

## The Section Sez . . .

By Bill Charles

### ARE THE TIMES A CHANGIN'? SHOULD THEY?

Whenever there is a heated issue concerning the eligibility of a player, the ire of those involved and outsiders not in the know often unleash a ration of vitriol.

The recent brouhaha over the eligibility of three San Diego High boys' basketball players has caused quite a stir. In its investigation of the desired transfer of the players involved, the San Diego CIF administration has been slapped with numerous unfair accusations.

Some of those who have responded to articles concerning San Diego High boys' basketball published in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* have labeled the CIF as 'vindictive, kid haters, evildoers on a witch hunt.'

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The truth is simply that there is now a clash of fundamental beliefs between those who want high school athletics to be a vocational education experience that stuffs the pockets of a new group of high school player agents working the club circuit and the organization charged with the responsibility to keep high school sports as an amateur experience that is an extension of the educational experience for all students, not the elite player.

Most important to consider in this debate is the undisputed fact that this organization was established in 1914 by the California state legislature at the request of the schools to prevent just this kind of abuse; but in those days it did not involve the great sums of money that parents are willing to pay today to a person who only creates showcase events (from which they earn tens of thousands of added dollars) on the promise that their kid will get a look for a college scholarship. No coaching, just playing in tournaments that these individuals organize in order to make more money for themselves, then encourage those parents to shuttle their kids out of the home school area to another school whose coach is connected to their organization to create a mega team in order to get invited to their showcase event.

Is that what high school sports are all about now? If it is, then the rules need to change; if it isn't, then parents and their player agents need to appreciate that it is not a free market system and go chase their dream for their elite athlete through the showcases to make room for the kids who want to play for their school, who want to experience being a part of team, and who want to work for a common goal, not an individual dream, and experience the thrill of the pursuit.

A math teacher can't tutor a student after school for extra pay by law; but a coach can impliedly require an athlete to pay to take extra lessons or to play in the out of season club program. And parents are forced to do it in order to make sure their child has a fair chance to make the school team. Parents have to spend money to protect their child from the import taking a spot on the school team. The law protects students from outside businesses taking advantage of them, but it doesn't protect them from the unscrupulous coach chasing a championship for whatever reason or building an outside business. Sounds like a conflict of interest and it is time for parents to no longer tolerate the hold up.

There has to be some kind of governance to administer rules that will maintain a level playing field for all student athletes.