

The Section Sez . . .

By Bill Charles

3,000 STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL AND ONLY 7 CAN PLAY BASKETBALL?

Someone needs to make sure that the majority of the neighborhood kids are not on the outside looking in. Preventing such a disaster is the CIFSDS. Their guidelines are clear; the process is simple; and there is plenty of support along the way. For it all to work there is one fundamental requirement: parents and students must provide the true, complete, accurate and correct story at the beginning; coaches, athletic directors and others responsible to make a determination must ask the tough questions of parents and the parents must not be offended by the questions; if the request is legitimate and the story is not evolving there should be no reason to hide the truth by anyone and the process works quickly.

It's not a shame for a new coach not to know the rules for transferring and maintaining eligibility, but it is a shame if he misinforms his players through his/her lack of knowledge or allows parents to run a sham to get around the rules.

The CIF is not evil as some suggest and taking delight in denying eligibility when necessary; but what parents and coaches do to kids who just want to play by moving them around, preventing them from taking full advantage of all that a high school experience has to offer, and using the school system as their personal playground to chase a dream is wrongheaded – if the athlete is truly part of the less than one percent that is elite, the athlete will be seen. The athlete also has every opportunity to shine in the showcases, but on the parents' dime and not the California taxpayers', and a college scout will be impressed how the athlete makes the others better.

Scouts aren't stupid, a good player with good players is nothing special but when a good player makes a team great, that is the kid they want. And when the kid can't play because of what the parent and coach try to pull, it is not the fault of the CIFSDS as much as anyone needs to blame them - and that is where the evil lies.

For just this reason, the CIFSDS has four levels of review before they even have to make a decision, so there is no excuse for ignorance, laziness or skullduggery.

1. The first order for a parent and student wishing to change is to first enroll in the new school, which usually starts with the counselor, registrar or assistant principal/athletic director – not the coach. The parent needs to tell the whole story and then will be advised of the steps to take and the forms that must be filled out. If the true, correct, accurate and complete information is given at this first step, a

decision to go forward with a request to transfer eligibility by the school can be made.

2. If the parent and student don't fully understand the process or disagree with the assessment, they can contact the school principal who is ultimately responsible for the story that will be told to the CIFSDS. It would be wise to speak to both the A.D. and principal to ensure that the transfer is on solid footing.

3. If questions remain, most conferences have a conference president for further clarification, for example, Larry Pear, Grossmont or Jerry Schniepp, Metro.

4. Final clarification and resolution rests with the CIFSDS administration.

"By the time it reaches our office we should have the full story so an appropriate decision can be made," says assistant commissioner Bill McLaughlin. "But we still have to verify the information. People wonder why everything is 'so secret' when we do our investigating. It's not a secret, it's information held in confidence that is respecting privacy. It is important for people to remember the old adage that every story has two sides."

When true, complete, accurate information is not provided by the parents, the students and the school, the process can take some time and lots of money. For instance, in 2007-08 alone the CIF processed more than 2,000 requests for transfer; this year that number may reach 3,000. Much of the delay can be blamed on candidates unintentionally filling out documents incorrectly or just flat falsifying their paperwork.

And when the decision isn't what is wanted, the expenses start to pile up for the CIFSDS. And all that money could have been spent on enhancing the participation of the athletes who are following the rules instead of on the families and attorneys who want vocational training for their superstar.