

Hello,

It was my pleasure to talk to you the other day. I read Mr. Conklin's resolution and agree with him 100%. My name is Randy Parry and I live in Jermyn, PA. I have lived here my entire life and attended public school here at Lakeland High School located in Scott Twp. I played basketball there and subsequently coached basketball there. I coached at every level and both boys and girls. I spent most of my adult life coaching there and loved every minute of it. The unfair advantage Mr. Conklin is referring to, began in the late 70's when the PCIAA folded up. The parochial schools applied for entry to the PIAA. It is my understanding that at first, they were denied entry due at least in part because they were nonboundary. Eventually, the parochial schools gained entry to the PIAA. The result was they took our players.

I have attended the PIAA state finals in Hershey and Penn State for many years. The very first game I saw in Hershey was when Sam Bowie played for Lebanon and played Schenley High School in the final. That was a very long time ago. The nonboundary schools began to dominate the finals. Erie Cathedral Prep along with Kennedy Christian (boys and girls) and Nativity BVM were frequently in the finals. There were many fans like me and my dad that were just fans. Just attending to see the games. We would see many of the same faces at games each year and would speak to them about the games. Each year, we would talk about the recruiting going on. One year, in particular, dad and I were walking into the finals. I recognized a coach from a catholic school walking in as a fan. I said to him, "It must be strange coming in as a fan and not on the sidelines." His team had been in the finals many times. His response to me was "yes, it is, but we will be back. I went out and found a big girl that will get us here next year." I said to myself, wow. Openly talking about recruiting like it was ok. Another example was Glen Mills School for Boys (which was closed, but I believe recently reopened under a different name.) We were there when they won the state title. I spoke to one of the guys that "escorted" the student body to their seats. He told me some of the players were not even from Pennsylvania!!!

While I was the boys' varsity head coach at Lakeland, I became friends with several opposing coaches. I offered my services when playoff time came. I did so for one coach in particular who coached at a Catholic High School. During the season, we played each other and sat together watching the junior varsity game. He began complaining about another coach that also coached at a Catholic school. I took him for a walk to our main entrance. I said, coach, do you see those doors? I take what walks thru those doors. If they cannot play, they cannot play. It is my job to teach and develop them. Also, I have to worry about my program K thru 12. You only have to worry about 9 thru 12. I run a buddy program myself on Saturdays, grades 1 thru 4, boys and girls. It is strictly teaching. No games. I have upwards of 100 kids myself. You, on the other hand, coach, attend 7/8 grade Diocesan league in Scranton. Pick out a boy who you think can help you and go talk to him about attending your school. I do not have that option. We remained friends to this day!!

The most recent change has been the advent of District 12. I have been around this a very long time. The original District 12 consisted of Mountain View, Elk Lake, Lackawanna Trail, Blue Ridge, and Susquehanna school districts. That version of District 12 was dissolved. Then came version 2 of Districts 12. This version included the Philadelphia Charter Schools. Again, all nonboundary schools. This changed things for Parochial schools who had their way versus public schools for many, many years. Charter schools began to dominate the finals in Hershey and Penn State. One instance, Dad and I were at finals in Hershey and a Catholic school was playing a Charter school. During the game, fans directly behind us were cheering for the Catholic school and at the same time, complaining about the

Charter school and how they recruit. Against dad's wishes, I turned to these people and said, "I coach at a small public school. How does it feel?" The fan replied, what do you mean? " I replied "you're just not happy because The Charter school can recruit from a bigger area, and I take what walks in our front doors." They stopped complaining for the rest of the game.

Gentlemen, in the end, you know what's going on is not fair. Everyone knows it. It truly is not a level playing field. Look at the program you can buy at Hershey. It has past years winners and losers. Look at the names of the schools involved in the finals. Status quo is not the answer.

I credit Mr. Conklin for making this an issue. I am sure politically it will hurt him. The PIAA ignores the issue because they are afraid of lawsuits if they change anything. I am old,68. I grew up in a generation where a coach could say what's on his mind, where there was no question where he was coming from. Please do the right thing!

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