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# High School Sports Can Gripe, But Athletic Transfers Are A Way Of Life

If you want to hear youth sports old-timers [or young-timers who sound like old-timers] gripe about something that isn't about [participation trophies](#), ask them about high school athletic transfers. You can do that with [coaches](#) (as quoted from the Dallas Morning News)...

“ [Guyer football coach John] Walsh had these words about IMG [Academies, a multisport school in Florida that has recruited players nationwide]:

“I think if I was going to answer any question about IMG honestly, we'd need a talk show on HBO,” he told the Denton Record-Chronicle's Adam Boedeker.

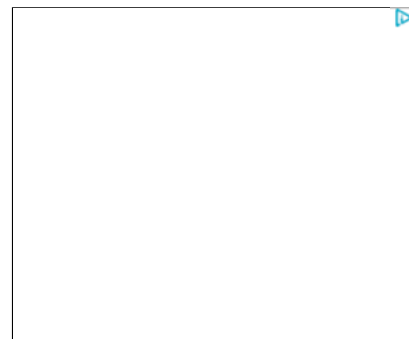
...or sports reporters [like [John Canzano of the Portland Oregonian](#)]...

“ I live in West Linn and drive past the high school every day on my way to work. And even as the Lions boys basketball team will play in the Les Schwab Invitational this week, I won't root for it.

Not primarily because a journalist needs to remain objective. But because what this defending 6A state-champion basketball program now represents is troubling, and threatens to rip high school athletics apart at the seams.

... The program has sold out to the club basketball scene and has become “THAT” kind of basketball school. It's dumped core values, and is drunk with winning. No way around the fact that [eight of the 18 players](#) available to play this week didn't grow up in West Linn.

...or sports reporters and coaches at the same time, as Daily Southtown (suburban Chicago) reporter Pat DiSabato and Chicago Heights Marian Catholic boys basketball coach Mike Taylor [take turns slagging players who transfer](#), as well as their parents, in particular one kid who transferred mid-season...



“ Welcome to the current state of high school boys basketball, folks.

In case you're not aware, it's a deepening cesspool of selfishness, misguided player evaluations and lack of accountability. And much of the blame lies at the feet of adults, whose priorities have gone awry.

Hurt is the fourth player from Marian Catholic to transfer since last season.

“A lot of selfishness,” Taylor said. “Why is this kid getting more attention than my kid? Why is my kid not making all-conference? Why isn't my kid getting a Division I scholarship? That's what the culture truly is today.”

However, like with participation trophies, everyone can complain about athletic transfers all they want, but the reality is there are students and parents who will shop for what they see as the best situation, especially in light of (as I've argued for years) legislative education priorities favoring charter schools, vouchers for private school, school choice, and a general sense that [parents know best when it comes to where their kids should go to school](#). And that's the case no matter what anyone says, including higher-ups at state high school athletic associations ([as quoted in the Press of Atlantic City, N.J.](#)):

“ It affects athletes academically,” [New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association Michael] Zapicchi said. “Everytime someone switches from one school to another, they lose three months on their reading and math scores.

“ It's also affecting the integrity of the game.”

The New Jersey association, the NJSIAA, is one of 24 statewide high school sports organizations nationwide requiring athletes to sit out a year if the association does not approve their transfer (say, if it takes place even though the family hasn't moved). However, that rule, as it is in other states, basically is unenforceable, in light of [New Jersey's school-choice program](#).

The NJSIAA doesn't want to grant virtual high school athletic free agency as has happend in [Florida](#) and [Utah](#). So it's come up with another idea, which would require little paperwork, no special rulings and no appeals. Again, from the Press of Atlantic City:

“ The NJSIAA, which governs most New Jersey high school sports, this week unveiled a proposal that would require all athletes who transfer to a new school to sit the first 30 days of the season regardless of whether they move or not. [The soonest it could be implemented is 2018.] ...

“What we're trying to do is address a number of concerns,” NJSIAA project manager Michael Zapicchi said in a conference call with reporters this week. “One is kids going back and forth between schools. The second is multiple transfers. The third is kids and their parents shopping programs to figure out which is the best for them athletically.” ...

“The 30-day sit is the shortest sit in the country,” he said. “During the 30-day sit, they can still practice and participate in all team activities. They get the bulk of the positives that being on a team provides, but they can't compete. That (requiring everyone to sit 30 days) is the negative, but we feel the tradeoff is worth it.”

By the way, the number of athletes transferring isn't all that high. The NJSIAA told the Press that about 1,500 athletes, out of 250,000, transfer annually. But noses get out of joint about transfers because they often involve the most talented performers, often finding their way to [only a few schools](#) – whether they be an in-state rival, or one of the out-of-state academies that have [popped up to serve elite high school athletes](#).

New Jersey's plan may not end up coming to fruition, depending on the vagaries of its board and members. But at least in this solution to the transfer issues, the NJSIAA is acknowledging the reality that — at least as long as school choice is a legislative priority — parents and students will shop around for schools based on academics, arts, activities and, yes, sports. Like it or not, right or wrong, that's the reality.

I would recommend to those in the high school sports world that instead of slagging schools, players and parents who engage in transfers, they accept this reality, work with parents to help them make the best decision, and if the athlete leaves, wish him or her well. If you're really all about the kids, that is.

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