

THE WASHINGTON COACH

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON STATE COACHES ASSOCIATION



Fall
2026



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Tennis	Harrison Lee, Curtis
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Volleyball	Suzanne Marble, LaConner
Wrestling	Brett Lucas, Todd Beamer

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WASHINGTON STATE

COACHES ASSOCIATION

A WASHINGTON STATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Our Mission

The mission of the Washington State Coaches Association is to support its membership by creating educational opportunities through sport specific clinics, provide resources which enhance the highest possible knowledge, standards and ethics in the coaching profession and to recognize and celebrate excellence of our membership, their families, teams and players.

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From the Editor

The articles in *The Washington Coach* do not necessarily represent the views of the Washington State Coaches Association. We publish articles of varied opinions and perspectives to encourage thought and discussion. If you read an article in our magazine with which you do not agree, we encourage you to write an article presenting your ideas and insights.

Presidents Message

Darrell Olson

Fall 2026

Fellow WSCA Members,

School is back in session, fall sports are underway, everyone is undefeated and believing they can win their conference championship. What a great time of the year. Everybody is refreshed, everything is new. Those of you that are new head coaches or new to the coaching profession, you are jazzed and ready for your 1st season to get under way.



This is the time of year when WSCA membership renewal is well underway. If you are a coach registering as an individual, log onto our website (washcoach.net) and get your registration completed. If you are part of a district that covers your cost of membership, log onto our website and get your registration completed. **A reminder to ALL WSCA MEMBERS: your WSCA membership card allows you entrance into post-season District Tournaments only.** This is not a ticket for regular season athletic events. This is not a ticket for the state tournament. Your AD should remind you of this. In your online registration, coaches will be able to select the multiple sports you are coaching. **Please be mindful that the #1 sport you select is where \$17 of your registration goes to support that individual sport with clinics, All Star games, and professional growth opportunities.** Your Washington State Coaches Association is here for you.

A reminder to ALL coaches of the 2026-'27 school year: ALL paid high school and middle school head and assistant coaches are required to complete the online WIAA and sport specific rules clinics. It is believed that all coaches should know the WIAA rules and the rules of the sport they are coaching. ALL coaches must complete their rules clinics before the first day of practice. Failure to complete these rules clinics will result in a WIAA violation. The rules clinic is also one of the requirements from WIAA that must be met to receive your 'GoFan' code for entrance to the state tournaments. Whether you like it or not, completing this requirement is part of the professionalism of being a coach. Get it done.

Amendments: due date for completed Amendment proposal forms must be submitted to the WIAA by the second Friday in October. This is an important step if you are looking to initiate change in your sport. You are the change agent for your individual sports. If you have an idea that you think will improve your sport, sit down with your AD and/or principal and share your thoughts and idea's. Get them on board then download the appropriate form from the WIAA website and start the process for getting your amendment proposal rolling. It takes time! It is a slow process. Understand it takes months and multiple readings to get it to a position to be voted on.....but it is worth it.

I want to personally encourage all coaches to get involved and get off the sidelines. Make a contribution to your sport specific organization in 2026- '27. Instead of sitting on the sidelines complaining about what you perceive as something 'broken', ask how you can help.

The Executive Board is always open to suggestions to better improve our WSCA. The Exec Board is a strong group of coaches with depth of experiences and a wide variety of coaching backgrounds. They serve as advocates for all middle school and high school athletic programs and support all coaches working with our young athletes.

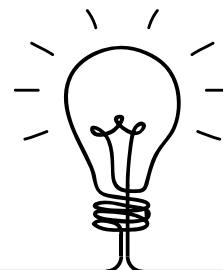
Here's to a successful fall sports season for everyone.

Darrell Olson
President



Executive Director/ Treasurer Report

Rob Friese, Executive Director/Treasurer
robfriese@gmail.com



Be in the Know

Welcome to the 2026-2027 membership year. We continue to maintain a consistent number of coaches who choose to be a part of this professional organization. Our reason for existence is to support coaches across the state through any means that we can.

This year we have budgeted \$30,000 for scholarships that go to WSCA members' kids and student teachers, which is something we are able to do because of good financial stewardship. Individual Sport Associations continue to receive reimbursement dollars to assist in all their sports' endeavors.

In order to provide the best assistance to our members, we have a dedicated a team of three, rather than one, board members to view and reply to messages we receive by email. When you email us, a real person is at the other end, not some auto replay or AI Bot. To give you some context, when you send an email it is either being

handled by Tom Sanchez; our Membership Coordinator, Mike Schick; our Magazine Editor, or Rob Friese; Executive Director/Treasurer. We are all checking emails throughout different times of the day. Each of us are very approachable and enjoy connecting with our members. The WSCA email is contact.wsca@washcoach.net.

Our up-to-date membership management system is up and running, along with our new website look. We welcome any input on how we can improve on this as it is new to all of us and I am sure there will be tweaks along the way.

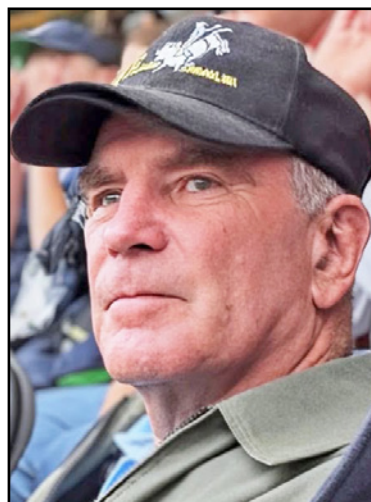
This is an exciting time to be a member of the Washington State Coaches Association.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me. ■

Our reason for existence is to support coaches across the state through any means that we can.

An Icon of Lebam...

It is with sadness we share that our Executive Director/Treasurer, Rob Friese, lost his father Albert "Skip" Friese on September 15th. "A man who didn't do anything halfway. When he worked, he gave it his all. When he loved his family, it was fierce and certain. And when it was time to live, he played hard and laughed hard. Eighty-nine years of a life fully, truly lived." Our heartfelt condolences to the entire Friese family and all the people who will forever miss "Skip". ■



Washington State Coaches Association

- Eligible to coach in sanctioned WSCA all-state games. WIAA will only authorize WSCA sanctioned All-State events.
- Receive reduced fees at WSCA sponsored coaches clinics and WIAA clock hours toward coaches education certification and/or salary placement
- Honor member coaches for their coaching achievements through our Career Recognition and Lifetime Achievement programs.
- Provide reimbursement to each Individual Sport Association for enrollment in the WSCA.

For registration information please visit:
washcoach.net

Why Should I Become A Member?

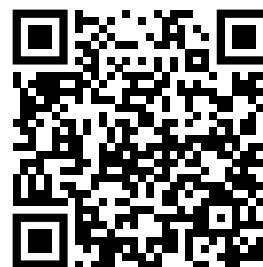
This \$50 question is asked by many coaches in our state. The first answer is that the WSCA is a professional organization for Washington State high school & middle level school coaches. ***We exist to support your efforts as a coach.***

- Professional education and training, to earn clock hours and coaching education hours.
- **Liability Insurance coverage of \$2 million** for our membership while working a scheduled, sanctioned and supervised WIAA sport or event.
- An opportunity for your son or daughter to apply for WSCA scholarships. (i.e. **Burnett-Ennis, Terry Ennis, Student Teaching**).
- Eligibility for your sports' **Hall of Fame and Coach of the Year** recognition.

OTHER BENEFITS:

- Coordination with the state governing association (WIAA).
- Input through the Individual Sport Association Representatives into the WSCA.
- By becoming a member of the WSCA, you are taking a proactive approach to working on issues facing our coaching profession.

SCAN HERE





GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE PROGRAM

As a membership benefit, coverage is provided by the Commercial General Liability Policy issued to the National Organization of Coaches Association Directors. This policy will provide general liability coverage to Washington State Coaches Association and its members.

CARRIER

HDI Global Specialty (A Rated)

POLICY PERIOD

August 1, 2025 – August 1, 2026

LIMITS OF INSURANCE

\$1,000,000	Each Occurrence
\$2,000,000	General Aggregate (per Member)
\$1,000,000	Products/Completed Operations
\$1,000,000	Personal & Advertising Injury
\$ 300,000	Fire Damage
\$ 50,000	Sexual Abuse (per Member)
Excluded	Medical Payments

COVERAGES

- ❖ Educator Professional Liability
- ❖ Participant Legal Liability for insured members
- ❖ Liability assumed under insured written contract
- ❖ Defense Cost outside limits

EXCLUSIONS

- ❖ The use of automobiles, buses, watercraft and aircraft
- ❖ Property of others in the care, custody, and control of the insured.
- ❖ This insurance does not apply to members that coach at an All-Star game that is not approved by your state coaches association.
- ❖ This insurance does not apply to any loss, cost or expense arising out of infectious or communicable disease.

CAMP INSURANCE

Today, most Coaches are involved in some type of sports camp. Please note that our General Liability Program follows insured members while working at camps and/or conducting their own personal camp.

In addition, Participant/Accident Coverage is required for coaches and/or participants. Should an accident occur during a camp, clinic or event, this secondary coverage helps offset the loss suffered by families affected by such accidents.

PROCEDURE FOR CAMP INSURANCE

As a member benefit of your state coaches association, all members in good standing have a \$1,000,000 per occurrence General Liability policy limit that provides coverage for their coaching activities. In order to protect the General Liability policy from potential claims, the insurance company has mandated that all coaches must obtain signed waivers and provide Participant/Accident insurance for their participants.

In order to obtain a certificate of insurance showing proof of insurance or naming an additional insured, the following must be in place:

- ❖ **Waivers:** Signed waivers showing indemnification language
- ❖ **Participant/Accident Insurance:** You must have Participant/Accident coverage in place for all participants attending sports camps.

PURCHASE INSURANCE

- ❖ Camp Insurance Request form is available on our website: <https://www.loomislapann.com/page/camp-insurance-2.html>

INSURANCE ADMINISTRATOR



www.loomislapann.com

(P) 800-566-6479 | (F) 518-792-3426

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Lori George

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Disclaimer: This is an insurance overview for summary purposes only; for complete policy terms and conditions please refer to the NOCAD Master Policy.

The Pros and Cons of Sport Summer Camps

by Steve Bridge



For years summer sport camps have filled a portion of a student athlete's summer, from team camps to individual position camps. I remember working a "Lineman Camp" at Eastern Washington University back in the day and I could not believe anyone could take 7 days teaching kids how to block or defend a block but it was probably the best position camp I ever attended. Great coaches teaching technique!

Recently, we have seen issues pop up centering around camp behaviors that have led to coaches being fired, teams removed from camps, football seasons cancelled and kids suffering penalties affecting their eligibility to compete in the fall. We have also seen huge financial judgements all due to hazing and HIB (harassment, intimidation and bullying). The main and con-

sistent ingredient to nearly every one of these incidents has to do with supervision. **There is a legal term used called Loco Parentis and is a Latin phrase that means "in the place of a parent".**

It describes a legal duty where an adult or a group takes care of a child and makes choices for them, just like a mom or dad would, without a formal adoption. Some of the supervision issues can be blamed on the increasingly high amount of turnover in both the coaching and athletic administration positions and concept of simply not knowing what to look for or predict kids' behaviors or "not knowing what you don't know." Even though it is hard to understand why kids do what they do but looking at the evidence, incidents do occur and if education-based athletics is really a concept, then we

need to do a better job with the educational part.

I would encourage all new and veteran AD's to be active learners and take LTC 504-506 and 508 to provide not only awareness into hazing and HIB behaviors but also encourage each of you to provide further training for your coaches. Meeting coaches' standards is certainly a step but I'm a firm believer nothing is better than effective on-site, in-person trainings.

The importance of developing team comradery is always a goal in team development and building a team culture. Attending summer camps provides the opportunity for kids to get out of their comfort zone and learn how to work as a group and appreciate their teammates. For this to occur, there has to be direct involvement by coaches to establish standards and rules to promote

the acceptance of all team members, new and old. Team camps provide an opportunity for team member to learn to appreciate each other and learn to accept the similarities and differences each team member brings. Spending a week or so away from the comfort of home (for some a first-time experience) can bring kids together as they work towards a common goal of improvement.

Along with the positive elements summer camps provide, we recently have seen several incidents of poor decision making on the parts of adults and athletes. It becomes difficult to understand why some believe embarrassing, causing physical pain or establishing an environment of fear is an excepted pathway towards a positive team culture, but it happens far too often with devastating effects.

The following is a team check-list for coaches to use with parents, players and school administration as a set of guidelines to minimize problems that have recently occurred regarding hazing and bullying behaviors at summer camps. The list is simply a suggestion—feel free to add or subtract.

A coach's supervision checklist for summer camp requires preparation in three key areas: **medical and legal documentation, daily accountability routines, and dorm/off-field monitoring.**

Before Leaving for Camp

- ✓ **Medical Releases:** Collect signed emergency medical authorization, insurance cards, and allergy/medication sheets for every athlete.
- ✓ **Medication Protocol:** Match all prescription drugs to doctor instructions; hand medications over to the camp nurse or lock them in a secure coach container.
- ✓ **Code of Conduct:** Review behavioral rules, curfew policies, and anti-bullying standards with both parents and athletes.
- ✓ **Emergency Contacts:** Keep a printed and digital list of parent phone numbers and local camp medical facilities.
- ✓ **Make sure all coaches have been hired and approved by the school board or superintendent**
- ✓ Daily Operations and Field Safety
- ✓ **Head Counts:** Do a physical roll call before and after every transition, bus ride, meal, and practice session.
- ✓ **Hydration & Rest:** Monitor weather conditions and enforce scheduled water breaks and shade rotations.

- ✓ **Injury Response:** Report any injury immediately to the camp medical staff and document the time, cause, and response.
- ✓ **Facility Check:** Walk through training areas to ensure equipment is safe and hazards are removed before drills begin. Look for “hot spots” in the dorms or sleeping facilities for overnight camps.

Dorms and Free Time

- ✓ **Room Checks:** Assign specific curfew times and perform visual bed checks every night to verify every athlete is in their assigned room. Assign coaches to certain floors or areas for bed checks and to enforce “lights out” regulations.
- ✓ **No-Isolation Rule:** Ensure coaches never stay alone behind closed doors with a single minor; maintain an “open door” or two-adult policy at all times.
- ✓ **Free-Time Boundaries:** Define clear off-limits zones on the camp property when athletes are not at a scheduled practice.
- ✓ **Establish a list of items not allowed at camp-** weapons, fireworks, hair clippers, scissors.
- ✓ **Establish clear consequences regarding rule infractions.**
- ✓ **Establish clear rules regarding coach's supervision. Coaches are to be visible and available as often as possible and at no time should coaches be in a separate building or gathering place from your team. Supervision is 100% of the time the coach's responsibility!**

Establish a “no hazing or bullying policy” and discuss with your players what those policies mean. RCW 28B.10.900- Washington State Hazing Law and RCW 28A.300.285 and RCW 28A.600.477 Washington State HIB Law

Just a reminder, team camps can provide very valuable lessons for our players but they also provide opportunities for players to set terrible examples if allowed. Coaches need to establish the boundaries for their teams and be the example of the team culture desired. Don't assume kids understand the standards you desire, they need to be told. I have learned over the years that the term “common sense” may not be as common as you think. Kids need leadership and direction and they look towards their coaches for that guidance. Wishing everyone a safe and memory filling season. ■

Coaches need
to establish
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and be the example
of the
team culture
desired.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Hearing their final whistle...



Coach Tim Kelly



Basketball Says Goodbye to Hall of Fame Coach Tim Kelly

The WIBCA is deeply saddened by the passing of our current board member and former President, Tim Kelly. Tim's legacy as a coach in the state of Washington is unparalleled. With 531 combined career wins at both Curtis and Lincoln High Schools, Tim compiled more wins than any other boys 4A coach in the history of the state. While at both schools, Tim led his programs to a combined five state championships, an extraordinary accomplishment made even more remarkable by achiev-

ing that success at two different schools.

Tim's coaching excellence is reflected in his numerous Coach of the Year honors, including State Coach of the Year recognition. In 2011, he was proudly nominated by Washington for the National Federation of High Schools National Coach of the Year award. His leadership extended beyond the sidelines, coaching multiple All-State games, the Northwest Shootout, and representing Washington at the National High School

Basketball Coaches Association tournament in 2014. Tim was a 2009 WIBCA Hall of Fame inductee. His legacy of achievement culminated in his induction into the City of Tacoma Sports Museum Hall of Fame, a testament to his lasting impact on the sport and his community.

As a current board member and past president, Tim's selflessness shines through his unwavering commitment to WIBCA events, his leadership spanning more than 30 years, and his readiness to take on any challenge to advance the sport of high school basketball.

WIBCA offers our sincere condolences to Tim's wife, Gini, his daughters, Annie and Katy, and the entire Kelly family. We also extend our heartfelt thoughts to Tim's former players, assistant coaches, colleagues, and friends. During this difficult time, please know that the Washington basketball community mourns alongside you and celebrates the remarkable legacy Tim leaves behind. ■



Do you have a coaching tip to share with the readers of "The Washington Coach"?

Send your tip or tidbit to wsca-editor@comcast.net





Can You Define Your Culture?

by Suzanne Marble, Author: Coaching With Confidence

“Team unity and team culture are by far more important than talent.”

— Rob Colbert

What is your team culture?

More importantly, **could every person in your program answer that question the same way?**

Culture is the foundation of your program. It shapes how athletes treat one another, respond to adversity, handle success, and show up when no one is watching. It influences how athletes, parents, fans, and your community experience your program.

Culture doesn't happen by accident. You create it.

Every practice, conversation, correction, celebration, and decision sends a message about what matters in your program. Your athletes are constantly watching—not just listening—to determine what you truly value.

A powerful culture goes far beyond winning. It creates **belonging, trust, accountability, and purpose**. It gives athletes the confidence to take risks, make mistakes, challenge themselves,

and learn without fear of failure. When athletes know they are valued, they are more willing to invest in themselves and in one another.

But culture can also work against you. When expectations are unclear or inconsistently enforced, negativity, division, and entitlement can take root. A talented team without trust and connection will struggle to reach its potential.

As coaches, we have the responsibility—and the opportunity—to intentionally build the environment we want our athletes to experience. **Define it. Communicate it. Model it. Hold people accountable to it. And protect it.**

Because ultimately, your culture will tell the story of your program long after the final score is forgotten.

Take a Moment to Reflect

Ask yourself:

- What are the **three words** I want my program to be known for?

- Could my athletes clearly explain what our culture stands for?
- Do my daily actions as a coach reflect the culture I say I want?
- What behaviors am I allowing that may be working against our culture?
- What is **one thing I can change tomorrow** to strengthen our culture?

The Challenge

If I asked every athlete, parent, and coach in your program to describe your culture in three words, would their answers be the same?

If not, don't wait for your culture to change on its own.

Start the conversation. Define what matters. Lead by example. And build the culture your athletes deserve. ■

As coaches, we have the responsibility—and the opportunity—to intentionally build the environment we want our athletes to experience.

**Define it. Communicate it. Model it.
Hold people accountable to it. And protect it.**



At the end of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, the new Hall of Fame members come back on stage where the Hall of Fame members in attendance present to them their Green Jacket. Congratulations to all! ■

Hearing their final whistle...



Coach Jerry Striegel



COACH STRIEGEL PASSES AWAY

Jerry Striegel, a longtime head coach at Tenino and Rochester high schools whose coaching career spanned four decades has passed away. He was 70 years old.

Born and raised in Rochester, Jerry attended Centralia College and graduated from Western Washington University in 1979 before dedicating decades to shaping young athletes across two communities.

Striegel served as the head baseball coach at Tenino High School from 1983 to 1995 and led the Beavers to the 1986 1A state championship.

During his time in Tenino, Striegel was also the head volleyball coach for eight years and the head tennis coach for one year, as well as serving as the Tenino athletic director for a decade. He was inducted into the Tenino Athletics Hall of Fame on Jan. 23, 2026.

Before his retirement in 2018, Striegel coached Rochester's baseball team for nine years and worked as the athletic director. He returned to the

diamond in 2023 to coach at Arlington High School alongside his son Scott.

Striegel was recognized by the Washington State Baseball Coaches Association as the Small School Coach of the Year in 2008 and was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022. He was inducted into the Washington State Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame in 2021.

Coach Striegel's impact as a coach, educator, and mentor will be remembered by generations of players, colleagues, and community members. ■

ONLINE THREATS & YOUTH TEAMS:

What Coaches Need to Know

Sextortion is an online crime where someone pressures a young person into sharing private images or information, then uses it to demand money or harmful actions. Youth athletes and clubs are increasingly targeted, and entire teams can be affected. Clear expectations and early action can prevent serious harm to athletes and teams.

WHY TEAMS ARE TARGETED

Individuals who commit sextortion often look for youth who are:

- Highly connected through teammates and group chats
- Easy to find online via rosters, tags, and team accounts
- Under pressure to perform and protect their reputation

Once one athlete is targeted, perpetrators may threaten to contact teammates, impersonate players, or move quickly through a team's social network.

COMMON TACTICS

- Pretending to be another teen or athlete
- Moving conversations quickly to private platforms
- Creating fear, urgency, or shame to silence the athlete
- Threatening to share private content with teammates, coaches, or schools
- Contacting or impersonating teammates after gaining access

MESSAGE FOR ATHLETES

"If someone online pressures or threatens you—stop, don't respond, and tell a trusted adult immediately. You are not alone, and help works best when it happens early."

This project was supported by Grant #15PJDP-23-GK-00804-MECP awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

WARNING SIGNS IN YOUTH

- Sudden anxiety or withdrawal
- Panic around phones or social media
- Avoiding teammates or practices
- Unexplained emotional distress after being online

WHAT COACHES CAN DO

Normalize reporting

- Clearly state: "You won't get in trouble for speaking up."
- Reinforce that anyone can be targeted, and discourage compliance with demands

Respond quickly to warning signs

- Stay calm and supportive
- Preserve messages, usernames, and screenshots
- Follow school policy to involve administration and parents
- Report to platforms and cybertipline.org; call local law enforcement for emergencies

Protect the whole team

- Encourage private accounts and cautious follower approval
- Watch for fake or impersonation accounts
- Alert administration if a team may be targeted
- Encourage athletes to look out for and report concerns about teammates



icactaskforce.org/internetsafety



WSVCA COACHING CLINIC



HIGHLIGHTS

The WSVCA Coaching Clinic was held on June 28 at Burlington-Edison High School, bringing together 40 volleyball coaches for a day of learning, connection, and professional growth. The clinic featured a talented group of presenters

who shared their knowledge, experience, and passion for helping coaches and athletes improve.

Mario Andaya shared defensive systems and principles, along with attacking strategies and ways to create scoring opportunities.

Diane Flick covered serve receive systems and setting tactics, focusing on consistency, decision-making, and offensive leadership.

Kimberly Grycel presented on drills and practice design, emphasizing purposeful, game-like practices and maximizing athlete engagement.

Justice McGraw presented on serve receive, mindset, and technical keys to help athletes build skills and confidence.

Suzanne Marble presented *Coaching With Confidence*, focusing on culture, communication, leadership, and turning coaching philosophy into daily practice.

With 40 coaches attending, the WSVCA Coaching Clinic is just getting started! The goal is to continue growing the clinic, welcoming more coaches from across Washington, and creating a place where coaches can learn, connect, share ideas, and inspire one another.

This clinic is more than a day of learning—it is about **building a stronger coaching community and investing in the future of volleyball**. We invite coaches from across the state to bring their ideas, share their experiences, and help us continue to grow something special for coaches and athletes throughout Washington. ■

This clinic is more than a day of learning—it is about building a stronger coaching community and investing in the future of volleyball.



The Washington Coach Magazine

DEADLINES

Fall Issue
September 14

Winter Issue
January 14

Spring Issue
May 14

A huge thank you to all those who have contributed to our magazine by submitting articles, sending pictures or offering suggestions. Our magazine is a work by and for our membership and we are committed to creating a publication which serves the best interests of the WSCA.

Please consider writing for your magazine by submitting your work to Mike Schick at wsca-editor@comcast.net. ■



Hearing their final whistle...



Coach Melvin Bowden

Prosser, WA - Melvin Thomas Bowden, 90 of Prosser, passed away on May 7, 2026.

Mel was born on July 6, 1935 in Calera, Alabama to Charlie Bowden and Rose Lee Wilson. His early years were spent growing up in Alabama in the midst of the Great Depression. At a young age, he moved with his mother and siblings to Renton, Washington where he attended elementary school and junior high school. He moved to Bellingham and attended Bellingham High School where he was an accomplished football and baseball player. He graduated in 1954. Mel joined the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War but deferred his enlistment until after his graduation. He served two years of active duty and six years in the reserves.

Mel attended Western Washington University where he began his path in education. He played a year of football for the Vikings earning a starting position as a halfback, but it was at Western where he met the love of his life, Joyce Adelle Horne. After graduation,

they were married in Lake Stevens on December 16, 1961. Two sons were born to this happy couple, Charles Edward and Darren Thomas.

Joyce and Mel began their teaching careers in the Highline School District, but after one year they moved to Prosser. After two years in Prosser, they moved back to Lake Washington to teach. But, it was an opportunity to return to Prosser that drew them back. Prosser became their home.

Mel found success as the head coach of the Mustang basketball team, enjoying the accomplishment of leading a team to the 1967 State A title. His greatest joy came from mentoring and coaching the many young men who played for Prosser. Mel loved teaching. He cherished the relationship with his colleagues in Prosser and he fostered many meaningful relationships with the students he taught. One group of students that meant a great deal to him were the statisticians who worked with him during each basketball season. Mel became Prosser's first Athletic Director, and he played a crucial role in the building

of Fiker Stadium. He was proud to serve as the AD to further help students and the community he loved. He was a long-standing member of Messiah Lutheran Church.

Mel is survived by his son Charles and his wife Theresa of Spokane Valley; his son Darren and his wife Lory, of Snoqualmie; four grandchildren, Erika Rose and her fiancé Quinn of Rathdrum, Idaho; Parker and wife Lacey of Post Falls, Idaho; Brianne Bowden of Liberty Lake and Noelle Bowden of Spokane Valley. He is survived by his brother Ed and his wife Sharon (and children) of Renton, his sister Boots King (and children) of Selma, Alabama. He is survived by in-laws Dr. Curtis Horne of Gig Harbor, Gerald Horne (Jeri) of Tacoma, Beverly and Rich Seston of Palmdale, California and Sybil Engdahl of Moline, Illinois. He is also survived by extended family, Kelly Lorenzen (Danica & Cris) of Snohomish and Lindsey Fiker of Mount Vernon, and many wonderful friends in Prosser.

He was preceded in death by his wife of forty-six years,

Joyce (Horne), his mother Rose and stepfather Odin Mauland, his sisters Tina See, Loie Westberry, and Joni Sanders, his in-laws Glenn and Eleanor Horne and Melba Horne, Rick Horne and Jon Horne, and a stillborn baby boy and stillborn baby girl.

A viewing was held on Friday, May 22, 2026 at Brookside Funeral Home -- Prosser Chapel from 3:00 - 7:00pm. A small church service was held on Saturday, May 23, 2026 at Messiah Lutheran Church at 10:00am followed by burial at Prosser Cemetery. A Celebration of Life was held on Saturday July 11 in Prosser where all attendees were asked to wear their favorite Mustang gear or Cougar gear as they gathered to remember this amazing husband, father, coach and friend. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Mel and Joyce Bowden Memorial.

Brookside Funeral Home is caring for the family. Memories and condolences can be shared at www.brooksidefuneral.com. ■



Beginning a New Year of Strength Training



*Danny M. O'Dell, Explosivelyfit
Strength Training*

After the fire season shortened summer, school is here again. And with it comes new students and new challenges for each coach and Phys Ed instructor. Currently, one of these challenges is air quality. In some parts of our State, the air quality still hovers in the danger zone, which precludes training outdoors.

Introduction to the class

Welcome to the Strength and Conditioning class. You are about to embark on a journey that will expose you to a small portion of the expansive world of strength exercise. This will not be just about lifting weights. To be sure, a lot of what we will be doing will be lifting heavy iron, but along with the lifting comes the knowledge of how to lift, when to lift, and even more importantly when not to lift.

Detraining is almost a constant with nearly all the students because the necessary stimulus for continued improvement has been missing during their time off. Not only has their physical fitness deteriorated but so has the psyche for such training.

In the strength area the effects of not training will be noticed by their inability to match their previous strength levels as noted in their logbooks from the previous year. However, this may be a leap of faith that they were keeping track of their progress.

During this initial period of the new year, remind them that cardio conditioning will have a direct bearing on their ability to stay with the strength program. Having the cardiovascular stamina is a critical part of keeping up with the heavy strength sessions.

The general rule is cardio after the strength training is finished

In any class the rules of the class must be clear and very specific, especially in the high liability weight room. Weight room rules ought to be simple to explain, understand, and easily monitored for compliance.

These guidelines and rules were handouts, to be signed and returned before they were allowed to participate in the class. As you will notice, they are just common-sense guidelines and rules.

Example

- ▶ Prior to participation, students/participants must get a medical checkup and release from their healthcare provider.
- ▶ Prior to participation, all students/participants must attend an orientation on the common risks involved in strength training, the proper execution of the various exercises, and the possible consequences if proper technique is not used.
- ▶ If a student/participant has an injury that inhibits a portion of the work out the student/participant will receive a modified program outlining substitution movements.
- ▶ Athletes are required to always use locking collars on the ends of the bar.
- ▶ No one is allowed to squat outside the Power rack if the Olympic bars and weights are used.
- ▶ Weight belts are not to be used where they will damage upholstery on the equipment, i.e., the benches or with less than 80% 1 RP max lifts.
- ▶ The weight plates will be kept only on the weight racks/holders or the bar. Plates are not to be left on the floor or leaned against the walls or equipment.
- ▶ All dumbbells and barbells are to be replaced in their respective racks after each use.
- ▶ The weight equipment is not to be thrown or dropped.
- ▶ Students/participants should always show respect for the equipment and facility; spitting in or defacing the weight room will not be tolerated (see disciplinary rules sheet)
- ▶ The weight room requires concentration. Horseplay, loud or offensive language or temper tantrums are not permitted.
- ▶ Proper attire is required, particularly shirts and shoes always.
- ▶ Jewelry such as loose necklaces, bracelets, hanging earrings, and watches should not be worn.
- ▶ Spotters are to be used where appropriate (overhead, on the shoulders or over the face exercises). Instructor demonstrations for correct spotting prior to the introduction of a new exercise or lift.
- ▶ Students/participants should immediately report any personal, facility-related injury, or facility or equipment irregularity to the on-site instructor or to the adult in charge. This includes minor injuries which will be documented in the student's class file on the computer.
- ▶ Chewing gum, food, glass bottles, cans, alcohol, drugs, cell phones, or other banned substances are not

- allowed in the weight room facility; plastic water bottles are acceptable.
- ▶ Instructors are not responsible for users' personal belongings or lost or stolen items.
 - ▶ Students/participants must keep their feet off the walls.
 - ▶ All guests and visitors must report to the office for the proper visitor's name tag.
 - ▶ Staff of the school may use the facility for workouts if it does not interfere with the students' use. Students have priority during the school day. A waiver form is required before use is permitted.
 - ▶ The on-duty instructor/ adult supervisor has authority over all weight room conduct, use of equipment, and may expel a student/participant from the room for failure to follow instructions.
 - ▶ A suggested form to be completed by those using the weight room is offered (to the right).

The warm ups

No matter what type of exercise sessions are in your schedule at least two main versions of the warm-ups are recommended. Beginning with the overall dynamic and then into the sport specific warm up. The total time spent on these warmups will be approximately 5-8 minutes.

Begin each session with a dynamic warm up incorporating at least four of the listed exercises. Do each one ten to fifteen times, without weight for the inexperienced lifter.

The dynamic warm up sequence

Dynamic warm ups prepare the body in a manner that is conducive to preventing injury. Functional movements that mimic the actual playing conditions of power output in the gym, on the field or the court are replicated in this type of warm up. Preparing the neuromuscular system for explosive action is the key to a successful and productive warm up. Static stretching relaxes the body and the joints by confusing the nervous system into a

WEIGHT ROOM AGREEMENT

I, _____ (print full name)
have read and understand the Weight Room Guidelines and Rules and hereby agree to follow them as written. I also acknowledge that my failure to comply with these guidelines and rules may result in my loss of Weight Room privileges for a specified period.

Signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____

reduced state of readiness to produce power.

A general dynamic warm up involves gross limb movements that place an emphasis on coordination of the limbs of the upper and lower body in conjunction with the torso. This is followed by a specific warm up that entails movements that are particular to the sport such as light bench presses, squats, or dead lifts in power lifting. Dribbling the ball in soccer or basketball, shooting at the goal with lower intensity than in actual playing conditions helps to groove the patterns as it warms up the body for action.

Dynamic warm up exercise examples

- ▶ Examples are listed but not explained, as most are in common use throughout the sports world.
- ▶ Skip rope front and back swing
- ▶ Jog forward, sideways, and backward
- ▶ Arm swings
- ▶ Lunges front back and side
- ▶ Skips
- ▶ Large hip swings
- ▶ After the warm ups

A basic progressive exercise schedule

Practice the balance and proprioceptive training exercise/lifting technique for as long as the form remains

PERFECT. Once it falters; stop and move onto the strength movements for the class session.

Work on your strength for eight to ten repetitions for two sets working up to four sets.

Cool down with static stretches of your choice for your legs and upper body, with an emphasis on the hamstrings and quads. Hold each stretch for fifteen to twenty seconds as you breathe normally. Move only to a point of mild discomfort, the stretch should not hurt.

If not, then after several weeks it may may be necessary to establish an estimated guess of their maximum found via a three-rep set with your previous older students. The newbies should not be tested this early in the season.

Once the quick and dirty 1RM has been established then my recommendation will be to warm up with 50% of the anticipated max load for that session. This does not mean using the previously determined 1RM, but only for the day's session.

Once this stage of instruction is reached then begin to set up the training program consisting of the exercises, the correct technique, breathing patterns, demonstration, spotting, sets, reps, speed on the bar, and other basics of what you believe is necessary for them to learn in your class. ■

SPORTS

Individual Sport Representatives

These are the coaches you need on your staff!

Do you have questions, concerns or thoughts about the sport you coach? Do you have ideas about how the game or contest could be improved, rule changes or practice regulations? Below are listed the Individual Sport Association representatives to the WSCA and their contact information. Please consider reaching out to your sport representative and share your ideas. We are stronger working together!

ATHLETIC TRAINERS

Ciara Ashworth
Kamiakin
president@wsata.org

BASEBALL

Brian Jackson
Graham-Kapowsin
bjackson@bethelsd.org

BASKETBALL - BOYS

Nalin Sood
Mountlake Terrace
wibca2010@gmail.com

BASKETBALL - GIRLS

Dan Taylor
King's
knights.in.gods.armor@gmail.com

CROSS COUNTRY

Kevin Ryan
Sehome
kevin.ryan@bellingshamschools.org

DANCE AND DRILL

Arianna Schultz
Puyallup
wsddca@gmail.com
Lori Stephens
Meridian-Mattson MS
wsddcapastpresident@gmail.com

FOOTBALL

Craig Bartl
Nooksack Valley
Craig.Bartl@nv.k12.wa.us

GOLF TBD

GYMNASTICS

Ryan Fleisher
Issaquah
wsgca@outlook.com

SOCCER

Jens Jensen
Royal
jjensen@royalsd.org

SOFTBALL

Corey Davis
College Place
cdavis@cpps.org

TENNIS

Harrison Lee
Curtis
hlee@upsd83.org

TRACK & FIELD

Kevin Eager
Gig Harbor
wstfcaprez@gmail.com

VOLLEYBALL

Suzanne Marble
LaConner
suzannemarblevb@gmail.com

WRESTLING

Brett Lucas
Todd Beamer
blucas@fwps.org ■

Building Healthy Cultures Together: *The Next Step in Sportsmanship*

By Jeneé James, WIAA Assistant Executive Director



High school athletics have always been about more than the final score.

Every practice, competition, bus ride, pregame conversation, postgame handshake, and interaction with an official provides an opportunity to teach. Through education-based athletics, we have the privilege, and responsibility to help young people learn how to compete, lead, respond to adversity, celebrate others, and represent something larger than themselves.

At the same time, we know the environment surrounding high school athletics continues to change. Across our state and throughout the country, schools are navigating increasingly challenging behaviors from spectators, heightened interactions between adults and officials, concerns surrounding sportsmanship, and greater pressure on coaches and administrators to manage the entire game-day experience.

These challenges cannot be solved by a slogan, a sportsmanship announcement before a contest, or a policy written after something goes wrong.

They require intentional culture change.

Over the coming year, the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association will begin introducing the WIAA

Sportsmanship and Healthy Culture Initiative, a comprehensive effort designed to help member schools create healthier, safer, and more positive environments surrounding education-based athletics and activities.

This will not be a single program launched overnight. Instead, the initiative will be intentionally introduced over time, allowing us to listen, learn, develop practical resources, and partner with the people who influence school culture every day.

And coaches will be essential to that work.

Moving Beyond Sportsmanship as a Moment

For years, sportsmanship has often been discussed in response to an incident.

Something happens. A behavior crosses a line. An ejection occurs. A spectator creates a problem. A coach or administrator intervenes.

We respond.

Accountability will always be necessary, but if we want to create meaningful change, we must expand the conversation beyond how we respond when something goes wrong.

We must also ask: **What are we intentionally doing before it happens?**

Healthy culture is built long before the opening

whistle. It is shaped by what coaches teach at practice, what administrators communicate to families, what student-athletes see modeled by adults, what communities choose to celebrate, and what behaviors we are willing, or unwilling to normalize.

Ultimately, changing culture requires changing behavior.

That means establishing clear expectations, reinforcing positive actions, addressing harmful behaviors when they occur, and creating opportunities for people to learn and grow when expectations are not met.

Our goal is not perfection. Our goal is intentionality and consistency.

Three Pillars for Healthy Culture

The WIAA Sportsmanship and Healthy Culture Initiative will be built around three interconnected pillars: **Celebrations, Proactive Strategies, and Restorative Practices.**

Celebrations

Culture is influenced by what we recognize.

Celebrations will focus on intentionally identifying and reinforcing the behaviors we want to see more often acts of sportsmanship, leadership, service, respect,

teamwork, resilience, and positive contributions to the athletic community.

We want student-athletes to understand that how they compete matters. We want coaches who intentionally build healthy team environments to be recognized. We want communities to see examples of what education-based athletics can look like at its best.

When positive behavior becomes visible, valued, and celebrated, it becomes part of the identity of a program.

Proactive Strategies

Healthy culture does not happen by accident.

Proactive Strategies will focus on the work schools, coaches, teams, and communities can do before problems occur. This includes establishing expectations, teaching leadership, preparing student-athletes for difficult moments, communicating with parents and spectators, strengthening game management, and giving coaches and administrators practical tools for building positive environments.

Instead of asking only, "What should we do when something goes wrong?" we want to help schools ask, "What can we do now to make the right behavior more likely?"

continued on page 18

continued on page 17

That shift from reactive to proactive is fundamental to sustainable culture change.

Restorative Practices

Accountability remains an important part of education.

However, consequences alone do not always change future behavior.

Restorative Practices will focus on what happens after expectations are not met. How do we hold individuals accountable while also creating opportunities for reflection, learning, repaired relationships, and improved future behavior?

Mistakes and poor decisions can become powerful educational opportunities when paired with meaningful accountability.

The objective is not simply to address what happened yesterday. It is to help create a better response tomorrow.

Coaches Are Culture Leaders

Coaches occupy a unique position in school communities.

You influence students during some of their most formative experiences. You communicate regularly with families. You establish expectations for teams. Your reactions are watched from sidelines and stands. The way you interact with opponents, officials, administrators, and your own student-athletes often becomes the model others follow.

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, coaches help define what is considered acceptable within an athletic program.

That is why this initiative cannot simply be something the WIAA gives to schools.

It must be something we build with schools and particularly with coaches.

We will need your perspective. We will need your experience. We will need coaches willing to identify what works, challenge what does not, share successful practices, and help us create resources that are realistic for the environments in which you lead.

Most importantly, we will need your partnership in helping communities understand that sportsmanship is not simply about being “nice” or avoiding penalties.

It is about creating environments worthy of the students we serve.

A Thoughtful Rollout

Throughout the coming year, member schools will begin hearing more about the WIAA Sportsmanship and Healthy Culture Initiative as the framework continues to develop.

The initial phase will focus on introducing common concepts and expectations while gathering feedback from coaches, administrators, student-athletes, officials, and other stakeholders. From there, additional tools and practical resources will be developed and shared to help schools translate these ideas into everyday practice.

Resources are anticipated to address areas such as coach and student leadership, parent and spectator expectations, game

and crowd management, recognition and celebration, proactive communication, restorative responses, and strategies that schools can adapt to fit their own communities.

Healthy athletic environments require shared ownership.

But coaches have an extraordinary ability to connect those groups.

A conversation at a pre-

Every Community Has a Role

Coaches cannot and should not carry this responsibility alone.

The intention is not to overwhelm schools with another initiative or another checklist.

Instead, we want to build a framework that connects and strengthens much of the good work already occurring throughout Washington while providing additional support where challenges exist.

The rollout will be deliberate because meaningful culture change takes time.

We want to listen before prescribing. We want resources to be practical rather than theoretical. And we want schools to have opportunities to learn from one another as this work evolves.

Every Community Has a Role

Coaches cannot and should not carry this responsibility alone.

Administrators establish expectations. Student-athletes influence their peers. Parents and spectators shape the atmosphere surrounding competition. Officials contribute to the educational experience. School leaders provide support and accountability.

season parent meeting can establish expectations before the first contest. A captain can redirect teammates before emotions escalate. A coach who models respect during disagreement demonstrates more to student-athletes than any poster hanging in a gym. A team that celebrates an opponent’s achievement sends a message about what competition can and should represent.

Those moments matter.

Repeated consistently, they become behaviors.

Repeated behaviors become habits.

And habits become culture.

The Work Ahead

There is no single policy, campaign, or training that will eliminate every negative interaction surrounding high school athletics. We also recognize that every school and community is different.

But we can establish a shared commitment to something better.

We can celebrate the behaviors we want repeated.

We can be proactive in teaching and communicating expectations.

We can respond to mistakes in ways that combine accountability with learning.

And we can remind ourselves that the purpose of education-based athletics extends far beyond winning contests.

As the WIAA Sportsmanship and Healthy Culture Initiative develops over the coming year, we are excited to partner with the Washington State Coaches Association and coaches throughout our state in shaping this work.

Coaches know their students. Coaches know their communities. And coaches understand better than most that meaningful improvement rarely happens after one speech or one practice.

It happens through consistent expectations, intentional leadership, accountability, and repetition.

Changing culture will require all of us.

And coaches will be among the most important leaders in making that change possible.

Together, we have an opportunity to create athletic environments where students feel a sense of belonging, officials are respected, coaches are supported, communities take pride in how they represent their schools, and competition continues to serve its greatest purpose: helping young people become better prepared for life. ■

Hearing their final whistle...



Coach Jim Cantrell

James Horace (Jim) Cantrell passed away on his 94th birthday May 30th, 2024. Jim was born in Seattle on May 30, 1930 to Ector and Jeanette Cantrell and was preceded in death by his parents and young son Jimmy.

Jim is survived by Marilyn, his loving wife of 35 years. He is also survived by his three daughters, Vicki Maniglia (Karl), Michele Korsmo (David), and Carolyn Syberg (Torben), four grandchildren: Kirsten, Hailey, Kayla and Kolby. Jim is also survived by his stepsons Steve (Pam), Tom (Celesta), Dan (Annie), and David (Cathy) Carlson and their families.

Jim served in the United States Naval Reserve at Sand Point for two years, one year of active duty. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1954 and embarked on a career in education. He had a long career in teaching and administration

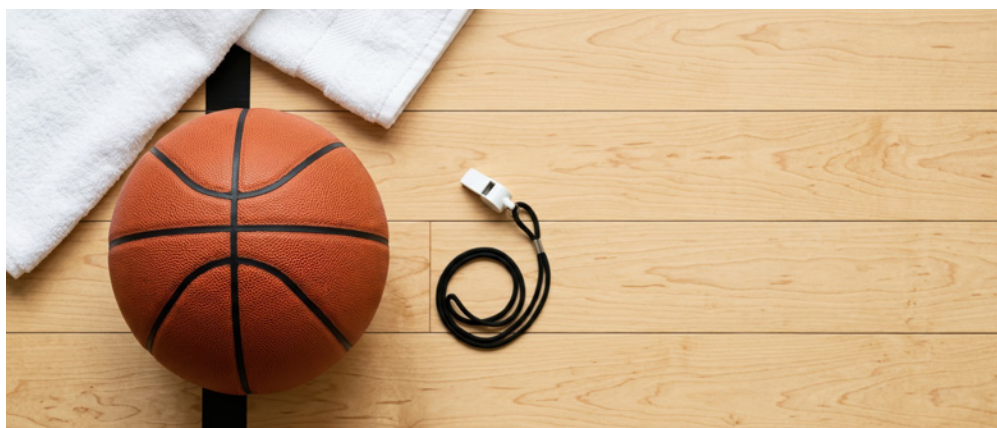
in the Kent and Auburn school districts and his true love, however, was coaching and working with kids.

While he loved all sports, he was especially passionate about basketball. He maintained many long-standing relationships with students.

One of his biggest joys was spending time with his family. They enjoyed camping, boating, and water sports. Coaching his daughters in various sports was a highlight.

Marilyn and Jim spent 18 wonderful years living on the Columbia River. They traveled across the US twice in their motorhome taking in all this beautiful country has to offer. However, at the end of the day, Jim was most content to sit in the bleachers or stands watching his grandkids compete.

"The best lifechanging experience was becoming a Christian later in my life." - Jim Cantrell ■





Breanne Smedley

Mental Performance Coach for Girl Athletes



Key Focus: helping coaches seamlessly integrate mental training into their practices and competitions (without extra prep) so their athletes can perform with confidence, resilience, and consistency when it matters most.

Coach Bre is the Co-Founder of The Elite Competitor, a groundbreaking company that equips coaches and athletes with the tools to master the mental side of sports. With over 13 years of coaching experience, Coach Bre has guided her team at Columbia River High School in Vancouver, WA, to an unprecedented four consecutive state championships, blending technical excellence and strong culture with a focus on mental training.

As a volleyball coach, educator, and mindset expert, Coach Bre has made it her mission to redefine how coaches approach performance. Her unique system enables coaches to seamlessly integrate mental training into their programs, helping athletes recover from setbacks, thrive under pressure, and build unshakable confidence.

With a background as a PE and Health teacher and a Master's in Special Education, Coach Bre brings a holistic and accessible approach to coaching, ensuring that athletes of all abilities can reach their potential. Through The Elite Competitor, she is revolutionizing sports coaching by making mental training an essential—and achievable—part of every team's success.

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION:

Coach Bre is the Co-Founder of The Elite Competitor, where she's changed the game by making mental training easy for coaches to implement, without overwhelming their to-do lists. As a four-time state championship volleyball coach, she's developed a system that helps coaches seamlessly integrate mental skills into their teams, empowering athletes to perform at their best with confidence and resilience when it matters most.

INTERVIEW TOPICS:

- Win the Mental Game Without Losing Practice Time
- Play Fearless: Get Your Athletes to Play Their Game Regardless of the Competition
- Clutch Mode: Prepping Your Team's Minds for Big Games
- How to Pressure-Proof Your Team So They Don't Crumble When It Matters Most
- Quick Ways to Get Your Athletes to Bounce Back from Mistakes Faster
- No Time, No Problem: Mental Training for the Busy Coach.
- Little Tweaks, Big Wins: Mental Game Hacks That Work

“I think your info/tools was our secret sauce and although I don't want to share with competitors I think it's soooo important to equip coaches to help their players have confidence and perform at their best!

Coach Amy
Seven Lakes HS Volleyball

“We did The Elite Mental Game together as a team, and I can tell you first hand from being the mom of one of the athletes and the team's coach, that it helped with confidence, anxiety, double guessing themselves.

Coach Jodie
Blackhawk HS Basketball

CONNECT WITH COACH BRE

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- 🌐 elitecompetitor.com
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- 📷 [@elitecompetitorcoach](https://www.instagram.com/elitecompetitorcoach)

elite competitor
STATS





Washington State Coaches Association

Membership Benefit

GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Who is covered?

- Member scholastic school coaches.

What is covered?

- Claims made by negligent acts, accidentally committed resulting in bodily injury, personal and advertising injury or property damage to others.

When are you covered?

- During your coaching activities and in the classroom.

What are the limits of liability?

- 1M per occurrence.
- 2M general aggregate per coach.

Additional policy coverages

- Participant Legal Liability.
- Defense costs outside of the limits of liability.

Exclusions

- The transportation of athletes.
- All Star games that are not approved by your state coaches association.
- The loss, cost or expense arising out of infectious or communicable disease.
- Assault & Battery

Reprinted with Permission

Berg wins offensive MVP, Red Devils shine in East rout at Earl Barden Classic



LUKE THOMPSON Yakima Herald-Republic Jun 20, 2026

Yet again, the home team rolled to a dominant win Saturday, June 20th, at Earl Barden Stadium.

Sure, the uniforms and most of the players on the sideline looked a little different as the East beat the West 36-6 at the 30th Earl Barden Classic 2A-1A-B All-Star Game. Still, some familiar names made their presence felt one last time as four East Valley players all made significant contributions while winning a 12th straight game on their home field dating back to the 2023 season, including 10 by 20 points or more.

Red Devils quarterback Jaxon Berg won the East's offensive MVP award after throwing for two touchdowns and Braden Albrecht added a 30-yard reception for his team's final score. Defensively, safety Jayden Buckalew delivered some big hits and forced multiple incompletions while Dominic Verduzco rose up to intercept a deep pass in the second quarter, one of six turnovers forced by the East defense.

"Those are my teammates and my guys since started high school," Verduzco said. "So it felt great to finish the game with them."

Like he's done so many times before, Berg kneeled the ball three times to run out the clock before forming his hands into the shape of a heart as he looked up into the stands one last time. Berg said the gesture symbolized his love for everything at East Valley and added it felt "kind of surreal" knowing he won't step on the field for any more games before beginning his college football career at Pacific Northwest Christian on Aug. 1.

A first-quarter touchdown pass from Berg to West Valley-Spokane's Erik Borg put the East ahead and a two-point conversion toss to Brayden Meyer ensured the lead would last the remainder of the game, even though the West answered with a touchdown early in the second quarter. Entiat running back Sebastian Sanchez ran for 37 yards on seven carries and found the end zone from five yards out just before halftime.

One of the West's three lost fumbles set up a short touchdown run by Omak's Joshua Bucsko and Jaxon Berg found Rogers-Spokane tight end Jacob Proctor near the corner of the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown pass later in

the third quarter. The 6-foot-4 Whitworth commit caught four passes for 62 yards, all from Berg, who completed 7-of-12 passes for 90 yards without an interception.

"He's a dog, he's easy to get it to," Berg said of Proctor, who missed Rogers' round of 32 loss at East Valley last November due to injury. "He's a big boy, so I just threw it up and he went and got it."

Knowing the East Valley playbook gave Berg an advantage over fellow quarterbacks Rylan Hatmaker of Cashmere and Dalton Schultz from Freeman, both of whom Berg said taught him a lot during the week of practice leading up to the game. Eric Berg said Jaxon essentially served as an assistant coach and he earned a \$500 scholarship as the East's Bill Alexander award winner for best teammate, voted on by the coaches with Eric Berg abstaining to avoid any appearance of nepotism.

Prosser's Josiah West, a Montana signee, shined as a leader on the offensive and defensive line and won the award for the East's most inspirational player, as voted by his teammates. Kittitas running back Ronan Stewart, who's



planning to run hurdles at Spokane Falls next spring, picked up 25 yards on seven carries.

"He runs hard," Eric Berg said. "He's fun to watch. Blessed to have him on the team."

He spoke highly of several other players including East defensive MVP Schultz, who intercepted two passes, not to mention a pass he picked off on the West's two-point conversion attempt. The Whitworth signee who expects to play defense in college also scrambled for a team-high 58 rushing yards on three carries while playing quarterback for two series.

Verduzco and Jaxon Berg both enjoyed the chance to connect with other talented seniors at practice and various activities all week, allowing them to build valuable chemistry for Saturday's game. The East won the series of competitions between the two squads, which Verduzco said included a victory for the four East Valley players in an ice cream eating contest.

Camaraderie between the players showed on the sideline when they celebrated plenty of highlights, many of them produced by Buckalew while he covered ground from sideline to sideline. Jaxon Berg said he's kept an eye on the annual all-star game since starting high school, and the special week delivered a memorable coda to his high school career, especially with his dad as the coach.

"Every single one of these guys just brings out the best teammate and player in me," Berg said. "It was an unreal experience."

West 0 6 0 0 — 6

East 8 8 14 6 — 36

EAST - Erik Borg 16 pass from Jaxon Berg (Brayden Meyer pass from Berg)

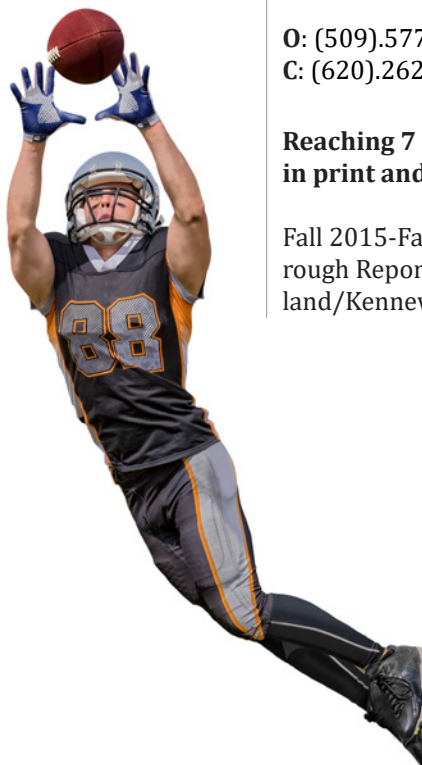
WEST — Isreal Shrode 3 pass from Mason Filitaula (pass failed)

EAST — Sebastian Sanchez 5 run (Jett Winger pass from Logan Schultz)

EAST — Joshua Bucsko 3 run (Schultz run)

EAST — Jacob Proctor 15 pass from Berg (run failed)

EAST — Braden Albrecht 30 pass from Rylan Hatmaker



INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — East, Schultz 3-58, Sanchez 7-37, Ronan Stewart 7-25, Albrecht 8-18, Bucsko 1-3, Hatmaker 3-(-6), TEAM 4-(-4), Berg 1-(-8). West, Zach Timmons 13-62, Shrode 2-14, Lyal Viers 1-7, Carson McCall 1-4, Grady Wilson 7-(-9)

PASSING — East, Berg 7-12-0-90, Hatmaker 4-10-1-58, Schultz 1-2-0-3. West, Filitaula 9-16-2-73, Wilson 6-11-1-65

RECEIVING — East, Proctor 4-62, Albrecht 1-30, Logan Spies 2-25, Borg 2-21, Shea Stevenson 1-7, Winger 1-3, Max Anderson 1-3. West, Boyce Robertson 5-82, Shrode 4-29, Ansen Asbjornsen 3-20, Viers 1-6, McCall 2-1



Luke Thompson

Outdoors/Sports reporter

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Reaching 7 out of 10 Yakima adults in print and online.

Fall 2015-Fall 2016 Nielsen Scarborough Report (Yakima/Pasco/Richland/Kennewick) ■

WIBCA Hall of Fame Banquet Celebrates Washington Basketball Excellence



The Washington Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association (WIBCA) proudly celebrated its 2026 Hall of Fame Banquet on July 15 at the historic Uptown Theatre in Richland, Washington. Coaches, family members, friends, and members of the basketball community gathered for an evening honoring the individuals whose dedication and leadership have left a lasting impact on high school basketball throughout Washington State.

The evening began with a social hour before the formal Hall of Fame ceremony. Longtime coach and past Hall of Fame inductee Pat Fitterer served as the evening's Master of Ceremonies, guiding attendees through a memorable celebration of the state's coaching tradition. The event was coordinated under the leadership of Bruce Siebol, WIBCA Hall of Fame Chairman, whose continued commitment helps preserve and celebrate the rich history of Washington high school basketball.

Retired Richland High School head coach **Earl Streufert** was inducted into the WIBCA Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding coaching career, dedication to student-athletes, and lasting contributions to the game.

WIBCA also recognized three outstanding assistant coaches with induction into the Assistant Coaches Hall of Fame:

◆ **Robert Harris** –
Davis High School

◆ **Bruce Robertson** –
Richland High School

◆ **Bruce Richardson** –
Roosevelt High School

Each honoree was celebrated for years of selfless service, mentorship, and the invaluable role they played in the success of their basketball programs and the development of countless student-athletes.

Special awards were also presented during the evening:

◆ **Dave Cullen**, District 5 Coordinator, received the prestigious Ed

& Shirley Pepple Service Award for his exceptional leadership and dedicated service to basketball throughout Washington.

◆ **Todd Schumacher**, Head Boys Basketball Coach at Burbank High School, was presented with the Pat Fitterer "You Gotta Love It" Award, recognizing his passion, enthusiasm, and unwavering commitment to coaching and positively impacting young people through the game.

The annual Hall of Fame Banquet remains one of WIBCA's most cherished traditions, bringing together generations of coaches to celebrate excellence, recognize service, and honor those who have helped shape the history of basketball in Washington. Congratulations to the 2026 Hall of Fame inductees and award recipients on this well-deserved recognition. Special thanks to Josten's Rings for their continued support of WIBCA-related events and providing rings to our inductees. ■



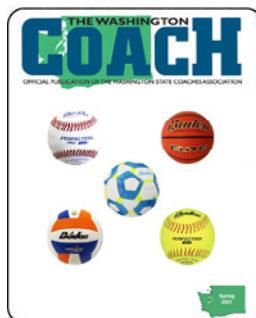
New Inductees:
Dave Cullen, Earl Streufert, Robert Harris, Bruce Robertson, Todd Schumacher and Bruce Siebol, holding the award for Bruce Richardson



New and Current Inductee:
Coaches from left to right
Pat Fitterer, Dave Cullen, Jim
Thacker, Earl Streufert, Robert
Harris, Eli Juarez, Don Schum-
acher, John Felton, Kyle Brooks,
Bruce Robertson and Bruce
Siebol ■



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Contact Michael H. Schick, Editor
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Participation Survey Indicates Continued Importance of Education-based Sports, Activities

BY DAVIS WHITFIELD ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2026 | NFHS NEWS, NFHS REPORT



The results of last week's annual [NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey](#) demonstrated that being a part of an education-based school team remains the focus for millions of high school student-athletes.

The survey, which has been compiled since 1971 by the NFHS through its 51-member state associations, indicated yet another all-time record of 8,415,684 participants. Since the return to action from the pandemic in 2021, the survey numbers have increased almost 800,000 in five years. Truly, students in our nation's schools continue to treasure their involvement in these programs that not only are fun and fulfill their desire for competition, but also meet relationship and mental health needs as well.

About 75 percent of the year-over-year increase was attributable to girls participation – primarily the emerging sports of flag football and wrestling. What has occurred in these two sports the past five years is phenomenal.

Participation in girls flag football increased 48.7 percent last year – 68,847 to 102,360 –

and the sport cracked the Top 10 list for most popular girls sports. The number of schools reporting girls flag football participation increased from 2,736 to 3,990 in the past year, and a total of [37 states](#) will be either sanctioning the sport or conducting independent/pilot programs by next year.

Girls wrestling also cracked the top 10 for the first time – in terms of the number of schools offering the sport. Since the return to activities from the pandemic, the number of schools offering girls wrestling has jumped from 4,802 to 8,853, and the number of participants has increased from 31,654 to 88,771. In addition, all states are now reporting some participation in girls wrestling, and 40 state associations are now conducting state championships.

Volleyball continued its rise in popularity and topped 500,000 participants for the first time. The top fall sport for girls moved to No. 2 in 2014-15, supplanting basketball, and now, at 502,056 participants, is only 7,014 behind outdoor track and field for the No. 1 spot.

There were equally positive reports among boys sports, starting at the top with 11-player football, which registered a 1.4 percent increase with another 14,128 participants and now stands at 1,043,716 – its highest mark since the 2016-17 season. Other top 10 boys sports that registered increases last year were outdoor track and field, soccer, golf and tennis.

The release of participation numbers comes as another season of high school sports begins around the country – and we believe that increase will translate into even more fans in the stands at football, volleyball, soccer, flag football, field hockey and other fall sports.

Why? Because education-based sports within our nation's schools attract not only students, parents and other family members, but thousands upon thousands of community members. Different from club and other out-of-school programs where spectators are usually limited to family members, high school sports are vibrant parts of communities in many cities and towns across the country.

With approximately 7,000 high school football games on an average Friday night, it is estimated that more than seven million fans are in attendance on a weekly basis. Add volleyball, which is attracting more interest every year, and other fall sports, that number likely exceeds 10 million a week. These figures far surpass the number of fans who will attend college and pro football games on a weekly basis.

In addition to the more than 8.4 million participants in high school sports, the home page of the [NFHS website](#) has another figure – 12,415,684 – which is the estimated number of participants in athletics and performing arts activities such as music, speech, debate and theatre.

When combined, the numbers are staggering. And the key word that sets these programs apart from all other youth sports is together. To borrow from our Play. Perform. Compete. Together messaging ...

Students grow TOGETHER in this setting as every single student has a role to

play that ultimately factors into the team's success.

Fans support their native sons and daughters TOGETHER, filling stadiums, gymnasiums, natatoriums and concert halls with a medley of cheers and applause.

Despite our personal and societal differences, high school sports bring entire communities TOGETHER for a common good.

We have all missed that feeling over these summer months, so here's to another year – TOGETHER!

Davis Whitfield began his tenure on August 1, 2026, as executive director of the NFHS, the national leader and advocate for high school sports and performing arts programs based in Indianapolis. He was chief operating officer of the NFHS for 11 years prior to his promotion to the executive direction position. Prior to joining the NFHS staff in 2015, Whitfield was commissioner of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) for five years. He began his career in sports administration in 1995 at Campbell University in Buies Creek, North Carolina, where he was assistant athletic director for operations and facilities for three years. He then served in the athletic department at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, including two years as director of operations and facilities management and two years as assistant athletic director for operations and facilities. Prior to joining the NCHSAA staff, Whitfield was on the administrative staff of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) for 7½ years, including the final 2½ years as associate commissioner. ■

Congratulations ON YOUR RETIREMENT!

Mike Morgan

Mike began his teaching career in 1987
and joined Colfax in 1992.



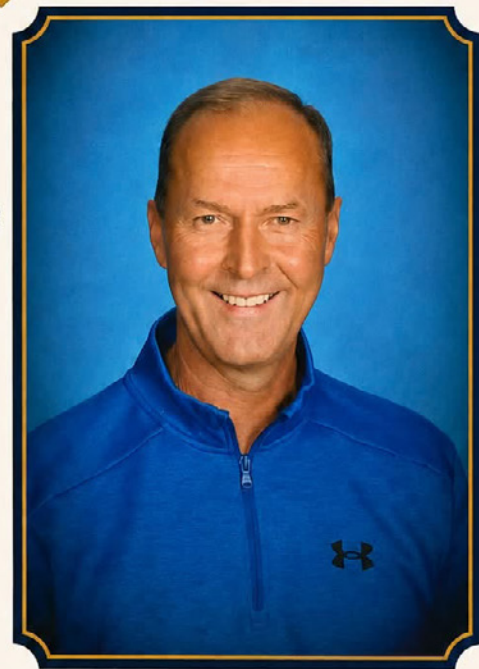
Served as Athletic Director
and Interim Principal.



Coached both football
and basketball at Colfax.



Retiring as our Instrumental
Music Teacher for the
Colfax School District.



A LEGACY THAT WILL LAST FOREVER

Mike has built more than a band program—
he has built a tradition of excellence, discipline, and pride
that is admired and respected throughout our region.
His impact on students, staff, and our community is immeasurable.

BIG SHOES TO FILL.

A Legacy That Will Continue.

THANK YOU, MIKE, FOR YOUR DEDICATION,
YOUR PASSION, AND THE DIFFERENCE YOU'VE MADE
IN THE LIVES OF SO MANY.

You will be greatly missed!

GETTING PARENTS ON YOUR SIDE: TURNING CHALLENGES INTO COLLABORATION IN SPORTS

POSITIVE
COACHING
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MOMENTUM



Coaches frequently express frustration about dealing with difficult parents* in youth sports. The reality is that parental involvement has shifted dramatically in recent years, often creating tension rather than teamwork. However, when coaches take proactive steps to build relationships with parents and align on shared goals, parents can become valuable allies rather than obstacles. The key is understanding why conflicts arise and implementing strategies to foster a supportive, collaborative environment.

WHY PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN BE DIFFICULT— AND HOW TO SHIFT THE DYNAMIC

Many of the challenges coaches face with parents stem from broader changes in youth sports culture. Here are some of the biggest factors driving increased parental involvement and, at times, conflict:

> INCREASED FINANCIAL & EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT

With families investing thousands of dollars in club teams, training, and travel, parents naturally feel entitled to certain outcomes, such as playing time and exposure.

> EARLY SPECIALIZATION & TALENT IDENTIFICATION

The pressure to specialize early has led parents to advocate aggressively for their child's development, sometimes at the expense of team cohesion and trust in coaches.

> SOCIAL MEDIA & COMPARISON CULTURE

Parents see constant updates about other young athletes receiving college offers and accolades, increasing anxiety and leading them to push harder for their child's recognition.

> REDUCED INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

Unlike previous generations, parents are more skeptical of authority figures in sports and more likely to challenge coaching decisions rather than defer to expertise.

> PROFESSIONALIZATION OF YOUTH SPORTS

Many parents now view sports as an investment with a return, such as scholarships or pro opportunities, rather than as a vehicle for character development and personal growth.

GETTING PARENTS ON YOUR SIDE:

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO COLLABORATION IN SPORTS

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momentum

HOW TO GET PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ON YOUR SIDE

While these factors create challenges, they also provide opportunities for coaches to engage parents as partners rather than adversaries. Here's how:

> SET THE TONE WITH [CLEAR EXPECTATIONS](#)

Coaches should communicate their philosophy, team expectations, and program values from day one. Hosting a [preseason parent meeting](#) to outline policies on playing time, communication, and athlete development can prevent many conflicts before they arise.

> BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE ISSUES ARISE

It's much easier to work with parents when they trust you. Take the time to learn their names, ask about their child's goals, and show that you care about their child as a person, not just a player. A little effort in relationship-building goes a long way when conflicts inevitably arise.

> LEAD WITH EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

When parents raise concerns, it is often out of love for their child, not a personal attack on the coach. Instead of reacting defensively, acknowledge their feelings and listen actively. A response like, "I understand you're frustrated; let's talk about how we can help your child improve" can shift the conversation from conflict to collaboration.

> FRAME THE CONVERSATION AROUND DEVELOPMENT, NOT JUST OUTCOMES

Many parent concerns stem from a focus on short-term success (winning games, getting recruited) rather than long-term growth. Reinforce the value of [sports as a developmental](#) experience, emphasizing skills like resilience, teamwork, and leadership. Helping parents see the bigger picture can ease tensions.

> ENCOURAGE CONSTRUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT

Many parents become "difficult" because they don't know how to support their child productively. Provide guidance on how they can contribute positively – whether it is reinforcing team values at home, cheering positively from the sidelines, or [volunteering in non-coaching roles](#).

> FOSTER A SUPPORTIVE TEAM COMMUNITY

When all parents feel a sense of belonging to the team community, they can better support and consult each other through challenges they may experience. Build in opportunities for parents to connect with each other and give them the tools to [incorporate empathy into the sports experience](#) and [support their peers](#) who may not have the availability to participate as they would wish.

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GETTING PARENTS ON YOUR SIDE: TURNING CHALLENGES INTO COLLABORATION IN SPORTS

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> ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES AROUND COMMUNICATION

While open dialogue is important, there should be clear boundaries. Implementing a 24-hour rule before addressing game-related concerns allows emotions to settle and leads to more constructive discussions. Define appropriate communication channels and times to ensure respectful, solution-focused conversations.

> PROMOTE POSITIVE SIDELINES

Sideline support may produce conflict when parents yell instructions that contradict the coach's strategy. This can create confusion and tension within athletes and frustration in the coach. Help parents create more encouraging sidelines by advocating for [no-directions cheering](#), handing out rosters so parents can support each player by their name, and emphasizing [effort praise](#).

> EDUCATE PARENTS ON THE REALITIES OF YOUTH SPORTS

Many parents push for immediate success because they don't fully understand long-term athlete development or the realities of college and professional sports. Providing educational resources such as guest speakers, workshops, or research-based articles – can help parents gain a healthier perspective.

> SEEK MEDIATION WHEN NECESSARY

If conflicts persist and become disruptive, involving an administrator, athletic director, or neutral third party can help facilitate a resolution. Having a structured conflict-resolution process ensures that issues don't escalate unnecessarily.

FROM HEADACHE TO ASSET: THE POWER OF A UNIFIED APPROACH

Youth sports should be about more than just winning – it is about building character, resilience, and a lifelong love for competition. When coaches and parents align on these values, the experience becomes better for everyone, especially the athletes.

Rather than viewing parents as adversaries, see them as [potential partners](#). By fostering open communication, setting clear expectations, and reinforcing a shared commitment to athlete development, coaches can turn even the most challenging parent-coach relationships into productive and supportive ones.

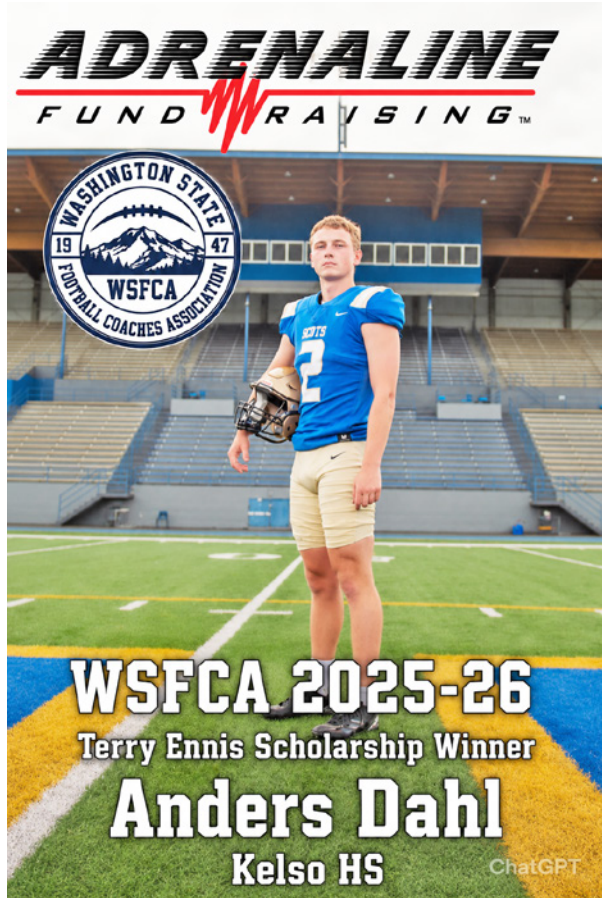
Ultimately, the question should not be, “How do I keep parents from being a headache?” but rather, “How can I engage parents in a way that benefits the athletes and the program?” When that becomes the focus, conflicts decrease, cooperation increases, and young athletes thrive.

This resource was developed by Momentum Labs with contributions from Positive Coaching Alliance. Learn more about how Momentum Labs can transform your game through mental performance coaching [here](#).

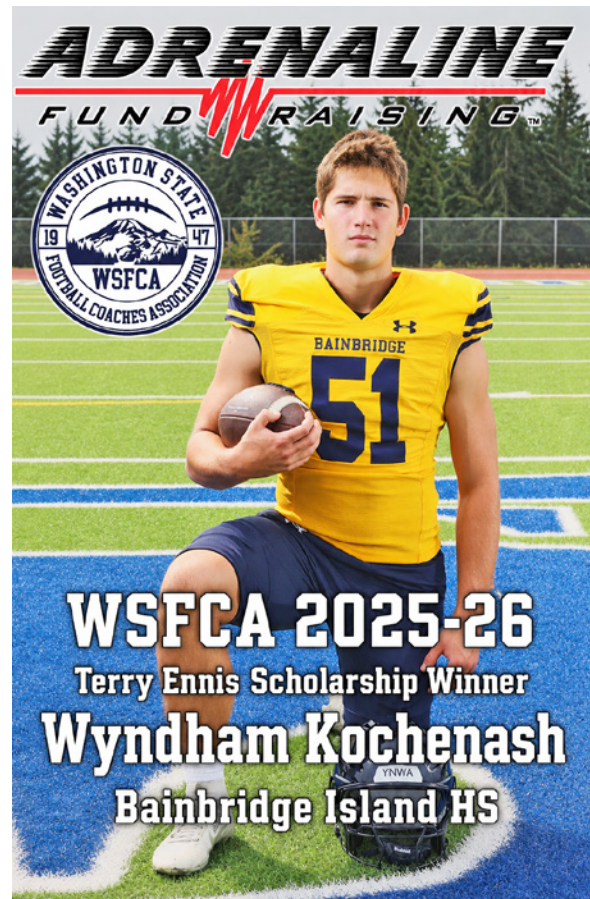
** Throughout this resource, we use the term “parent” to refer to anyone filling a caretaking role for our athletes.*

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Terry Ennis Scholarship Winners



Congratulations!



Hearing their final whistle...



Coach Leo Gervais



A Legacy on the Gridiron: Remembering Coach Leo Gervais

When beloved educator and coach Leo Gervais passed away at age 92, the football coaching community lost more than a dedicated instructor; it lost a patriarch of football coaches who sparked a multi-generational coaching dynasty.

Leo Gervais was born in 1934 in North Dakota to LDA and Elsie (Hanson) Gervais, joining an older brother, Wally and sister, Delores (Hattrick). During his early childhood, severe asthma prompted his parents to make the difficult decision to send him to live with his grandparents in Wapato, Washington, just south of Yakima, where the climate was believed to be better for his health. After several years, he reunited with his family when they settled in Toppenish, Washington.

Leo attended elementary school, junior high, and Toppenish High School, graduating in 1952. From an early age, athletics became one of his greatest passions. He excelled in

football, basketball, and baseball and was admired for both his athletic ability and his character. Even as a young boy, Leo enjoyed organizing neighborhood games and encouraging other children to form teams so they could play together on Saturdays. His natural leadership, kindness, and enthusiasm for sports were evident throughout his life.

While attending Toppenish High School, Leo met the love of his life, Jeanne LeBlanc. Although Jeanne was one year ahead of him in school, Leo's athletic success brought them into the same circle of friends. They spent many evenings together after games, at school dances, and enjoying the simple pleasures of small-town life. Their friendship soon blossomed into a lifelong love.

Jeanne graduated in 1951 and enrolled at Central Washington College. Leo followed a year later after graduating from high school. Although Jeanne's parents believed they were

too young to marry while attending college, Leo and Jeanne were certain of their future together. During Christmas break in 1952, they secretly married and returned to college as husband and wife, determined to complete their education while building a life together.

After graduating from college, Leo and Jeanne began their teaching careers in Moses Lake, Washington, where they taught for two years. When Leo's principal accepted a position on the west side of the state, he invited Leo to join him at Edgemont Junior High in the Puyallup School District. The family relocated to Edgewood and Leo began a long and fulfilling career teaching shop, physical education and coaching various sports. During his tenure at Edgemont he successfully led the school teams to many championship seasons.

Together, Leo and Jeanne raised four children—three sons, Steve (Nancy), Scott

(Denise), Chris (Kari) and one daughter, Carri (Tim Salios). Family was the center of Leo's life. He encouraged each of his children in athletics and in life, rarely missing a game or opportunity to cheer them on. His love for young people extended beyond his own family. He often arrived at school early to visit with students who needed encouragement, guidance, or simply someone willing to listen.

In addition to teaching, Leo directed the Pierce County Parks summer baseball program, working with children from T-ball through older youth leagues. Through coaching and mentoring, he taught not only athletic skills but also sportsmanship, teamwork, confidence, and respect.

Leo was equally devoted to serving his community. He faithfully served as a deacon at Edgewood Community Church and was an active member of the Edgemont/Fife Education Association, holding the positions of both president and treasurer

over the years. Whether in the classroom, at church, or in the community, Leo led with humility, integrity, and compassion.

Retirement allowed Leo to devote more time to the people and activities he loved most. He enjoyed golfing with friends, spending hours in his woodworking shop creating projects for his family, and helping his children with homebuilding and remodeling projects. He

found joy in working with his hands and sharing his talents with those he loved.

Leo's greatest pride was his family. Together, he and Jeanne created a legacy that continues through their four children, ten grandchildren, and twenty-one great-grandchildren, with a twenty-second eagerly anticipated. Watching his family grow and attending their games, performances, and milestones brought him

immeasurable happiness.

Leo will be remembered as a devoted husband, loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, a respected teacher, coach and mentor, a faithful servant, and a loyal friend. His kindness, quiet strength, generous heart, and unwavering faith touched countless lives and inspired generations of students, athletes, neighbors, and friends.

Though he is no longer

with us, Leo's legacy lives on through the family he cherished, the lives he shaped, and the community he faithfully served. He will forever remain in our hearts, and his example of faith, love, service, humility, and generosity will continue to inspire all who knew him.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Edgewood Athletic Association (EAA) P.O.Box 366 Milton, WA 98354. ■

Thank you Coach Gervais...

It is always hard to say goodbye to someone who you have known and respected for most of a lifetime. We all have those individuals who made a lasting difference in our lives and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude which may never be paid in full. Coach Gervais was one of those individuals for me. An icon in the community of Edgewood and an even greater legend in the history of Edgemont Junior High, coach Gervais "hired" me to take his place as he was about to retire.

To quickly sum up an incredible couple of hours, coach Gervais called to me while I was teaching a 6th grade physical education class at the adjacent grade school to come over to Edgemont. After taking me on a tour of Edgemont, for what purpose I had no clue at the time, it ended with him leading me into the principal's office and announced his intent to retire. He stated his decision to retire was not to be shared until he was ready to do so. Coach Gervais then introduced me as the one who will be taking over his position the next fall. No interview, no questions, no push back of any kind. I was welcomed by principal Ray Green and he said he would take care of the paperwork. Coach Gervais had that status as someone who was trusted, respected and somewhat fearless in getting things done. After a decision was made, it was time to get to work. I spent the next 34 years at Edgemont trying to maintain his level of professionalism and excellence placed in my charge. Coach Gervais "handed" me the absolute best possible teaching assignment in our district. Coach, I hope you approve of how I took care of the gift you gave me. Thank you!

Pictured are Bob Peot (on the left) and Coach Gervais (on the right) were the heart and soul of the athletic programs at Edgemont for many years. No doubt both in heavenly conversations about the kids they taught, the players they coached and the great times they had together working at Edgemont and their forever-lasting friendship.

Mike Schick, Editor ■



The Washington Coach on the Road...

Executive Board Member, Pat Fitterer, bundles up and takes his copy of "The Washington Coach" topside while keeping an eye on the glaciers and the icebergs.

Take your copy of "The Washington Coach" on the road. Send us a picture and tell us where you are. You will have great reading anywhere you go. Send your picture and information to:

wsca-editor@comcast.net ■



The Integrity Gap:



Navigating Allegations in the Age of High-Stakes High School Sports

By Raymond Bonnell, CAA, Puyallup High School

In the ecosystem of elite high school athletics, the role of the Athletic Director has evolved into a complex hybrid of educator, CEO, and—increasingly—chief investigator. As programs grow more competitive and the perceived stakes of college scholarships, revenue sharing, N+IL Deals, and national rankings rise, so does the frequency of allegations regarding recruiting and eligibility.

For those of us in the chair, the mandate is clear: we are the stewards of competitive equity. We are duty-bound to investigate every claim that threatens the integrity of our programs. Yet, there is a widening gap between the public's perception of our investigative powers and the reality of the resources and legal frameworks within which we operate.

The Standard of Evidence vs. the Weight of Hearsay

The most significant hurdle in maintaining a fair environment is the

distinction between actionable evidence and anonymous hearsay. In a digital age, a “tip” can be sent in seconds from a burner email or an anonymous social media account.

While every lead warrants a preliminary look, we must be transparent with our communities: **an allegation without evidence is merely a rumor.** As educational administrators, we do not possess the surveillance tools or subpoena power of the FBI. We cannot—and *should not*—launch exhaustive forensic audits based solely on “he said, she said” or the fact that a talented student-athlete happened to transfer into our district.

To protect the integrity of the process, we must insist that those making claims provide a starting point—a document, a specific date, or a firsthand witness. Without this, we risk chasing shadows, which diverts precious time and energy away from our primary mission: supporting the holistic development of all student-athletes.

The Human Cost of the Rumor Mill

When baseless claims are allowed to circulate unchecked, the damage is rarely contained to the scoreboard. The “rumor mill” creates a toxic environment that impacts the mental well-being of student-athletes and the professional reputations of coaches and administrators alike.

As ADs, the burden of investigating these claims is substantial. It involves countless hours of reviewing transcripts, residency documents, and interviewing families—often for cases that turn out to be entirely compliant with state association rules. When the public throws around “pay-to-play” or “illegal recruiting” labels without merit, it places an enormous administrative strain on the very people working to keep the system honest. We must lead the charge in shifting the culture from one of suspicion to one of verified accountability.

The FERPA Paradox: Investigating in Silence

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this work is the “FERPA Paradox.” Under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** and various state privacy laws, the details of a student’s eligibility, residency, or any internal investigation are strictly confidential.

This often puts the Athletic Director in an impossible position. When a high-profile athlete is cleared after a rigorous investigation, we cannot hold a press conference to explain *why* they are eligible or present the evidence that cleared them. To the outside observer, our silence can be mistaken for complicity or a lack of due diligence.

We must remain professional and disciplined, adhering to the law even when it leaves us vulnerable to public criticism. Our role is not to win the PR war in the court of public opinion, but to ensure that the internal process is beyond reproach.

Moving Forward: A Collaborative Standard

Protecting high school sports requires a collective commitment. We must encourage our coaching staffs and communities to report concerns through the proper channels, but we must also educate them on what constitutes a legitimate claim.

By demanding a standard of evidence and resisting the urge to engage with the rumor mill, we protect the students who are the heart of our programs. We are guardians of the game, and that requires us to be as rigorous in our pursuit of the truth as we are disciplined in our adherence to the law.

Best Practices: Navigating the Investigation Process

When an allegation lands on your desk, having a standardized response protocol is essential for maintaining both legal compliance and your own professional boundaries. Here is a framework for managing the intake and investigation of claims.

1. Establish a Formal Intake Process

Move away from “sideline conversations” or unofficial emails. Require that all allegations be submitted through a formal, written process. Provide a specific form or contact point that asks for:

- ☐ The specific rule allegedly violated.
- ☐ The names of the individuals involved.
- ☐ The date, time, and location of the incident.
- ☐ **Any tangible evidence (screenshots, emails, documents).**

2. The “Hearsay” Threshold

Upon receiving a tip, conduct a preliminary review to determine if it meets the threshold for a full investigation. If the claim is entirely anonymous and lacks any supporting documentation or specific details, document the receipt of the tip but clarify to the reporting party (if known) that without actionable evidence, the district’s investigative resources are limited.

3. Documentation is Your Shield

Keep a meticulous log of every step taken. Even if an allegation is found to be baseless, your file should reflect:

- ☐ The date the allegation was received.
- ☐ The specific steps taken to verify the claim (e.g., “Reviewed residency documents on [Date]”).

- ☐ The final determination based on state association bylaws.
- ☐ **The rationale for closing the case.**

4. Manage Expectations Early

When a member of the community or the media asks about a “rumor,” have a pre-vetted statement ready that emphasizes the process over the specific case.

“We take all allegations of rule violations seriously and have a rigorous internal process for investigating them. Due to student privacy laws (FERPA), we cannot comment on the specifics of any individual student’s eligibility or any ongoing investigation.”

5. Educate Your Coaching Staff

Your coaches are often the first to hear the rumors. Ensure they understand that they are not investigators. Their job is to report information to you immediately and then step back. This prevents “freelance investigating,” which can compromise the integrity of the school’s official inquiry and inadvertently fuel the rumor mill.

6. Know Your Limits

Remember that you are an educator, not a private detective. If an investigation requires resources beyond the scope of your office—such as verifying out-of-state residency or complex financial records—contact your state athletic association or district legal counsel. Knowing when to escalate is a sign of professional competence, not a lack of effort. ■



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WASHINGTON STATE

COACHES ASSOCIATION

A WASHINGTON STATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Mission & Vision

Dedicated to supporting and developing the coaches who shape the future of young athletes in Washington State.



Our Mission

The mission of the Washington State Coaches Association is to support its membership by creating educational opportunities through sport specific clinics, provide resources which enhance the highest possible knowledge, standards and ethics in the coaching profession and to recognize and celebrate excellence of our membership, their families, teams and players.

Core Values

- ✓ Integrity: Upholding the highest ethical standards by modeling honesty, sportsmanship, and fair play, ensuring our coaches serve as positive role models who honor the game and protect the well-being of all student-athletes.
- ✓ Education: Elevating the coaching profession by providing continuous educational opportunities, professional development, and mentorship that empower coaches to safely, effectively, and positively impact student-athletes.
- ✓ Community: Fostering a supportive network of sports educators dedicated to sharing knowledge, uplifting peers, and collectively strengthening the impact of athletics across our communities.
- ✓ Recognition: honoring the dedication, excellence, and achievements of coaches and athletes, celebrating their vital contributions to the athletics community.

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