

## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

### PARENTS



I am the Commissioner of Athletics for the CIF Southern Section. I am also a high school sports parent with a 10<sup>th</sup> grade daughter who plays soccer for her high school team. The start of the school year and the start of the sports year bring many things: excitement, enthusiasm and optimism along with hopes and dreams of success. This time of year also begins what we call the transfer season.

On the first day of school, there will be many students who will be attending a new school as a result of transferring from one school to another. In trying to evaluate the reasons why students transfer, there are many of them and it can be a complex situation at times. However, my experiences as a high school teacher and coach, Assistant Commissioner, Commissioner and now high school sports parent have taught me that very few transfers, if any, take place without the parent(s) playing a prominent role.

Several years ago, a successful high school baseball coach in our section authored a document he entitled, "An Open Letter to Parents of High School Athletes." Here are some excerpts from that letter...

"After many years of coaching high school baseball, I have experienced a part of coaching that is the most difficult to accept. It is not the more obvious frustrations of wins and losses, dealing with the problems young high school student-athletes face or declining budgets and fund raising.

It is the parent that interferes, criticizes and manipulates constantly in order to improve their son's/daughter's chances of playing time. Parents are not involved in the daily program of practice and player-coach interaction; they have a limited view of the real situation. What the parent does not realize is the person that is ultimately hurt is their son/daughter, not the coach they portray as the villain. For the coach, it is a temporarily uncomfortable situation, but for the player, it is something that may last a lifetime. So, what should parents do? Help your son/daughter by leaving them alone. Allow them to fail or succeed on their own. They will grow from the failure and take great joy in knowing they have succeeded on their own. Today, they may appear to appreciate your intervention, but more likely they will resent your interference later. Allow your son/daughter to come home and air their feelings about the day's events without fear of you jumping in trying to solve their problems. Listen to them and use it as an opportunity to help them learn, not as a way of suppressing their independence by your interference.

Parents can love and support their son/daughter without subverting their quest to become an adult. When conflict between coach and parent occurs, the athlete is caught in the middle because of the love for their parents and a desire to please their coach in order to play. Don't let the coach become the reason for an athlete's failure, and that is exactly what happens when a parent constantly berates the coach.

Let go and let your son/daughter grow up. Help them deal with the situations that confront them.

Encouragement and support from parents is what young people need, not someone throwing out insults and criticism to break down the morale of the team. A great season can be completely destroyed by a parent or parents that think they know better than the coach.

Remember, the coach is really the most unbiased person on the field. They see the team as a team in the proper perspective. Parents see the team through eyes that are tinted with the love and aspirations for their son/daughter. No matter how much the parent has played the game or coached youth sports; they are not exempt from these feelings.

Love them and let go!"

All the best,

*Robert Wigod*

Rob Wigod  
Commissioner of Athletics  
High School Sports Parent

