

Sports in high school

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It is said that the odds of a high school football player making it into the NFL is 1 in 6, 000; for basketball players, it's 1 in 10, 000. When faced with odds as daunting and unpromising as these, I can't help but believe that placing such an enormous focus on sports, especially on teenagers through middle school and high school, is only setting us up for failure. However, I am not saying that a sport in school is a bad thing. However a sport at the price of academics is unacceptable. I speak from personal experience when I say that I was exposed to life lessons that are hard to come by in the absence of sports such as letting go of mistakes, focusing on what I can control, how to carry myself with confidence, not cockiness, and to always be prepared.

In addition, it is not uncommon to hear of students using sports as their motivation to keep up their grades. However, when kids get into the mindset of cheating to make the team, or when colleges hand out athletic scholarships to students who cannot fulfill the academic demands, sports in school become an issue. High school is the time for teenagers to focus on building an educational foundation for the rest of their lives. It is a time to discover who we are as individuals, not to be labeled and judged based on how many times we can throw a ball through a hoop or how fast we can run. Students who would rather focus on their grades, instead of spending an average of 4 hours a day in the gym, need to feel like they can without being condemned as “ lazy” or a “ nerd.” Truth be told, when teenagers are introduced to the world of sports, 65% consent because they want to be social, 56% are genuinely curious about trying something new, and only 20% are serious about becoming good.

The fact of the matter is that all three are legitimate motives; however, none of these need to interfere with school. If one wishes to play sports, regardless of the reason, leagues, clubs, or traveling team outside of and not associated with school are available. I adamantly believe that there is an enormous amount of pressure added to lives of student athletes. It is hard enough to juggle a social life, a family life, and an academic life; however, when teens feel compelled to join the volleyball team or the football team just because their friends are doing it and they don't think they will be accepted if they don't as well, they are setting themselves up to fail by spreading themselves too thin. I propose that keeping school at school and sports on the field is the simple solution.

As a nation, all we need to do is shift our expectation for high school athletics. I'm not suggesting that we oust college or professional sports. If an athlete is serious about it, she would have the opportunity to go from her traveling team in high school to a college team, and provided she is good enough, she would continue on to the pros. The corresponding notion would then be for college scouts to scope out the local traveling teams rather than high schools and as an added bonus, the traveling teams would already be composed of the cream of the crop, dedicated, and serious athletes. To those who are concerned about their children receiving their recommended daily exercise because they aren't in sports, the easy fix is to place a larger focus on Physical Education programs that are typically offered through the school's curriculum.

If we were able to shift our " norm" into relying on individual accountability and PE for exposure to different sports and daily exercise, there would be no

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more missing school for sports related absences, no more pressure, and no more judgment. I understand that if things were to change, it is not something that would happen overnight. It would take time, adaption, and cooperation. However, I believe that if we start to make the mental change now, our kids' kids wouldn't know life another way and would never have to experience the challenges aroused when sports are integrated with school. In the world we live in, one becoming more and more consumed in the world of sports, I think it would be the healthy decision for at least high school and sports to become two separate entities and learn to coincide independent of each other.