAAA members and member state associations.

Webinars will be held the fourth Wednesday of each month with future webinar dates and topics for September and October identified below.

- **Wednesday, September 28:** Emergency Action Planning; Concussion and Head Injuries
- **Wednesday, October 26:** Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Behavior and Sportsmanship Best Practices; Sudden Cardiac Arrest--Preparation for Winter Sports

You will receive an email from the NIAAA to register for each specific webinar once available.

Title IX Education & Celebrate reviewed

We will continue to education and celebrate Title IX through the conference in December. Feel free to use the following announcement to educate your school community. This school year marks the 50th anniversary of Title IX (9) – the landmark law supporting female students. The passage of Title IX (9) led to a movement here in Virginia, where more than 75,000 female athletes now compete annually in 14 VHSL sports. The opportunities for today’s athletes were built on the perseverance of those who came before. Whether you were a trailblazer in 1972 or helped carry and pass the torch, you played a part in creating and expanding opportunities for female athletes. Please stand and be recognized at this time.

NIAAA 2022 Board Goals

New Initiatives:

1. Support and encourage opportunities to provide current and best practices for the positive mental health and wellness of the Athletic Administrator while providing resources for coaches and student-athletes.

2. Support the initiatives of the DEI Committee in their inaugural year. (Strategic Plan #18 & 34).
3. Promote the new tax incentive for athletic administrators and coaches through state legislation and state athletic director's association.
4. Create a resource for states to use to promote additional pay for athletic administrators who have obtained CAA or CMAA certification. Utah is going through this process currently and will lay the groundwork for the other states.
5. Provide more virtual options for professional development, including NIAAA YouTube Channel and streaming of live events. (Strategic Plan #16 & 30)
6. Support the NIAAA office staff through the transition in leadership.
3. Support the Professional Development Academy as they grow and change to meet the needs of the membership, including international, cohort and certification.
4. Correspond to the Superintendents/Boards of Education of local school districts as to the professional importance of the AD position and for the certification of the AD at the local, state, and national level. (Strategic Plan #26, #27 & #32)
5. Facilitate the development of a communication tool to easily communicate with key positions in each state. (Strategic Plan #12 & 31)

NIAAA Make-A-Wish Fundraiser

The NIAAA is raising money for Make-A-Wish to help grant wished for children with critical illnesses. It's truly amazing what wishes can do. A wish renews hope, uplifts spirit, and encourages the belief in the impossible. Make-A-Wish grants thousands of unique wishes each year. A wish begins with hope. And hope begins with you. Together, we can grant more wishes. Please donate today. Donation page link: <https://casci.ac/7593> ■

Ongoing Initiatives:

1. Support the implementation of the Fifth Strategic Plan and communicate progress to the membership.
2. Support initiatives that increase NIAAA membership and initiatives that promote dual membership status. (Strategic Plan #6, #7)



The Road to G.R.I.T. as an Athletic Administrator

Ms. Shea Collins

Director of Student Activities at Midlothian High School

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are terms that have been used to describe the progress to equal services, programs and resources within an organization. How those resources and services are dispersed may look different depending on the educational and professional environment. Working as the Director of Student Activities (DSA) in a public high school, my approach to the needed diversity change at my school has been with G.R.I.T. (Growth, Relationships, and Inclusive Change for Today). Entering my fourth year as the DSA, I have chosen to focus on where the department was when I started this role and how the relationship changes are being made for the inclusive practices of today. I am consistently working to ensure we are not only complying with the diversity, equity and inclusive practices in words but in action. The Virginia Department of Education gives us a resource guide to cultural response and inclusion by incorporating the use of The Five C's: Continuous Reflection, Compassionate Student and Family Engagement, Curriculum Reframing, Courageous Leadership, and Cultural Responsiveness (VDOE - Office of Equity & Community Engagement #EdEquityVA).

The three most important lessons and concepts that I have focused my work on as a DSA to engage and diversify our school athletic and activities department as a whole are: DEI- Words or Duty, Scope of Normal vs Reality and Coaches- Adults or Staff.

DEI- Words vs. Duty?

In an educational or other working professional setting, how one feels about the diversity, equity

and inclusive nature of the workplace has a lot to do with whether the concepts are words on the wall, a company slogan or will there be action and duties that the company displays on a daily basis. For example, if a coach wants a player to run a certain play or follow team rules, they are usually hung up in the locker room, recited daily to players, repeated and executed on game day or written and signed by the parent and athlete. When this action is mandatory and coaches expect desired results, it is just as important to create the space and platform with action to increase the awareness of equity and inclusive practices. The inclusive practices are not necessarily those that need to be driven in the ground as "best practices" rather steady and progressive actions of change. I noticed in my role as DSA that my coaching staff was not a direct representation of the student body or those that participated in athletics. Transitioning from no coaches of color in my current school to now having eight throughout the athletic program, is a first hand approach to a shift in inclusive practices.

Scope: Normal vs. Reality

According to the Webster Dictionary, normal is defined as conforming to a type, standard, or regular pattern, and characterized by usual, typical or a routine. Reality, according to the Webster Dictionary is the quality or state of something being real. One must look at their programs or departments and see if they are leading by normal standards or what the reality is for now.

COVID-19 caused all of us to pause, reflect and reroute how we operate business in a pandemic. On

a personal note, the shift of limited or no personal contact with coaches and players took me by surprise. This new “normal” practice of meeting twice a year with coaches, players and parents, allowed me to create regular meetings, communicate with parents and players through video and webinars, invite guest speakers and host of other virtual opportunities. In reality, it would not be business as usual but business for today. Although I was not ready for the transition, I relied on coaches and other school personnel to help me move to the virtual reality of learning and meeting. I must admit, I was nervous to always have to plan a coaches, parent meeting or school meeting, etc. from a computer using Zoom, Google Meet or other platforms. It allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and I have not looked back. This also allowed a shift in the athletic programs and the mindset of the coaches to more of a “family atmosphere” rather than a “here for my season” atmosphere.

For the first time ever, the Varsity Head Coaches were invited to a book study on InSideOut Coaching by Joe Ehrmann. This book study not only allowed us to talk about racial issues and tension that happened years ago that were also prevalent in 2020, but each coach could share some of their best coaching practices, how athletes may see them as coaches and get to know each other on a more personal level. It has been exciting to see how the coaches appreciate each other, work as a family to help each other, the overall support for the student-athletes whether in season or not and the ultimate care for our facilities and equipment as a whole.

Coaches: Adults or Staff

Interactions with coaches should be more than just a yearly or seasonal commitment. Growing a program is more than adding teams to the department. At a minimum, a coach should see growth in their program and personally every two years. As the leader of the department, your staff should see your growth as a leader and individual which can cause a departmental

reaction for personal and team growth. Your overall communication and support of your coaches and staff should start to become a habit that they have that team approach to help, support and make adjustments within the program even though they are not in “season”. The shift to family culture versus coaching your sport, has been a welcomed change in our department. The teachers in the building are also starting to embrace the shift in culture and love to support and watch the student-athletes perform.

Leaders must be tough enough to fight, tender enough to cry, human enough to make mistakes, humble enough to admit them, strong enough to absorb the pain, and resilient enough to bounce back and keep on moving

(Jesse Jackson, 1984). I will make mistakes as a leader and I have cried in front of my coaches, but together we fight for the betterment of the athletic programs and department. The Pandemic is here, and I will not let it defeat us or divide the programs from the consistent work that is happening everyday. We are shifting and moving to keep the fight and the passion of why we are in this business. This must be a collective effort for those that you lead. If we lead by example, they will follow or perhaps find a way to remove themselves from the culture shift. Either way it is a win. ■

References:

“Normal and Reality.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/normal>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2021.

VDOE - Office of Equity & Community Engagement
#EdEquityVA | www.VirginiansForLearners.Virginia.Gov/EdEquityVA



TIDBITS TO ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION

Bob Stratton, CAA
VIAAA Executive Director
NIAAA Liaison

The role of Athletic Administration has changed so much over the years that there is no longer enough time in a twenty four hour day to complete the many tasks expected of this position. Along with these changes the majority of the people around you have no idea what you do on an everyday basis which makes each of your jobs even tougher. Educating school board staff, your administration, parents and community members is crucial for the survival of all new and young athletic administrators we now have in the State of Virginia. The following are four suggestions I used everyday to manage the pressure and stress of the many expectations placed upon each of you as you perform your day to day job responsibilities.

1. **TO DO LIST** - Start each day with an itemized "Top 10" to do list in the order of importance for the day. As you complete each task mark it off list and move on to the next task for the day. It is important to remember on most days if you complete five of the ten tasks consider your day a huge success. At the end of each day create a new "Top 10" list for the following day using the tasks not completed that day with the addition of new ones created during the day. This "Top 10" list will keep you on track even when the job is overwhelming you.
2. **PROACTIVE versus REACTIVE** - With the many demands this title and position holds **PLANNING** becomes the most important aspect of survival. I was told very early in my career to dot every "I" and cross every "T". The more you can plan and become proactive to situations that may come up the less often you will have to make a reactive decision in the face of adversity.

3. **PAUSE AND REFLECT** - Each of us are judged by the decisions we make everyday. My experience over the years has been with proper planning and being "proactive" versus "reactive" we create scenarios that allow us to Pause and Reflect prior to a decision being made. Most decisions do not need to be made at the moment so creating time allows you to remove yourself from a stressful situation and to digest all information prior to making the decision. Advice I received years ago was to sleep on the decision, and to always see the big picture to take into account what the decision means and holds for the future.

4. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION** - As the years have gone by our culture has brought to the role of Athletic Administration the responsibility to be able to manage conflict and reach a decision with as little negative outcome as possible to all parties involved. My former Superintendent, Dr. Steward Roberson, gave me advice I used on a daily basis. "Create a playing field where all parties involved feel as if all the facts have been heard and at the end of the process the end result is not looked at as creating a winner or a loser."

Athletic Administration is one of the most challenging yet one of the most rewarding jobs any person can do during their lifetime. Each of you has the unique ability to make decisions that affect young student athletes as they grow and mature toward adulthood.

In closing I would like to share with you my comments I used as an Athletic Administrator for many years when recognizing seniors during their last home game on senior night. "On behalf of the Athletic Department we



Tips for survival, professional development, and leadership

Dan Jones CMAA
King William High

- I. Secure a position as an Athletic Administrator
 - a. Join the VIAAA
 - b. Within years 1-3 attend New AD's workshop
 - c. Ask for a mentor
- II. Meet and build relationships with the DOERS
 - a. Have a philosophical/organizational meeting with your principal
 - b. See if there is a Job description so you know what is expected of you
 - c. Meet with and clarify your role for team transportation
 - d. Find out who is the custodian in charge of your athletic facilities
 - e. Meet with maintenance staff so when you need them they come
 - f. What ref associations does your school use
- III. Organize
 - a. Do a daily top 5 or 10 list
 - b. Plan a time or times for email and phone messages
 - c. Have closed office door time to bang stuff out
 - d. Create a coaches handbook
 - e. Plan time to walk your facilities daily for the health of it
 - f. Plan time for you and your family
- IV. Mental/Physical health
 - a. Don't always eat concession food
 - b. Plan time for exercise
 - c. Plan time for reflection
 - d. Read positive books/quotes
- V. Years 2-3
 - a. Review certification requirements for CAA certification
 - b. Plan LTI courses to take for CAA cert.
 - c. Plan activities to earn points for CAA cert.
 - d. Earn points as a VIAAA committee member or board member.
 - e. Order the PDF and complete for consideration
 - f. When PDF is approved sign up to take CAA exam
- VI. Years 3-6
 - a. Review certification requirements for CMAA certification
 - b. Plan LTI courses to take for CMAA certification
 - c. Plan activities to earn points for CMAA cert.
 - d. Earn points on as a VIAAA committee member or board member.
 - e. Order the PDF and complete for consideration
 - f. When PDF is approved plan project
 - g. Contact CMAA members of the VIAAA for advice on project

Example CMAA projects can be viewed by going to www.niaaa.org click certification program click CMAA projects click categories pick a category to view project



Learning More About Your Craft for Middle School AD's

Marcus Carter, CAA
Fluvanna Middle School

I am honored to serve as the middle school co-chair for the VIAAA. This opportunity gives me a chance to share some suggestions for middle school athletic directors. Even though I have been an athletic administrator for 10 years, I am still learning every day. This past summer, Jonathan Bukva, a fellow co-chair, and I had the opportunity to meet for the first time at the new AD workshop. We shared our experiences and expertise with new middle school athletic administrators. One of the points we emphasized in our discussion to our colleagues is to always seek to gain more knowledge about our profession. Taking the LTC courses through the NIAAA are beneficial, informative, and eye opening. It is equally important to consult with fellow athletic administrators because they can give you vital information for the present and the future. The LTC courses give you the foundation for how to be an effective athletic administrator. The courses provided me with the needed insights of the do's and don'ts of the profession. Even though I coached for over 25 years, I began to look at athletics through different lenses. This allows you to see the bigger picture when it comes to legal issues, strategic planning, collaborating with stakeholders and so much more.

I hope this will motivate more middle school athletic administrators to take courses and eventually earn certification. The encouragement to work on my certification came from my high school athletic director. Middle school AD's fulfill other roles such as teachers, counselors and other support staff, but it is important to take the time to learn more about educational based athletics. I believe it would be to your athletic program.

One last piece of advice: Athletic administrators are constantly evaluating and reevaluating at different aspects of one's athletic program. Always ask questions, be involved, and continuously pursue professional development. The NIAAA and VIAAA are excellent resources to call upon. It is a lot to learn, but the experience can be rewarding. If you decide to stay at the middle school level or even pursue going to be a high school athletic administrator, the courses the NIAAA/VIAAA provide are essential for effective leadership. If you would like to share some of your middle school experiences, contact me at marcusc@apcps.fluco.org. ■

It's a Man's world. Until it isn't.

Lyndsey Boyce

Catholic High School

"So you're in athletics?" he asked, sounding surprised. He must have seen the surprise on my face, because he immediately tried to recover. "I mean, that's great; we need more women in this business to keep us men straight. Right?" As if looking for validation, I eased his concern by saying "Absolutely!"

This quick exchange happened as I was walking a college coach back to the athletics office to meet with a football player (a prominent ACC coach who shall remain nameless). I was an assistant athletic director at the time and, not easily offended, I was unbothered by the conversation.

It wasn't until I became THE Athletic Director that those comments started to become, well, a little too frequent.

"You don't see many women athletic directors. Congratulations."

"Thanks! I am a pioneer, I guess!"

"Must be difficult being in a man's dominated industry"

"Not really; it's pretty fun!"

And one of my favorites...

"Who will go into the boys locker room if there's a problem?"

"Oh, I don't know? Maybe, one of the twenty male staff members I have."

I think it is finally time to start asking the question.

Why, in 2022, is a woman working in Athletics still a shocking concept?

By pure coincidence and not by design, our Athletic Department is now run by all women-including my Assistant Athletic Director and Athletic Trainer. I can't think of another athletic department in our conference, state, or even in the United States that is currently run by an all female staff. In a day and age where female athletes are demanding fair treatment on a national stage and more and more young women are majoring in Sports Management-why is a female athletic department still a novelty rather than a common reality? It is time to reframe the way we view women in the sporting world not only on the field, but behind the scenes as well.

My position is a responsibility I do not take lightly. Not only because of the necessity and magnitude of the job in the general sense, but because I want to show the next generation of young ladies that the world of Athletics is for them, not in spite of them.

Our Athletic Trainer is one of the strongest and most professional women we have on staff. I have never once questioned her ability to offer the best possible care to our student athletes night after night. Oh, and she does her job while also parenting her young child-women are great multi-taskers in case you didn't already know!

When the Assistant Athletic director position came open, I felt some pressure to hire a man. I'm not sure if that was pressure I put upon myself or an idea influenced by outside sources. At the end of the hiring process in which we had over 30 candidates, I told myself to hire the most qualified person and that's just what I did...HER name is Kelly. I met her as a high school freshman on the first team I ever coached. I

was blessed to coach her in two sports for four years. She went on to play college lacrosse, and eventually became a coach herself, while earning a Masters in Sport Leadership. Watching her grow as an athlete and now having her work alongside me as a woman in sports administration was a great full circle moment for the both of us.

So that's my team. Three women, all extremely qualified for the jobs they do and that they do so well.

I can't deny that my faith and personal belief in human nature keeps me aware of some of the God given differences between men and women. It would be easy to point out some disadvantages of being a "woman in a man's world." That's a ridiculously outdated statement in itself and one that I hear often, but I do believe being a woman in the athletics arena has some distinct advantages.

It's true; I may not be able to talk shop as well as some of the men and I have no problem admitting that. I love a college football game as much as the next guy (pun intended), but I do indeed prefer a good hallmark movie over ESPN- most of the time. I coach women's field hockey and lacrosse, so those are the only sports I know extensively. However, many other athletic directors-regardless of gender-do not have a comprehensive knowledge of every sport ever played. I would actually argue that sometimes a lack of knowledge can be an asset. Hear me out...coaches are their own content experts and I rely on their expertise and defer to their experience regarding their teams and sport. In doing so, I foster a relationship where we are equal partners with valuable information to share with one another. I provide the support and logistics and the coaches lead their athletes.

I'm a pleaser. I think most women are. I hate saying "no" to things or knowing when I've disappointed our coaches or parents, even to the point of losing sleep. It's tough to carry that weight. Sometimes I tell myself to do what the guy who trained me would do, just say "no."

I'm a problem solver. Most women are. I am personally offended by a problem I cannot solve, which makes our department pretty darn creative and effective at getting things done. I will move mountains to get our athletes anything and everything that will help them succeed both on and off the field.

I'm realistic. I love to "wear the pants," until the pants get too big. When that happens, I have no problem asking for help. No ego here.

We can't deny that we've come so far since title IX and I'm ever so grateful for the women who fought for our rights and paved the way. We should celebrate the women in our industry by recognizing their God given gifts and helping when needed. But please don't act surprised to see them on the stage. It's 2022 after all.. ■



Athletes and Coaches in a COVID World

Kathleen A. Keough
Student Activities Coordinator
Corporate Landing Middle School

So much has changed since mid-March of 2019. Students have experienced a combination of online school, in-person learning, asynchronous instruction and in some cases have been completely isolated from other young people. Furthermore, students have been left alone at home with less supervision than ever before. Now that most schools are back to in-person learning we are seeing firsthand the manifestation of behavioral and attitudinal changes that are the result of two and half years of pandemic protocols.

Teachers in the classroom are reporting, “an uptick in disruptive behaviors. Some are obvious and visible, like students trashing bathrooms, fighting over social media posts, or running out of classrooms. Others are quieter calls for help, like students putting their heads down and refusing to talk.” (Chalkbeat) These behavioral and attitudinal changes bring new challenges to the world of sports, coaching, and athletic administration as well. Our coaches, athletes, and parents are needing more attention than ever before.

Since the return of spectators, “School officials have reported problematic fan behavior ranging from students using foul language, making obscene gestures, throwing objects and physically fighting. The uptick also has included spectators hurling sexually demeaning and racist language at young athletes.” (The Washington Post) Schools and athletic programs are a microcosm of larger society and our society at large has seen an increase in poor behavior in public. As athletic administrators we are seeing that poor behavior play out on our fields,

in our gyms, and in our bleachers. Karissa Niehoff, the executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations, said, “When we look at the racial instances and the really horrific things that are said and done, we have taken what we might consider bad sportsmanship to a new level. It’s bad sportsmanship, of course, but it’s criminal.” (The Washington Post)

Behaviors and attitudes are morphing, but that is not all the news. In addition, student athletes are coming to us with lower skill levels and less experience than ever. The skills/experience gap between socio-economic groups has grown wider and wider as wealthier parents could afford private instruction and costly league fees while our less affluent students were left out of sports altogether for over a year. This divide within a single school has widened but the gap between wealthy divisions or schools and their less affluent counterparts has widened exponentially.

So, what are we to do? We cannot coach and administrate as we have always done in the face of so much change. First, this era is requiring that we are aware and open to the fact that students are coming to us with less skill and less experience. We must adjust our expectations and tailor our coaching to meet our students where they are. This might require a renewed dedication to reinforcing the fundamentals and more time spent on developing the concept of collaboration and teamwork. As administrators we can take some of the heat off our coaches by letting them know we understand that we are not in the same place we were in January of 2019.

Second, this is a fabulous opportunity to revisit your own mission statement as an athletic administrator. Remind yourself the purpose of your programs and take some time to reflect on the many lives that have been impacted by going through your programs. That has not changed, and lives will continue to be impacted positively even if we need to simplify game plans and focus more on fundamentals and teamwork.

Third, our students are craving structure and routine more than ever. Our programs must have clear guidelines and expectations and it is essential that we remain consistent in our adherence to those expectations and consequences. We can provide a place where students can thrive, can grow, can find encouragement, and where students can feel relief from uncertainty and rely on us to be a steady constant place they can count on.

Fourth, and most importantly, it is imperative that we provide a safe space for our student athletes. Fan behavior is our responsibility. We must have public address statements that spell out proper behavior and state consequences for bad behavior. Then, and most importantly, we must be vigilant about assessing the crowd consistently so that we can catch bad behaviors before they get out of hand. I think of my school like it is my home. When people

come to my home they are treated with respect. As Mike Jabour, the athletic director at South Burlington High School said, "These people are coming into your home and thinking they're going to be treated with respect. And when that doesn't happen, that falls on you. When they come to our school and community, if they're disrespected in any way and there is harm that has been done, that's our fault. And we need to correct that behavior and deal with it immediately." (The Washington Post)

There is much about which to be positive and hopeful. Our student athletes will continue to gain valuable experiences, grow in confidence, and harvest memories for a lifetime in our programs. Your work is priceless, keep on keeping on! ■

Sources:

"As fans return to high school sports, officials say student behavior has never been worse" by Roman Stubbs, The Washington Post, December 18, 2021.

"Stress and Short Tempers: Schools Struggle With Behavior as Students Return" by Kalyn Belsha, Chalkbeat, September 27, 2021.



Rebuilding and Educational Based Athletic Culture

Denny Ziegler, CAA
Strongville High School, Ohio

One of our girls' programs, which has been fairly successful, suffered a loss to a team they were far superior to. That loss pushed our girls overall record to 6-4 and took us out of a conference championship race. At that point in time, I was made aware of "girl drama" that was taking place within the program, which made it very difficult for the team to be successful. I met with our head coach and asked her if I could speak with the team. I had heard from multiple sources within the program that selfish behavior was starting to take over the program, turning the focus from "WE" to "ME," which anyone knows is the ingredient for failure.

I approached the team meeting like I did at the preseason parent meetings, outlining the culture we want to build and the expectations of the program. It was at that moment in time I realized that most of the athletes on this team had no idea what the true meaning of educational-based athletics was. That thought was reiterated by an athlete on the team telling her teammates that playing high school basketball was not supposed to be "FUN" but that it was a business. That thought alone triggered my mind to wonder why that comment was voiced aloud. As I left that meeting, I continued back to my office dumbfounded about the fact that a high school athlete would only think of high school sports as a business and nothing more. That night, as I was telling the story to my wife, I started to piece things together. The comment alone was not anything the athlete herself thought of, but it was simply more of the comments of the adults present in her life, which is a perfect example of our broken sports culture.

As an athletic director, one of the many duties you

face is finding ways to connect with student-athletes and programs and making certain all programs feel as relevant as the next. One of my main goals as a professional is to connect with coaches and programs during practices. I ask coaches if I can come and not only reiterate the goals and vision for the athletic department but also to teach the basics of mental peak performance. It was during a recent meeting with my current girls' basketball program that I truly realized the struggle today's athletes face.

When I first joined a high school sports team, there were many unknowns and unfamiliar paths that I walked. As a high school athlete, I remember coaches being very hard on me and my teammates. We were constantly being held to high expectations and were always accountable for our performances on and off the playing surface. I remember being pushed and trained beyond reasonable limits. If I were to have complained, my parents simply echoed the phrase, "If it was easy, everyone would be playing a sport." As much as I may have complained about a coach or a program, my parents never took it upon themselves to call the coach or talk negatively about a program because in the end, my parents knew what the sport was teaching me. My parents were so positive about the life-lessons sports were teaching me that they relayed that message on every college visit I took and even through graduation. My parents encouraged me to look at Division I schools and Division III schools knowing that sports would ultimately lead me to my destination.

My experiences as a former collegiate athlete and coach, and now as an athletic director in the 21st century, has shown me that parents who once

supported and pushed their children to be better people are now pushing their children to become statistic collectors. Sports' parents today are more interested in preparing "THE PATH" for their children than actually preparing the children. Many parents, who may not have had the resources to them in their time that their kids have today, try to live vicariously through their children. They want to relive their athletic career through their children's high school career.

It seems to me that many parents and even AAU or club coaches believe they are the real experts and know more than high school coaches or even athletic administrators. They routinely talk about strategies and question why programs are run a certain way, yet when coaching positions are open, you never seem to see their resumes cross your desk. Parents will continuously call coaches and ask about playing time, choice of schedule and even choice of practice structure or practice times. Parents will call and try to find the best travel or club team for their children that will "showcase" them to the rest of the world whether they are good or poor athletes. Parents and travel coaches will schedule more camps and games to "expose" children to the world and speak about the importance of specialization in order to get that college scholarship.

In order to make room in a so-called broken sports culture, we as a society need to trust coaches more and give them the opportunity and space to train, teach, and coach our children. We need to allow our kids to fail and learn from their mistakes. We, as a society, can't place the blame on coaches or teammates for losing or for our struggles. As a current parent, one must be willing to teach our children if they are not happy with their current role on a team. We need to show them that the only person who can change that role is them. Adversity can be a good thing if we allow our children to face it and give them strategies to overcome it on their own.

Below, I want to outline what I feel is a 5-step process to rebuilding an educational based athletic system.

Building the Real MVP

When I first started my coaching career, like many other coaches, WIN was the only word you always heard! If a coach does not win, they will not be retained, and the negative culture of non-winning teams would make recruiting difficult. If you know anything about Alabama football coach Nick Saban or Clemson football coach Dabo Sweeney, you understand that "WINNING" starts with the "PROCESS." In 2016, I was very fortunate to attend an athletic director's total immersion conference in Chicago with a gentleman by the name of Brian Cain. Cain taught me the real meaning of educational based athletics and its correlation to winning. During this conference of 30 Athletic Directors from all around the country, Cain outlined "THE PROCESS" to sustain a positive and educational based athletic and activity culture. During that conference, Cain introduced the MVP process. The MVP process as it relates to educational based athletics is very simple. As a coach, or even as an athlete, creating an MVP process for their program or for themselves is nothing more than creating a mission, vision and believing in core principles or core values. I can honestly say that the meeting I held with my girls' basketball team that I mentioned above helped the team rattle off 12 straight victories and upsets of some of the top 10 teams in the state. The focus at that time was more about being good teammates and understanding roles on the team as established in our MVP process.

1. Establishing a Mission: A mission is nothing more than what you are striving to do or complete. Establishing a mission is very simple, yet can be very complicated if not understood or if it does not have clarity. The links below outline the MVP Process that I established at Strongsville High School for not only student-athletes but also parents. It's the foundation for what we base our athletic success

- STUDENT-ATHLETE MVP PROCESS
- MVP PROCESS FOR PARENTS

2. Establishing a Vision: The vision statement is the next key piece in building your MVP process. Your Interscholastic Athletic Administration I Winter 2021 vision has to be specific and has to have clarity in order for it to be successful and for people to believe in it. For example, my own personal vision is to empower an environment where people can thrive as individuals or as a team. I personally want to share as much knowledge about educational based activities and athletics as well as share knowledge about mental peak performance with everyone in which I come in contact. A vision can be as simple as wanting to be the model program for all other institutions to follow. Along with the vision, I think you have to create a motto saying that everyone involved with the department knows and relates to the vision.

3. Developing Core Principles: The last piece of this MVP process is to establish core principles that are relevant to yourself, your program, and your district. As a coach or as an athlete, when you establish the core principles or core values, you must be able to define these core values and how they relate to not only athletics but also your personal life. To help you relate this to real life, I wanted to provide each of you with an example of how this works in athletics. As an athletic director, our programs believe that success is based upon being extremely selfless. If selflessness is a core value, then you must define what that looks like in the classroom, during practice, in the community, with your friends, and in training. When teams or departments can define their core values in every aspect of life, they have achieved educational based athletics in their program because it has been carried over into life.

4. Create Leadership Development: As a leader within an athletic department, I think one item that is often overlooked is leadership development. How do coaches, administrators, or programs develop leaders? During my tenure as an athletic director, I have been able to create leadership

training courses that incorporate many different pieces, but most of them revolve around character development. Many times throughout the course of a season, character wins and the performance pathway take over. The performance pathway is key to success in not only athletics but also in life. Creating a leadership development course or strategies for coaches to share are key to building an outstanding culture. I have realized that in high school athletics, the best teams do not always win, but it's the teams who play the best together that ultimately win. The "why" behind educational-based activities is student development. The best teams do not always win, but it's the teams that have the ultimate "why" that win games. Talent does not always win championships, but championship people win championships. What are you personally doing to develop championship people and promote an educational-based philosophy in your program?

Process Over Outcome - the Last Step in Rebuilding an Educational-Based Athletic System

As an athletic director in today's society, I have had the challenges of meeting with many parents about different athletic related issues. I remember taking over as athletic director at West Bend East in 2016. When I started there, many of the programs were struggling and some teams had not experienced success in years. During the initial interview process, I remember being asked specifically about how I would turn programs around and bring excitement back to the community. The "easy" and default answer would have been to rattle off many things to do, but the reality was those things would not have been measurable. You see, success goes far above telling someone you won 100 games and only lost 2. Success in the broader sense would be establishing process-based practices to enhance the high school experience as well as promote educational based athletics. Success, when mentioned in educational-based athletics, also highlights an attitude of gratitude. What are we as a department or program doing for

the community that has given us so much?

During my time as an athletic director, I have routinely walked through many practices and interacted with many student-athletes. On the average, I have heard many coaches repeatedly say to athletes, “How many times have I told you not to do that?” Instinctively when practice was over, I approached the coach and asked about that particular sequence of events. I asked how he or she measured that particular failure in practice so the program could grow. The coach inquisitively stared at me with the “deer in the headlights” look and responded with, “What do you mean?” In educational-based athletics, you must realize your audience is different in many ways. In most athletic programs, some are visual learners and some are audio learners. As a visual learner, athletes have to “see” things to bring success to themselves or to a program.

At West Bend East, the coaches established process-based practices which brought more fun to practices and games. It eventually broke year-long losing streaks as well. As a member of the West Bend East Athletic department, we focused on effort, attitude, body language, communication, and we tracked bad plays in practice versus good plays which put all the thinking at practice into details. When gameday rolled around, nobody cared about the scoreboard or wins or losses. It was tracking the process of turnovers, fouls, bad passes and learning from failures that ultimately brought success to the programs. This success then served as motivation for the programs to want to give back to the community in various ways. You see, when athletes give back or have “an attitude of gratitude,” it immediately changes emotions and feelings in a positive way. These positive interactions lead to better captains, better programs and something that communities can be proud of.

A recent article entitled “The Value of Purpose-Based Athletics” by Russ Reetz, outlines that we as athletic leaders, don’t have opportunities to practice

as an athlete anymore, but we do find ways to make sacrifices for the success of coaches and student-athletes. We almost always work well beyond 40-hour work weeks to advance athletic departments, but we always find ourselves facing adversity and bouncing back from mistakes and learning from them. We often hear complaints from athletes that practices are too tough or too hard, but you know what else is hard ... being a good husband, a good father, a good friend, a good employee, and a good colleague. If we never learn how to deal with difficult situations through sports, we will never be able to learn how to overcome difficult situations in our own personal lives.

As an athletic director, I have repeatedly said to my coaches - I don’t care about the wins, I care about the process of getting the desired outcomes. I care about the influence and development of the student-athletes. We can’t judge our success as a district or as a coach based on a score or number of wins in a season. We simply can’t control the wins on a schedule. We can’t control officials’ calls, weather, injuries or factors that could influence wins and losses; but we can control how we respond to adversity. We need to base success on the number of moments we have created for students and programs and teach them that the gift of giving back to the world is far better than any trophy we win. That in itself, does not keep score on a scoreboard; but defines how successful you were as a person. That type of success goes way beyond the scoreboard and is key in making room in our current win-at-all-costs sports’ culture for educational-based athletics.

Educational-based athletics is unique and has different definitions whether you play youth sports, NCAA sports, or professional sports. High school activity programs should always prepare, practice, and play to win - winning is the goal, but should not be the end all be all. Let’s make certain that the people we are entrusted with believe in us and end their limited time with us with life-long lessons! ■

“Ref”-lective Thinking: Strategies for Supporting the Work of Game Officials

Gary Stevens

Thornton Academy, Saco, Maine

The shortage of game officials is one of the greatest threats to the future of interscholastic athletics in the United States. As the population of men and women who serve high school athletics as referees continues to age (leading inevitably to retirement), other officials are leaving the profession in their prime and are hanging up their whistles for a variety of other reasons, including how they are treated by coaches, athletes, and spectators. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and affiliated state athletic associations are currently engaged in a major recruiting effort to build upon the current pool of officials and therefore stanch the bleeding within its ranks.

Athletic directors are a critical link in this process as well. In addition to assisting local, state, and national efforts to identify potential candidates for officiating boards, they also play an important role in ensuring that those individuals currently donning the stripes remain in their positions. Unfortunately, some individuals within the ranks of the profession contribute to the acrimony that some officials cite as the reason for their exit. School athletic directors who verbally abuse game officials during contests or confront them about their performance after the fact not only demonstrate unprofessional and unethical behavior; they also make a challenging problem worse.

Creating a welcoming environment and working conditions for game officials is a good starting point. Through utilizing best practices in game management, athletic administrators can offer support for this important group of athletics personnel. Game day officials are more than neutral arbiters hired for the purposes of interpreting the rules and making calls; they are essential partners in the education-based athletic experience. Athletic directors can help reinforce this point by working in concert with them to ensure that games go well.

Prelude: Verifying Assignments

Decades ago athletic directors were the sole people responsible for securing officials to work all of their home contests. In many cases, they would find locally-based board approved personnel or even teachers in their buildings to cover those activities. The pay would be determined by the host schools themselves. As a result, many games were arbitrated by alleged “homers” whose every call would come under question by the visiting team.

Today the landscape of education-based athletics, particularly when it comes to game officiating, has drastically changed. The process for addressing officiating assignments is scientific and precise. Most game officials are assigned by governing boards to work contests at schools within the catchment area of those organizations. Athletic directors have access to their officials lists in advance of a given sports season via web-based software or other communications systems established by those agencies. Some leagues and officiating groups even have created elaborate protocol to “blacklist” individuals from working in certain schools where conflicts between officials and coaches may occur.

Being proactive in ensuring the accuracy of assignment reports is vital. Upon receiving their assignment lists, athletic administrators should review them thoroughly to ensure that all information provided (date, day of week, game time, site) is current and correct. In the event that there are any errors (or changes due to postponement or other circumstances), those details should be shared with the members of the crew assigned to cover the event and the assignor.

In an age when every dollar spent on athletic programs counts, these steps are basic, yet important. Athletics

leaders not only need to confirm that they have coverage for each of their events, but also want to make sure that contests are not double-booked. Many state athletic associations require that officials who show up for events that they are not assigned to work receive a portion of a game fee and mileage for their efforts.

The “Welcoming Wagon”

Little things matter a great deal to people. Athletic administrators should not forget that small acts of courtesy and kindness pay big dividends when building relationships with other people. The connections forged with those individuals assigned to officiate our athletic contests are not exempt from this rule.

Establishing goodwill with game officials can take place well in advance of a contest. Reaching out via e-mail or a telephone call to communicate details such as secure parking arrangements or changing areas creates connections that foster the basis of the game day partnership. This strategy may be particularly helpful if an official is visiting one’s school for the first time.

For indoor events such as volleyball, basketball, or wrestling, the officials’ dressing room is ideally located in an area that is not adjacent to any of the locker room spaces being utilized by teams competing in the event. This area should be clean and welcoming. Access should be limited only to the game officials and any event staff requiring it. Among the amenities available in this space are:

1. a whiteboard and markers for officials to use as a tool for their pregame or halftime meetings
2. a toilet and shower area
3. comfortable seating
4. a clock set to the accurate time
5. lockers or other facilities ensuring the security of personal belongings

A number of athletic directors post a game day itinerary in the officials’ dressing room for their review. This itinerary will include information such as the time when warm-ups begin, order of pregame festivities (announcements, National Anthem), projected start time, and planned halftime activities.

When an official arrives at the game site, an effort should be made to meet and greet that person and escort him or

her to the designated dressing area. After all officials have arrived on scene, the athletic director should carve some time prior to their pregame meeting to review a number of details that will be essential to game administration. This content of this brief meeting should include:

1. completing of any paperwork (ex.: vouchers, W-9 Forms) required by the local school unit for payment purposes
2. information about the name and location of the certified athletic trainer assigned to cover the event
3. where the athletic administrator or game manager will be located through most of the contest
4. the halftime drink (water, sports drink) preferred by each official
5. a review of any special pregame (ex. senior recognition) or halftime activities (ex. youth basketball exhibition)
6. any special concerns that may impact the contest

Game Time Administration

Although an athletic director has an obvious allegiance to the school where he or she works, an essential component of game day administration is to support the efforts of the officiating crew working the event. A few basic points should be given in the case of all athletic events. The game facility should be appropriately marked with all field or court equipment in proper working order. Having a properly trained and knowledgeable crew working at the score table is an important starting point. The official timer should always be an adult who is familiar with the scoring panel and the rules of the game.

While the game is occurring, game day staff should manage the facility itself so that it does not impede the ability of the officiating crew to do its job. Buffer zones between the playing surface and pedestrian areas should be maintained so that officials are not restrained to run their lanes up and down the field or court. Spectators should not be allowed near the game table or bench areas. The facility should remain clean and dry at all times to foster athlete and officials safety.

For indoor activities such as basketball, cheerleading or drill teams should be assigned to areas that allow the lead official on any given play the best possible angle from which to view a play. In addition, towels should always be handy

at various areas to clean wet spots that may result during the course of the competition. For outdoor events, having rakes or drying agents at hand may be critical for managing hazards posed by inclement weather.

Game administration should also strive to address crowd control issues that can create challenges for game officials. Game staff should be constantly monitoring the entire facility for loud or disruptive spectators that may require attention. If an official asks that a particular fan be monitored or ejected from the facility for egregious behavior, it is important to work with him or her to ensure that those behaviors are addressed.

The “Escape Hatch”

One of the most critical – and oftentimes neglected -- aspects of game management actually takes place after the event is over. Athletic administrators should have preplanned “escape hatches” for game officials to use to return to their changing areas or vehicles. Those routes should be communicated in advance to officials and left clear of fans and furniture to ensure a safe and quick egress. (I have oftentimes taken advantage of a late timeout to remind the officials where to go after the final buzzer has sounded.)

Egress routes from contests should be carefully planned so that game officials and team personnel or spectators do not cross paths with one another. Game management should remind officials to not deviate from this path or respond to any comments made by unruly partisans that they may pass en route to their locker areas. Athletic directors should occasionally review their postgame plans to ensure that they are current and effective.

Particularly following a heated contest or one in which a decision is reached in the waning moments, officials must be escorted safely from the playing venue by game day staff. If the game day staff includes law enforcement or security personnel, those assets can be used to help manage this egress and prevent angry or unruly spectators from interacting with them. Having one person at the front (“the point”) and another individual in the rear of the line is a sound strategy to keep the group together and to deter negative behavior. When necessary, these precautions

should be extended to the officials’ actual exit from the school campus.

Other Courtesies and Opportunities

An athletic director’s obligations to game officials does not cease once they depart the school venue. As soon as possible after the contest is completed, athletic directors should finalize the completion of any internal forms to ensure that officials are paid for their services as promptly as possible. All paperwork should be reviewed prior to submission to ensure that the officials are paid the correct amount and receive appropriate mileage reimbursement (if applicable).

Offering feedback, particularly for an official who performs his or her duties well, is another means of creating goodwill. Many officiating boards have on-line or written evaluation mechanisms whereby schools can share their experiences. I have even gone to the length of making a quick phone call to an official on the day after a contest or sending a brief note. Particularly for novice or probationary officials who are “learning the ropes”, these gestures provide needed encouragement.

Athletic directors may also consider helping in the retention and training of officials by offering opportunities for them to work at preseason play days or other exhibition events. Many officials boards will staff these activities for free or at a reduced rate. Some coaches hire board

officials to work an intrasquad scrimmage in the preseason and to offer a rules clinic for players and coaches.

As American schools look to expand their athletic offerings, it has become clear that the current supply of officials is not adequate to keep up with the demand for game coverage. Now more than ever, it is important that school athletics personnel and officiating boards must work closely and cooperatively to not only recruit new people, but to also retain the people we currently have. Through paying attention to detail and displaying common courtesy to those who serve our games, athletic administrators can contribute to this essential effort. ■

Empowering Our Youth With Quality Programs

By Dave Tikker
WSSAAA Executive Director

Our new Executive Director for the WIAA, Mick Hoffman, has an interesting little saying right before his signature with emails. It says, "Walking our Talk Without Making Excuses". I love that saying. Its empowering when you lay a strong foundation for what you believe in that sends a positive message to all stakeholders. "We believe in what we are doing".

When we quit believing in what we are doing then we just become a management tool and our jobs become irrelevant. That can never be the case with education based activities, Regardless of all the obstacles that interfere with our programs it's imperative that daily we all affirm the value of what we do. That value should not be reflected in the wins and loss column.

My 7th grade basketball team (first team I coached in Junior High) was 0-10. We were horrible and got beat our first game 64-4. I had to come to grips very quick about how to find victories in a losing season. Our motto after that first game was get up, dress up, and show up and never ever, ever, give up. We lost every game but the victories we had going through that season were life changing. Never had I experienced the closeness of a group of guys. They fed off of my positive attitude and I fed off of their determination. My current family doctor was on that team.

Celebrate the victories and I don't mean wins and losses. Find ways in your programs to promote the value of what your coaches are teaching our youth. Here are some examples!

1. Identify for each team a player of the week that reflects their respective character and how they are contributing to making their schools better through their participation.

2. Have athletes write articles for school newspaper about what they are learning in their respective sport that carries over into their daily lives.
3. Have a community service day during your season where your team volunteers in the community. Examples might be a food bank, local senior citizen center, litter pick up.
4. Have your team captains present to the school board the value of what they're learning.
5. Have coaches honor players who are not the stars with a weekly award for their role on team.
6. Have a team breakfast with the moms and coach every week. Get the moms on board and dads are a little more manageable.
7. Invite a sports reporter to practice one day and watch what you are teaching kids.
8. Have varsity athletes work with elementary kids with clinics
9. Have pregame meal at a different parents home every week
10. Start your season with a positive parent meeting and include your athletes in the presentation.
11. End your season on a positive note identifying the value of everyone's role and what you all learned as a team.

The best possible outcomes of your seasons is parents, athletes, and your communities seeing the value in what you are doing. Pretty amazing how that becomes a community builder.