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Sports Commentary: 'The state must be crazy' – stay away from the TSSAA

By Joe Williams for the Williamson Herald
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Submitted

FRANKLIN – Any doubt the Tennessee state legislature has lost its ever-lovin' mind was completely erased this week when the super-majority party of that body decided to take up the idea of eliminating the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association that governs scholastic athletics in the state.

They envision the state taking over and placing high school athletics under the watchful eye of the General Assembly.

For full disclosure, I'm part of the party that holds a super majority. For the better part of the TSSAA's 100-year existence, I've either played under its oversight or covered athletes doing the same. I've fallen under their discipline and watched them show compassion when necessary. I've hated the TSSAA and I've loved the TSSAA, which, the older I get, leads me to believe they've been doing something right.

If you've read these pages before or listened to WAKM AM-950 radio over the years, you know I am a firm believer that high school sports is the last bastion of purity in athletics. It's something more evident now than ever, too. The vast majority of participants do so because

they love the game, and they love their school. This was even more so ingrained in the days of neighborhood schools, but that's another topic for another day.

I got wind of the rumblings last week, but it struck me as such an overreach and purely greedy grab for power that I laughed.

I should have known better.

After all, this is the same veteran group elected years ago on the platform of less government is better and local government is best. As soon as they got to Nashville, they began to try to dictate to municipalities how they should do things. And only they have the right answers.

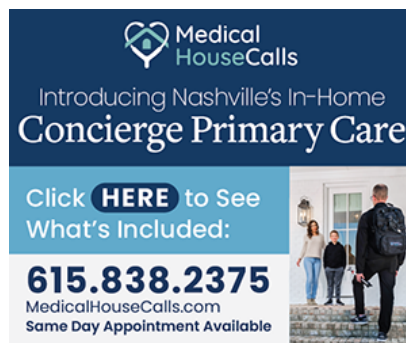
Despite any smoke that may be blowing around, the state's interest in regulating high school athletics is to create a quasi-transfer portal. Without an open-zoned school situation, a bona fide change of address, or an academic class request, athletes must sit out a year when transferring. Leaders in the legislature have pushed for a one-time "free pass." When the TSSAA didn't go for that, the leaders decided to make a move to kill an organization that has been a good steward of athletics in this state for a century – a century celebrated earlier this month on April 11, the TSSAA's 100th birthday.

The thought process seems to be don't like the coach – I want a free pass. Don't like the offense – I want a free pass. Don't think I'm getting enough playing time – I want a free pass.

Much of this comes from "those" parents, who I am sure have been in the ears of the legislature. I can't tell you the number of moms and dads over the last 40 years who told me their "stud" player was going into the Southeastern Conference, only to find four years later the kid couldn't make it as a walk-on at an NAIA school. Not because of a lack of talent, effort, focus, desire by the kid, but because the kid didn't have the right coach. "If only he had played for coach So-and-So, he'd already be a household name."

Don't think there not are ways around anything any governing body wants to set out as rules. Here in Williamson County several years ago, a kid started on Friday night for High School A. The moving truck arrived Saturday, the kid enrolled in High School B on Monday with a change of address and made the required number of practices and started the very next Friday night for High School B. That just so happened to be against High School A, too.

No, this is just an attempted power grab by the legislature in an area they have no business. Please, build roads, fix bridges, trim the sales tax and fully fund every school system. Then, you can maybe begin to worry about which athletes get to go where.



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Tags

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Transfer Rule

