

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

MULTI-SPORT ATHLETES AND MULTI-SCHOOL ATHLETES



I believe that one of the founding principles of our organization, which has continued throughout our history, is to encourage and promote student-athletes participating in multiple sports throughout their high school years. In this way, our student-athletes continue to learn the life's lessons that their high school athletics experiences can teach them in a different way. I think our principals and our athletic directors feel the same, while I am sure there are coaches who support the concept of multi-sport athletes and those who do not. Our Fall sports are almost complete, as the CIF State Championship Football Bowl Games this weekend are all that remain, but our Winter sports have already been up and running for the past three weeks. In previous eras, we would have seen many of our student-athletes transition from a Fall sport to a Winter sport and they enjoyed the opportunities to do so. Sadly, in more recent times, we have seen a significant decrease in the numbers of student-athletes who are involved in more than one sport at their high school and there are various factors involved that have directly influenced that situation: student-athletes choosing one sport in pursuit of college scholarships/professional contracts, off-season programs on our campuses that operate year-round, the club/travel industry that feeds sport specialization, etc. Having said that, I often wonder what effect this decline in multi-sport athletes has had on the increase in what I refer to as multi-school athletes, student-athletes who change schools once, or many times, in search of an athletic experience that they feel is of benefit to them. Is there a relationship between multi-sport student-athletes and multi-school student-athletes? I submit that there is.

Perhaps the student-athlete who participates in more than one sport at their high school would have a stronger connection to that high school and would be less likely to leave in search of a different sports experience somewhere else. I would suggest that the deeper the commitment a student-athlete has to their high school, the likelihood that they would leave it all behind is reduced. The values of loyalty and trust, along with the relationships and friendships that are built between teammates, coaches, fellow students and families can all be enhanced by being part of more than one athletic program at a school. In this day and age, we have more and more examples of students attending four high schools in four years, three high schools in three years and so on. I find that phenomenon difficult to understand. During my 17 years as a high school Social Studies teacher, my students would be upset if I decided to change their seat in my classroom, so it has always been hard for me to grasp why so many students would change high schools specifically for sports. As the parent of a current high school senior, I can only imagine what my daughter would have said to me if I told her we were going to transfer her to another high school because of issues involving athletics and then did it a second time, a third time...

As the Commissioner of Athletics for the CIF Southern Section, it has always been my primary goal to move our section forward and that will continue to motivate me each and every day. However, if making progress means that we continue to see the decline of multi-sport athletes in favor of multi-school athletes, then I see that as a step backward for all of us.

Thank you very much for your help and support and I wish you good luck always.

All the best,

Rob Wignol

