

The real winner of 100-0 game? Sportsmanship

DALLAS (AP) - All over the country this weekend, teams of athletically gifted kids will step onto a court or field against teams they could crush by pretty much any score they want - maybe even 100. Odds are, it won't happen. Not again. Probably not for a long time.

And that, observers say, is the long-term benefit of the recent high school girl's basketball game with that same memorable score, the double-whammy of a 100-point victory and a shut-out.

"I don't want to overstate the importance of this game in history, but it is important in the present landscape of middle school and high school athletics because it gives us the framework for conversations about fair play and sportsmanship to take place," said Dan Lebowitz, executive director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University. "This example is one that was so extreme. The morality of healthy competition and sort of an ethical standard were all violated."

Because Covenant School's victory over Dallas Academy was so severe, the reaction has been, too. The losers have become the winners - getting interviewed on several national television shows and drawing donations to their school, which has about 180 students and specializes in children with learning differences, such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder. They won't lose again this season, either, as they've dropped the rest of their games.

The winners, meanwhile, have become losers - literally, as the Christian school of nearly 400 students has offered to forfeit the victory, but also in the court of public opinion. The coach lost his job, too.

School officials supported coach Micah Grimes until the day he wrote on a Web site that he disagreed with the school's apology. He noted his roster was as limited as Dallas Academy's and pointed out times they've finished a game with only four girls on the court. He also recalled an 82-6 loss four years ago "that forever changed us and the way we approached the game of basketball."

Beyond the ramifications and explanations, what lingers is all those zeros, the wild imbalance of one team having 100 points and the other still stuck at 0. That perfectly imperfect score is what stirred up so much buzz. Eight years ago, there was a 178-28 boys' high school game in the Houston area. That 150-point win barely made a ripple compared to this game.

The biggest debate stirred up by this game centers on fair play. The big question: What's worse, piling on the points or easing up out of pity? Rutgers coach C. Vivian Stringer has won the third-most games in women's college basketball and taken three schools to the Final Four, so she knows all about the dilemma of managing a powerful team against weak competition. She even faced it in a game against her own college coach.

"For me to let you score, it's like welfare. It's embarrassing," Stringer said. "So you have to be careful with that. But there's a way to give a person their dignity without making it obvious."

All points lead back to the reason this game inflamed so many people - the premise of using athletics as a way to teach kids about teamwork and life lessons like how to handle victory and defeat. The plight of Dallas Academy shows that in our society winning isn't everything - winning the right way is. - *By Jaime Aron, The Associated Press, January 30, 2009*

Needham students told to sit out game

In the latest crackdown on bad behavior at school sports events, Needham High School principal Paul Richards banned students from attending a boys' varsity hockey game against Framingham because of rowdiness by spectators during the game prior. In an email sent to parents, Richards said Needham fans at the game against Wellesley yelled chants and heckled representatives from the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) who were there to observe fans because of an earlier incident. "Needham's student section chanted, 'Wellesley...Wellesley...you s-k' several times," Richards said in the email. "In addition, they chanted, 'Put your clipboards away,' to the MIAA reps who were there to observe our fan behavior." The Needham boys' hockey team is defending the state Division I championship and is 6-0 this year. The MIAA criticized Needham fans last year for poor sportsmanship at varsity hockey games, prompting school officials to add more crowd monitors at games and amend the student handbook. Richards ordered what essentially is a one-day suspension for students who want to attend boys' hockey games. - *By Kathryn Eident, Boston Globe, January 7, 2009*

Coaches' actions in heat death defended

Two Pleasure Ridge Park High School coaches followed "all policies and protocols required of them" while running football practice last August where two players collapsed, one of whom later died, the coaches' lawyer said yesterday. Mark Fenzel, the attorney representing head coach Jason Stinson, assistant coach Steve Deacon and four other coaches in a civil suit filed by the parents of 15-year-old Max Gilpin, who died of heat stroke, said the investigation should reveal that "Max's problems came on suddenly and unexpectedly after conditioning was over." Attorney Todd Thompson, who is representing Max's mother, Michele Crockett, and attorney Mike Cooper, representing Max's father, Jeff Gilpin, asked yesterday that Jefferson Circuit Judge Mitch Perry order Stinson and Deacon to give depositions in the lawsuit. Both Jefferson County Public Schools and Louisville Metro Police are investigating Max's death after the sophomore lineman collapsed at an Aug. 20 practice. He died three days later at Kosair Children's Hospital after his body temperature had reached 107 degrees. Crockett and Jeff Gilpin filed suit against the PRP coaches in September, accusing them of negligence in their son's death. "All we want to know is what took place on the football field on Aug. 20," Thompson said yesterday after meeting with Perry. Stinson and Deacon were scheduled to give depositions Jan. 6-7; neither showed up. Fenzel said yesterday it would be reasonable to postpone the depositions until the criminal investigation is closed. - *By Antoinette Konz, The Courier-Journal, January 13, 2009*

School sports now a Minnesota luxury?

The economic crunch is coming to high school sports. Faced with budget problems, some schools are raising fees while cutting back on equipment, transportation and other expenses. Others are voluntarily cutting back on the number of games their teams play. In early February, the Minnesota State High School League could decide to make reduced schedules mandatory starting in the 2009-10 school year as a way to save money. Administrators use words like "bleak" and "troubling" to describe the outlook for high school activities. Examples stretch across the metro area and beyond. In Lakeville, the district's two high schools will each cut \$200,000 (20 percent) from their activities budgets for 2009-10 and participation fees are expected to increase. At Armstrong High School in Plymouth, participation fees have been raised to \$200 for athletics and \$100 for activities. But there is still not enough money to buy basic sports equipment like bats and balls. To save on transportation costs, Apple Valley, Eagan, Eastview and Rosemount high schools, which are in the same district, will sometimes send teams to road games on a one-way bus. The athletes must ride home with parents or friends. And at outstate Crosby-Ironton, activity fees have risen to \$230 per student per sport, and it's possible that some individual sports could be funded entirely by fees or face elimination. Fee increases are not a new solution to the problem, but the increases are tougher for families to bear in a down economy. School officials are not just waiting for more financial hammers to fall. The Minnesota Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association has endorsed a two-pronged legislative approach. The group wants the Legislature to give local school boards the power to hold separate levies for funding co-curricular programs, and it also would like money from an impending sales tax increase to help fund arts programs in public schools. More than 237,000 Minnesota students participated in high school sports in 2007-08, the ninth-highest total in the nation. - *By John Millea, Star Tribune, January 19, 2009*

MPA proposals prompt criticism

The Maine Principals' Association's (MPA) Interscholastic Management Committee will vote on Monday on a short list of cost-cutting recommendations that could have a dramatic effect on Maine high school sports. The recommendations include shortening the regular season, reducing the number of teams that qualify for the playoffs, cutting back the number of non-countable games (preseason scrimmages, exhibitions and holiday tournaments) to two, and pulling Maine from the New England championships. They have sparked intense debate, and prompted two state legislators to propose bills that would limit the MPA's authority over high school sports. "This conversation," said Marty Ryan, the athletic director at Kennebunk and one of the Maine Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association's two liaisons to the Interscholastic Committee, "is probably as heated a conversation as I've experienced in the last 29 years. And rightfully so. It has some significant impacts." On Monday, each of the proposals drawn up by an MPA ad hoc committee in December will be discussed. Some may pass as written. Others may be voted down. Still others could be altered. "This isn't an all-or-nothing proposal and I never think it was proposed as such," said Bob Birmingham, assistant principal at Oak Hill High in Wales and member of the Interscholastic Management Committee. Opponents argue the MPA's recommendations won't help the situation. Kennebunk's Ryan calculated his school would save \$6,100 if those measures were passed. "But," he quickly added, "at the same time we'd lose some revenue, because of lost (home) games." The figure, he said, was about \$3,900, including concessions and tickets. So the total savings would be only \$2,200, and "when you consider the number of students we have, that's not a whole lot." The lack of big savings is at the crux of the opponents' criticism. The MPA has stressed throughout that money was not the only reason the proposals were made. MPA officials also want to ensure that all schools are on a level field, that schools without aggressive, money-raising booster clubs aren't left behind schools that get much financial support from their boosters. - *By Mike Lowe, Portland Press Herald, January 24, 2009*

New Englands stay

AUGUSTA - The Interscholastic Management Committee of the Maine Principals' Association (MPA) voted Monday to reduce the number of teams who qualify for its tournaments but will continue sending the state's top athletes to New England competitions. Most of the controversial recommendations from an MPA ad hoc committee that said they were intended to save schools money while keeping athletes on a level playing field were voted down or changed. On Monday, the 10-member management committee consisting of Maine principals, assistant principals and headmasters, reviewed the proposals one-by-one and voted:

- 7-3 to reject a proposal to reduce the number of countable games by two if the present number is 12 or more or by one if the present number is 10 or fewer.
- 9-1 to reject reducing the ice hockey and swimming seasons by one week.
- 8-2 to limit all teams to five non-countable dates (exhibitions, scrimmages, holiday tournaments, etc.). The ad hoc committee proposed only two. Conference championships and pre-playoff scrimmages are not included.
- 9-1 to allow 50 percent of teams in heel point sports to qualify for the playoffs. Currently, the top 67 percent qualify.
- 9-1 to continue to allow Maine athletes to compete in the New England Secondary School Principals' Association competitions.

The reduction in tournament teams and limits on non-countable games will start with the 2009-10 school year. The tournament policy will be reviewed in two years. The committee also voted unanimously to urge a two-year freeze on fees and travel reimbursements for officials. Many of the proposals met strong resistance from high school athletic conferences, athletic directors, coaches and athletes. Over two dozen administrators attended the meeting while about a dozen athletes lined an outside walkway leading to MPA offices and held signs urging the committee to reject the proposals. MPA executive director Dick Durost said the ad hoc committee was formed after the state's superintendents raised concerns about increasing travel costs, dwindling state subsidies and the overall economic climate. - *By Randy Whitehouse, Sun Journal, January 27, 2009*

Sports ethicists, coaches voice concerns on prep routs

The perfect awfulness of The Covenant School's 100-0 defeat of Dallas Academy got the losing team on national television, the winning coach fired and ignited the issue of sportsmanship in girls' basketball. Tom Gonsalves, the coach at St. Mary's (Stockton, Calif.), No. 16 in the USA TODAY Super 25 rankings, saw his team beat Stagg (Stockton) 98-10 in a district game last week, despite a running clock in the fourth quarter. He said his team reached 98 points with four minutes to go. "We didn't want to score 100," he said. "It's hard to tell my kids not to play hard. We are known for shooting 40 three-pointers a game. That's the part of coaching I don't enjoy right now. I'd hate to have my own kids embarrassed, so I understand." For sports ethicists, the issue is clear-cut. When a game gets out of hand, it's the winning coach's job to adjust. "This is not a close question," said Michael Josephson, founder of the Josephson Institute in Los Angeles. "You have to ask, what is the ultimate goal of coaching? It should be teaching good life skills. When Wilt Chamberlain scored 100, he did it against a professional team. It's a huge difference when you're dealing with children. It's a terrible black eye to believe that people are defending the proposition that there is anything worthwhile about that type of game." Dan Doyle, executive director of the Institute for International Sport at the University of Rhode Island, says the solution can be subtle. "The line of demarcation was whether the outcome of the game was still in question," he said. "Once you cross that line, the first thing you stop is the full-court press. Particularly if the press involves traps. You're obligated to put your subs in. You don't need to fast break. I never told my players to miss shots or let the other team shoot, but a discerning coach can manage in a way in which no one is wounded. There are so many values that can be taught. There's also the value of empathy. It's at the core of a moral society." - *By Jim Halley, USA Today, January 29, 2009*

Outdoor participation up, down among youth

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Outdoor Foundation announced the release of the 2008 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, the only detailed study of its kind tracking American participation trends in outdoor recreation. The findings highlighted in the report are areas of both opportunity and concern: while overall participation in outdoor recreation among Americans is increasing, the connection to nature among youth is declining. The 2008 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report is based on an online survey capturing responses from over 60,000 Americans ages 6 and older and covers 114 different outdoor activities, making it the largest survey of its type examining participation in sports and outdoor activities. The survey represents a collaborative effort among The Outdoor Foundation, Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, National Golf Foundation, and SnowSports Industries America. According to the report, over 50 percent of Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2007, getting outside 11.36 billion times - either close to home, in a nearby park or on an overnight trip. While the increase in participation comes as good news to the outdoor recreation industry, the report also reveals over an 11 percent decline in participation in outdoor activities among youth age 6 to 17 with the sharpest declines among youth age 6 to 12. The insights detailed in the report are critical to efforts nationwide seeking to understand and reverse the growing inactivity crisis among youth and the growing disconnect between youth and the outdoors. - *By The Outdoor Foundation, ESPN, January 29, 2009*

Participation not a constitutional right

The high court of Massachusetts strongly endorsed the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's (MIAA) oversight of athletics in the state's public schools, rejecting a former Andover High School swimmer's assertion that she was denied her constitutional rights when she was banned as a fifth-year senior. In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Judicial Court said that participation in school athletics is not a constitutional right for anyone. Writing for the court, Justice Judith M. Cowin also rules that the MIAA's grievance procedure does not violate the state's civil rights law. "The right to a public education, even one with a mandatory physical education component, is not synonymous with the right to participate in extracurricular activities, such as interscholastic athletics," Cowin wrote. She added, "we do not expand the contours of a student's property interest in public education to include within it every extracurricular activity that might enrich the educational experience, however meaningful those activities might be to individual students." Elizabeth Mancuso was a star swimmer in 2003 when she and her school asked the MIAA to treat her as a fifth-year senior. Mancuso had attended Austin Preparatory School for her freshman year, but then repeated freshman year when she transferred into Andover public schools because she had started school one year earlier than her peers. Denied by the MIAA, Mancuso went on to Dartmouth College where she was a member of the university's swim team and has since graduated. - *By Globe Staff, The Boston Globe, January 23, 2009*

Experts say better safety measures needed

In 2008, five youth athletes died from head injuries during high school football games or practices, while another seven had indirect causes of death, including undetected heart problems and heat stroke, according to the National Center for Catastrophic Injury Research. Two others also died of direct blows to the chest and abdomen. "Right now we're at that single digit number," said Frederick Mueller, director of the National Center for Catastrophic Injury Research. "But when it creeps up, people should be concerned." Changes in equipment and rules have helped save lives - the number of deaths and crippling injuries is much lower than it was in the late 1960s - but there is still more that can be done. Dr. Albert Hergenroeder, chief of Sports Medicine Clinic at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston who also works from the sidelines as a doctor for high school football games, said that it is up to the coaches to teach proper technique, but also up to the referees to call penalties on head tackles. Because football is a sport steeped in macho bravado, it is particularly important for coaches to talk to players about the dangers of playing with any head pain after taking a hit. "Anyone who has any headache or neck pain should not be playing and cannot go back to contact," Hergenroeder said. Head injuries can be accidental, but all experts agree that heat stroke is unacceptable. There were no heatstroke deaths in 2002 and 2003, but that number has climbed in more recent years, with four boys dying due to heatstroke in 2008. Coaches should not assume that players are acclimated to the heat. Coaches need to not only ensure that there's plenty of water, and provide plenty of breaks, but also take it easy for the entire first week, using the lightest equipment possible. College football, for example, does not allow for two practice sessions on two consecutive days, but there is no similar rule in high school. Players and coaches need to be aware of the heat index, and not just the rising mercury, when they plan practice times. - *By Katherine Tweed, Fox News, January 20, 2009*

Essays on sportsmanship encouraged

The National Sportsmanship Day "Dare to Play Fair" program, founded and administered by the Institute for International Sport, will be celebrated March 3, 2009. As part of the celebration, students from elementary, middle and high schools, as well as colleges and universities, are invited to write essays of 500 words or fewer on the theme of fighting in sports. USA TODAY will publish online a selected essay from each student group as part of National Sportsmanship Day. The deadline for receiving essay entries is Feb. 26. Essays may be sent to: USA TODAY Sportsmanship Essay Contest, Institute for International Sport, University of Rhode Island, P.O. Box 1710, Kingston, RI 02881-1710; Fax: (401) 874-2429; iis102@etal.uri.edu - *USA Today, January 27, 2009*

For more information about the *Sports Done Right* initiative visit
www.sportsdoneright.org or call 1-866-767-8540

