



February 2019 Issue

- * **FIGHT FOR THE FISH - Coeur d'Alene vs. Lake City**
- * **CHANGING SCHOOL CULTURE THROUGH UNIFIED SPORTS**
- * **LEARNING PRO - NFHS Courses for Student-Athletes**
- * **FROM DAIRY WEST**
 - * *National Healthy Weight Awareness Month*
 - * *Family Fitness Month*
- * **GOODING BASKETBALL - Together We Rise**
- * **THE PLIGHT OF THE REFEREE: 7 Reasons We Yell**



UNITED DAIRYMEN — A DAIRY WEST PARTNER



IHSAA EXPRESS

Supporting Education Through Activities

FIGHT FOR THE FISH

The 21st edition of the spirit games between Coeur d'Alene and Lake City was played in front of over 2000 screaming students for the Vikings and Timberwolves. Both schools competed on and off the court in this rich tradition that was full of loud noise, great pep bands, outstanding cheerleaders, honoring men and women of service, community and school-wide passion and most of all SPORTSMANSHIP!!

Congratulations to the students, players, fans, coaches and administration for being an example of what high school sports & activities are all about!

BOTH SCHOOLS WERE AMAZING

Dear Fight For The Fish,

First of all, thank you. For the past three years at Lake City you have revealed to me my passion in high school. I don't think I would be able to make it through high school without the annual Fight for the Fish basketball spirit competition. School spirit may not be appealing to all, but I believe it runs through my veins. I bleed navy, silver, and teal, and there is almost nothing I wouldn't do to feel the rush of adrenaline course through me when they say "And for the 9th year in a row." Those words make it all worth it. That is what I live for.

Let me start from the beginning. Student council starts planning Fight for the Fish in October; the class after homecoming. With the expectations high from our student body and ourselves, student council along with our advisor, Mrs. Alderman, are ready and anxious to start the process for Fight for the Fish. We start with basic theme and discuss each of them with consideration of cheers, band, decorations, spirit packs, cheerleaders, etc. After intense and high-strung voting for the best theme ideas, we come down to one. Some people love it and some people hate it, but student council has to sell it and learn to love it because it will become our lives for the next three and a half months.

Decorations are always a very important part of Fight for the Fish and they end up taking the longest time and the most concentration. The decor has to be theme and spirit based, and only include our colors, navy, silver, and teal. This can become very challenging. With many hours of painting signs and cutting designs, we are finally able to put all of the paper on a 20 foot by 30 foot tarp that we use for the Fight for the Fish game.

Our cheers are probably the most creative section. We have to take the cheers we already use and modify them to our theme without them sounding too different and not too hard for the student section. We also have our spirit pack committee which is tied in with the cheers, that is in charge of shirt design and any items that we will include the spirit pack. They must tie in with the theme and, of course, school colors.

The week of Fight for the Fish we have a whole spirit week that we also have to plan for. During this week student council puts on the annual Kiss the Fish competition. This competition includes five volunteer teachers that are willing to kiss a real, but dead, fish in front of the whole school at the assembly. The way the school chooses what teacher kisses the fish is by donating money at lunches. Very few people know the true meaning of Fight for the Fish, which is to raise money for the Human Rights program. The Kiss the Fish competition helps raise a portion of the \$500 each school donates at the competition on Friday. We try to make each day fun, easy, and hopefully theme related. The Friday of Fight for the Fish is the one day of the year that I am most stressed. No AP test or NIC exam can come anywhere close to this day. Nervous, excited, and anxious are just some of the multiple good and bad emotions I have on that Friday. After the assembly on Friday, we head to the gym of the school responsible for hosting to get everything set up. The doors to the gym open at 3:00 P.M. for both schools to get in and start decorating. You have until 4:45 P.M. to be completely ready for the mob of people to start rushing in. When both schools are able to start decorating, there are many things that have to be done. For Lake City, at least, we have to hang the massive tarp and player posters which is done by our amazing volunteer teachers and also our janitors.

We have signs that have to be put up on the sides of the bleachers, and raise a sign in between the basketball hoops which is probably the most nerve racking part of the decoration set up because it has to be tight enough to where people can see it, but not too tight to where it rips. The boxes also have to be put in place along with the sign boxes that contain a sign for each of the cheers that we will use during the game. The time goes a lot faster than what we realize, but student council always finds a way to make sure everything is finished with time to spare.

On the 2019 Fight for the Fish we opened the doors for our students to come in and as I watched them come by the hundreds, I was overwhelmed and relieved all at the same time. Emotions that I have never felt before with Fight for the Fish, or in general, took over my body and I started crying. They were mostly happy and excited tears. This moment always makes me feel like Lake City is united and all the work of student council has paid off. It is a feeling I will never forget. I have never loved my school more than that specific moment.

I was a runner during the actual competition. A runner stays on the floor and helps with everything behind the scenes such as, picking cheers, helping the people on boxes and fixing any mistakes that might, and will, come up. I am not sure what gets me about school spirit, but when the whole school is together and united as one, I feel complete and entirely thankful. The whole night is over in a blink of the eye and I always wish it never ended even though my head is pounding, my ears are ringing, and I am exhausted by the end of the night. All of the time, dedication, and many frustrations comes down to a couple of words; "Lake City High School" or "Coeur d'Alene High School." When they are about to announce the winner, the student sections for both schools are all completely quiet because they know that it is going to come down to a few simple words. I can almost hear the student's heart beats that are racing due to the exhaustion from cheering and the nerves that are creeping up until this moment. "And for the ninth year in a row..." That is all I could hear and it seems like there was weight lifted off my shoulders. All I could do is run with my school to that fish, laugh and finally breathe.

Writing this letter I am tearing up because I feel so emotionally invested into this one moment, and it brings me chills whenever I think about.

We did it, yet again, but for some reason this year was different. There is no one I look up to more than my advisor Mrs. Alderman. I adore her as a person and a T-wolf. We share the same love for school spirit and after we were announced as the winners of the Fish for the ninth year in a row, I knew I was sharing the same emotions as her. This event would not be possible and to be ran so smoothly without her amazing guidance for student council. Mrs. Alderman is very realistic and straight forward which is something that is crucial for the planning of Fight for the Fish. I want to thank her for her dedication and time she puts into student council and this school. I know for a fact, that Fight for the Fish would not be anywhere close to the same without her.

The clean up after the announcement of the winner does not feel like a chore because of the happiness and the adrenaline I have, even though the bleachers are covered in water bottles, Red Bull cans that are cracked and spilled everywhere, food that has been stepped on by many people, and spirit pack items. At this point, I do not mind one bit. I can go home knowing I did my job along with student council and the amazing student body.

This might sound totally insane to other people, but I am so thankful for Fight for the Fish. It has taught me many life lessons such as dedication, perseverance, and patience. I love Fight for the Fish. At this moment, the tears in my eyes are full of passion. I am ready for you next year, Fight for the Fish. The class of 2020 is coming to get that 10-peat with no doubt about it. I am not going to say that bringing the fish home for 10 years in a row will be easy, not one bit, but I am ready to do it all again for the very last. Time. Thank you from the bottom and deepest part of my heart. You will forever and always hold my love and T-wolf spirit. T-WOLVES FOREVER!!!<3

Sincerely,
Abby Quigley - Lake City HS



ADMINISTRATION CORNER

DATES TO REMEMBER

1/31-2/2	All-State Music
2/1	Winter Sports E.V. Due
2/4	State GBB Pictures & Rosters Due
2/5	Winter Academic State Champions Due
2/14-2/16	Girls Real Dairy Shootout
2/17	State Wrestling Seeding Meeting
2/18	State BBB Pictures & Rosters Due
2/18	President's Day
2/22-2/23	State Wrestling
2/22	1st Practice - Baseball; Softball; Track; Tennis
2/25	1st Practice - Golf
2/28-3/2	Boys Real Dairy Shootout



TO DO IN FEBRUARY

- ___ Send State Sportsmanship information to parents, band, cheerleaders
- ___ Prepare Spring Facilities (scoreboards, fields, equipment)
- ___ Fall Contracts for 2019
- ___ Winter Contracts for 2019-2020
- ___ League Meetings
- ___ Finalize spring bus schedules
- ___ Turn in Winter Sports EV Form
- ___ Spring Coaches Requirements
- ___ Set dates/sites/times for spring coaches and parent meetings
- ___ Nominate a student for the IHSAA Student Advisory Council
- ___ Nominate a student for the Interscholastic Star Scholarship
- ___ Nominate a student for the Spirit of Sport Award
- ___ Put together a Unified Team from your school



AED CHECKLIST

Sudden Cardiac Arrest is the number one cause of sudden death in student-athletes during activity. In the event of a sudden cardiac arrest episode and automated external defibrillator (AED) can save a life. **Each minute defibrillation is delayed, the chance of survival decreases 10%.** The following can serve as an AED checklist to be sure you are prepared.

- ___ The AED is easily accessible at every practice/game location and available for use within 2-3 minutes (ideally it is onsite). The device is **NOT** in a locked or secured area where retrieval could be a challenge.
- ___ Personnel are always available onsite who are trained in CPR and AED use.
- ___ The AED is checked regularly to ensure it is working and the pads and battery are not expired.
- ___ The Emergency Action Plan has been rehearsed **PRIOR** to the beginning of the season with everyone potentially involved in the emergency response.
- ___ Someone has been designated to retrieve the AED if needed.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



The Gooding Senator Basketball team has adopted a cause for this year's Basketball Season. The Senator's have chosen to join a movement of other high school athletes to bring to light the feelings of hopelessness and despair that lead to actions of suicide. Suicide is the number two cause of death among teens.

1 in 5 Idaho Youth report seriously considering Suicide. Idaho has the 8th highest suicide rate in the nation. The Senators wear on their warmups the contact information for resources and ask for help in recognizing this problem and join the community of people who care.

For Only Together We Rise.



Idaho Arts Educators Recognized by the NFHS



Camille Blackburn
Hillcrest HS

The NFHS Music Association recognizes individuals whose contributions in the fields of band, choral or orchestra have exemplified the highest standards of ethical conduct. Camille Blackburn, Hillcrest High School has been chosen as this year's Idaho recipient.

Camille has taught Choral Music, Musical Theatre, Adjunct Voice while directing multiple schools. In 2011 she was chosen as the Idaho Music Educator of the Year and in 2015 was selected as the Idaho Choral Director of the Year.



Julie Underwood
Kimberly HS

The NFHS Speech, Debate & Theatre Association annually recognizes outstanding high school speech, debate or theatre educators. An NFHS awards committee has selected Julie Underwood, Kimberly High School as this year's Idaho recipient. Qualifying candidates must have demonstrated a commitment to both curricular and co-curricular activities, organization and continuance of an activity program, on-going contributions to her field both in and out of the state of Idaho.

Julie began coaching competitive speech and debate at Kimberly High School in 2006. Julie has served as Idaho Speech Arts Teachers Association Treasurer and Vice-President. In 2009 she was honored as the Speech Teacher of the Year by the ISATA.

COACHES CORNER

COACHING TIP OF THE MONTH

"Winning is a habit. Watch your thoughts, they become your beliefs. Watch your beliefs, they become your words. Watch your words, they become your actions. Watch your actions, they become your habits. Watch your habits, they become your character."

-Vince Lombardi

NFHS LEARN COURSE OF THE MONTH

DID YOU KNOW... - NFHS Learn has four courses designed for student-athletes to achieve excellence in the classroom. All courses are **FREE** at NFHSLearn.org

LEARNING PRO: Homework Helper

This course will help students identify the optimal environment for learning and provide skills to allow them to take control of their study experiences. Included will be tips on how to prepare to study, how to get organized, the importance of maintaining a study schedule, how to manage distractions, and how to develop good study habits.

LEARNING PRO: Reading and Learning Strategies

All individuals learn differently, and this course will help students develop strategies that support their own approaches to learning. Effectively organizing information, employing techniques that increase retention, making meaningful connections with the material, and managing problems that may be getting in the way of academic performance will be explored.

LEARNING PRO: Research Skills

This course will take the student step-by-step through a research project - planning the project, identifying sources and conducting the research, evaluating sources, compiling the information in a meaningful way and, finally, presenting the results.

LEARNING PRO: Testing Tips

Test anxiety can undermine a student's academic success. This course will explore effective note-taking, outlining, and study skills to help students prepare for a test, and offer tips for tackling questions and avoiding self-defeating behavior on test day.



National Healthy Weight Awareness & Family Fitness Month

Jaelyn St. John MS, RDN, LD

Registered Dietitian, Mom, and lover of all things Family, Food, Fitness and Fun!

It's no surprise January is National Healthy Weight Awareness Month and Family Fitness Month! Everyone looks forward to a fresh start and new beginning.

Looking for ideas to stay active during the cold winter months? Dairy West and I are here to help! Enjoying activities alongside your loved ones often feels more like fun than 'work' and typically leads to more movement over time! Swimming at an indoor pool, bundling up for a walk, hitting the slopes, and visiting the local recreation center are all great indoor activities to keep us moving this winter!



Family fitness



Recently released, the updated Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and adolescents (ages 6-17) get 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily and adults (ages 18-64) should do at least 150 to 350 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week. Some of the benefits you might find with regular activity include better sleep, more energy, increased strength and endurance.

While working to achieve more movement, don't forget the importance of balanced nutrition!

Focus on nutrient-rich foods: **1)** Fat-free and low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt **2)** Vibrant-colored vegetables **3)** Whole, fiber-rich grains **4)** Brightly colored fruits and 100% fruit juices **5)** Lean meats, skinless poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts. MyPlate is a great visual to illustrate meal by meal what your plate should look like. Make the healthy choice the easy choice!

Your health and weight are connected! According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if your body mass index falls into the range of overweight or obese, you may be at a higher risk for some diseases and conditions such as stroke, some cancers, hypertension or high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes. To learn more visit Your Health and Your Weight.

With regular activity and balanced nutrition, you'll feel your best self in no time! Together we continue to build a healthy, high-achieving generation of youth! If you have questions or comments, please contact me at jjstjohn@dairywest.com

Dairy West works on behalf of dairy farm families in Idaho and Utah to promote the dairy industry and dairy products locally, nationally and globally. We are committed to connecting people with agriculture and sharing information and resources about dairy farming and dairy foods.



Girls Real Dairy Shootout
February 14-16 Ford Idaho Center



Boys Real Dairy Shootout
February 28-March 2 Ford Idaho Center

STATE BASKETBALL SCHOOL WIDE SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

A sportsmanship award is presented at the Basketball State Tournament to the school in each classification that exhibits the best sportsmanship. Schools are judged before, during and after games throughout the tournament using the following criteria:

SPORTSMANSHIP MATTERS



TEAM AND COACH

- Attitude displayed by players, coaches and bench personnel
- Respect for the flag, national anthem, opponents and officials

ADMINISTRATORS

- Appropriate and effective supervision of students

STUDENT SECTIONS (CHEERLEADERS, STUDENTS, PEP BANDS)

- Respect for the flag, national anthem, opponents, and officials
- Courtesy towards opponents and tournament management
- Choice and timing of chants, cheers and songs; crowd control
- Avoidance of unsportsmanlike behavior (listed below)

ADULT FANS

- Respect for the flag, national anthem, opponents, and officials
- Courtesy toward opponents and tournament management
- Avoidance of inappropriate behavior. (listed below)
- Following IHSAA State Tournament Sportsmanship Rules

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- Displaying signs that are directed toward opponents, negative, vulgar, or display poor sportsmanship
- Throwing objects onto the playing area; creating distractions during introductions of opponents or while shooting
- Derogatory/harassing remarks that are directed towards opponents or officials
- Pep bands starting a song when opposing band is playing, or disregarding the "alternating play" etiquette rule



February 22-23 Holt Arena



March 8-9 Century High School



March 15-16 Ford Idaho Center

Changing Your School's Culture Through Unified Sports

By Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald on January 08, 2019



There are 10 seconds left on the clock and Tyler has the ball at half-court. He dribbles and passes to Hayden, who shoots and scores as time expires. The crowd rushes the floor as parents, students and athletes hug and celebrate winning the Unified Sports State Basketball Championship.

While there will be a trophy and a banner to remember the victory, they don't compare to the joy captured in the moment by athletes who have struggled their entire lives. For these athletes and their Unified partners – individuals without disabilities – the school board recognition, the pep rally and the medals they will proudly wear symbolize far more than a victory in an athletic contest, they signal acceptance.

Because their school and community have embraced Special Olympics Unified Sports, they now join together to share the pride that comes from winning a championship. And why not! As with interscholastic athletics, Unified Sports is about competition, doing the best you can, learning the sport, developing relationships and representing something larger than yourself. For high school principals, Unified Sports can be the foundation for building a positive sports and inclusion culture in schools.



Things to know about Unified Sports

Unified Sports is not intended to take the place of either varsity athletics or Special Olympics. It belongs in its own category. Unified Sports teams are composed of students with and without disabilities. Under the partnership between the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association and Special Olympics Delaware, state champions are recognized in three Unified Sports seasons – flag football, basketball and track and field, which vary in length. Flag football has a six-game schedule followed by playoffs, and basketball plays a minimum of five games. The Unified track and field team follows the same schedule as the varsity program.

Getting started



A great place to begin is the NFHS Learning Center at www.NFHSLearn.com. It also is important to connect with your state high school athletic/activity association and Special Olympics program. If these two organizations can create a partnership in your state, it will solidify the impact that Unified Sports can have on your school and help the program grow around the state.

As with any sport, the coach must be dedicated, knowledgeable and a capable teacher of the sport, while also having the ability to work with students with disabilities. Schedules and transportation for contests must be arranged along with securing uniforms and equipment. Meetings are held throughout the year to determine interest – just like any other varsity sport.

According to Nate Threatts, Unified Sports head coach at Caesar Rodney High School in Delaware, "All Unified partners and athletes go through tryouts like any other varsity team, but our athletes must prove they are eligible to try out by their behavior in school. Playing time is determined by a student's performance at practice and behavior in the classroom. An athlete can be benched or lose playing time for lack of focus or effort in school or practice."

Typically, Unified teams practice three to four days a week based upon available space and the season. An extra day of practice is added during the tournament.

Challenges

For many programs, the greatest challenge is the availability of space for practice. It is especially difficult to find gym space during the winter season. Since most students with disabilities are also new to afterschool activities, another hurdle may be parental awareness and their support.

The Unified program will only be as good as the administration will allow it to be. While there may be some strong programs, there may be others which are very unorganized and barely meet the minimum requirements. When facing these issues, the principal must make a commitment. It is imperative that the Unified Sports program is treated like any varsity sport. Otherwise, a disservice will be done to these athletes, and the program will fail.

Impact

The following are examples of the positive impact of a Unified Sports program:

- Middletown High School offers all three Unified sports, and the football games are played under the lights in the stadium, with the marching band and an inclusive group of cheerleaders performing. Players wear their jerseys on game days, and are wished good luck by students and staff in the hallways and cafeteria. According to Athletic Director Collen Kelley, "Unified Sports has given our students with disabilities a sense of truly being part of a team and being accepted by their school community. Our Unified partners really care about the athletes and want to help them succeed. Whether it is a win or a loss, everyone has fun."
- Woodbridge High School is in the second year of participating in Unified Flag Football and its fourth year with Unified Track and Field. During this time, the school has witnessed a major increase in the confidence of its Unified athletes. They proudly wear their Woodbridge jerseys through the hallways and to home varsity football games on Friday nights, and many took school pictures and senior portraits in their uniform. Andrew Layton, Unified Sports coach at Woodbridge, believes that "from a Unified partner perspective, we have been fortunate to find great students who are role models for our athletes, and embrace everyone inside and outside the classroom. Best of all, they don't treat our athletes differently, hold each other to a higher standard, and support and look out for each other. "As a Unified Flag Football coach, I am grateful for my experiences with these athletes as they not only have made me a better coach, but a better person. The excitement they bring to their craft is contagious. The best part of every game is our post-game dinner, where we get to talk about the game, joke around and focus on something we all have in common – our love for the game of football."



District leaders seeking to celebrate their students' abilities rather than their disabilities while also building a culture of inclusiveness, can see that realized through Unified Sports. Every student should have the opportunity to participate and be involved in high school athletics. As an educational leader, it is important to understand that the ultimate reward for anyone who participates in an extracurricular activity is acceptance, friendship and making memories that will last a lifetime. Unified Sports will provide this and more.

Any administrator looking to create a school climate of acceptance, inclusion, recognition and the breaking down of stereotypes, can find the answer in the development of a strong Unified Sports program.

For information on beginning a Unified Sports event or program in your school, go to IDHSAA.org or contact Allison Moskos at Special Olympics of Idaho

THE PLIGHT OF THE REFEREE: SEVEN REASONS WE YELL

by Jack Bowen 05.08.2018



Job Description—Youth Sports Referee:

Oversee games involving emotionally charged athletes, parents, and coaches. Adjudicate what occurred amidst hundreds of instances involving fast-moving athletes and high-speed balls. Athletes will repeatedly fake what's actually going on. Responsible for athlete safety. All the while, coaches, fans, and parents will berate you for any perceived mistakes. Referees often get overlooked in the world of sports writing. And from the unfortunate actions of many youth sports coaches, parents, and athletes, we can easily recognize how they're often viewed and, consequently, treated. Delving deeper into the "Why?" of this cultural phenomenon provides a perfect opportunity to consider the cause of much of this behavior: our brains.

Credit: Odyssey

Humans have various blind spots looming beneath the surface. Bringing these to the surface is a great first step to help us understand where we've gone wrong in our approach to interacting with referees. Then, with this sort of awareness, we can change our actions accordingly.

1. Confirmation Bias: In short, here's how your brain works: you establish a pet theory and then try to prove yourself right. We like being right. It feels good. And we'd much rather just feel like we're right than go out and challenge our worldview in search of the truth, all the while recognizing where we'd gone wrong.

So, if a coach has established the theory, "The referee—i.e. every referee—is calling the game against us," then that coach counts the instances which confirm his hypothesis—calls that go against him—and ignores those that do not. He experiences the game as if objectively gathering data proving the conclusion: more bad calls against him and, subsequently, this particular referee is terrible. The problem is, it's likely the other coach has been testing the same theory, but for his team. And, thus, both coaches lash out at the supposed injustice of the whole enterprise.

2. Availability Bias: Much of this ties in with our tendency to focus our attention on more recent and more "outstanding" events while overlooking or forgetting all others. The soccer coach becomes wound up by the call that just happened and which seemed egregious because of its implications. But he likely ignores the huge majority of minor calls along the way. Not to mention the countless no-calls throughout the ninety-minute match. Not much to remember: calls were made (or not) and it's time to get on to the next play. But then, the coach perceives what seems to be a bad call against his team, and this call sticks in his mind, adds to his pet theory, and catalyzes the feeling of injustice.

In the "real world," this bias explains why people often fear flying unreasonably following a publicized plane crash, despite the fact that driving to the airport is actually more dangerous, and plane safety at an all-time high. The more available and outstanding an event, the more likely we are to consider it and act (irrationally) accordingly.

3. Naturally Poor Statisticians: Many of the world's greatest scam artists cash in, literally, on the fact that humans just aren't good at statistics. Along with the prior two biases, this is one reason horoscopes and the like seem to work: people go in with the bias thinking it will work (confirmation), then notice when it does (availability), and don't think to add up all of the "misses" along the way. Statistics, instead, help paint a picture of how things really are so we don't get caught up in the emotions of how they seem.

It's certainly too much to ask, amidst the intensity of a competitive game, for coaches to objectively view referee calls and statistically analyze them. But when I've done this, the calls never demonstrate some deep-seated unfairness toward one team. There are occasionally runs of bad calls against one team but, again, that's what we should expect. If you flip an unbiased coin 10,000 times, you shouldn't be surprised to see an occasional run of 10 consecutive heads—actually, you should be surprised if you don't as you need just over 1,000 flips to expect to see that. Likewise, even a good referee will make a run of bad calls. For many coaches, as they're coaching thousands of hours of games, when this happens they should chalk it up to a statistical run, not some evil intent of the referee.

4. Emotions Get In The Way: Given this competitive nature of coaches, we not only expect them to be emotional, but we want that. How odd it would be for a committed coach to be on the field without any emotional connection to the competition, her players, or the score. But we all know the downside of emotions and how they get the best of us: it's the reason we're advised to let that emotionally-laden email sit in our "Drafts" folder overnight before sending, or to "cool off" before re-engaging in an argument. Physicist Leonard Mlodinow thusly refers to emotions as our "prime source of irrationality." Our emotions truly cloud our ability to access the truth of the matter at hand.

At a high school soccer game I recently attended, at one point, the goalkeeper challenged an offside call against his team on offense. The call was made at the opposite end of the field from the goalie: not only was he the farthest person from the transgression, but he had the worst possible angle to judge it, especially compared to the linesman exactly parallel with the defensive line. Only someone whose emotions had high-jacked his rationality (along with the aforementioned biases) could yell from the opposite side of the field, "Come on ref! That's terrible!"

5. We Don't See Reality: It sure seems like our eyes capture reality, but countless studies and visual illusions, along with a basic understanding of neuroscience shows they do not. So it's not just the case we're giving in to our biases and ignoring what's really happening—in many instances, we don't even see what's actually happening in the first place. In one famous study, half of the people counting passes made by three basketball players fail to see a large gorilla on screen for 8 seconds of the 30 second video. So, in combination with the above errors, we are now forced to admit we selectively attend to and view phenomena, especially emotionally-charged phenomena to which we bring expectations and pre-conceived notions from the outset.

6. Objects Versus Persons: Somehow, in the world of sports, it's become commonplace to view the referee not as a person—someone just like us, with bills to pay, fears and desires, etc.—but as an object. Worse, as an object preventing us from achieving our goals, such as winning games. Once you view a person as an object, it's easy to treat them as such and not afford them the same moral respect we would any other person.

In my own coaching career, over 18 years in the same league I've gotten to know every referee, to some extent, as a person—one has a sordid story of his upbringing in Croatia, while another has a strong affinity for motorcycles, and yet another wonders if he will ever afford to buy a home in our area. Knowing these sorts of things about someone removes them from the object-category and makes it rather difficult to then publicly berate them from across the playing field.

7. Negativity Bias: We feel the negative feelings of losses considerably more than we do the positive feelings of gains. This plays out in the world of investing and often leads to people choosing investments irrationally due to the pain of recent and anticipated losses. Clearly, then, coaches fall prey to this: bad calls hurt more than favorable calls feel good. And that exacerbated sting once again leads to a biased and irrational view of referees.

Credit: The Tribune-Democrat

Once we account for and recognize all of this, we can be reminded of a few things.

- First, referees have a very difficult job, especially at the HS level. Consider the job description that started this article. Reflecting on this provides an easy opportunity for empathy.
- Secondly, having now acknowledged our numerous biases and blind spots, consider this question: At a point of controversy mid-game, who has a better chance of being correct, the expert non-biased referee or the emotionally-laden coach? Given that any rational person would have to bet on the referee, coaches can apply this same reasoning to themselves, as keen as we might perceive our respective sense of vision and rational abilities to be.
- And third, it's truly part of the job of the interscholastic sports coach to model behavior and proper values for the children they coach—the children they are educating. Once the adult coach begins berating the referee, the players soon follow. This is not to say a coach should remain mute in the face of perceived injustice. At any break (halftime, quarter break, etc.) referees often welcome a well-meaning coach's sincere questions as to how the game is being called, or sharing a concern regarding issues he believes have gone undetected. The athletes are all watching closely.

As in all walks of life, recognizing our blind spots helps us to better interact with others and allows us to come at our relationships with a heightened understanding and greater compassion and humility. And now, on the playing field, we can return to the roots of competition—to strive together—and include not just our competitors under this banner, but referees as well.

