



## **The Demands and Joys of Being an Athletic Director** ***Published in the October 2016 Superintendent Skelly eNews***

Bill Walsh once said about the sport of football that “Football is not fun. Football is rewarding.” The same could be said about the Athletic Director (AD) job. While the daily tasks of being an Athletic Director are far more challenging than fun, the rewards are very significant and worthwhile.

An AD will typically have equal parts planning, weekly and daily tasks, and crisis management. Basically, picture a general contractor who is also a fire fighter.

The planning ADs do focuses on hiring new coaches, assigning facilities, website maintenance, doing budgets, trying to make improvements to our facilities, just to name a few AD planning tasks.

The daily tasks involve clearing coaches and players, e-mailing teachers on early dismissals, coordinating bus transportation, paying bills, approving purchases, responding to parents and coach e-mails and processing facility rental requests from outside users of our facilities.

The crisis management comes in so many shapes and sizes that trying to list them would be a “fool’s game.” It is very common for an AD to be “zero-in” on their daily and weekly tasks or to be excited about meeting with a contractor to discuss an improvement to a facility when all those plans come to a screeching halt because of a crisis that, to the parties involved, needs to be fixed not now, but *right* now!

And by the way, almost all ADs have a team and classes to manage; this makes for a *big* workload. It’s difficult for an aggrieved parent or athlete questioning a lack of playing time or coach disciplinary action, for example, to appreciate the AD’s level of responsibility and competing deliverables. The same holds true of a coach and student who are asking why their transfer hasn’t been processed and to the community who is questioning why the request to rent our gym has not been approved. In short, there are many demands on an AD’s time with each requestor feeling they have the most urgent need.

To continue with the original metaphor, imagine having the workers hired to remodel your kitchen or bathroom being pulled off the job to put out a fire at an apartment building down the street. As a customer you are furious that your kitchen or bathroom is behind schedule, but the burning apartment is the more pressing issue.

So, with this dynamic of never being able to please all of our constituents, why do we continue to sign-up for what is often a thankless job? Where are the rewards that Bill Walsh referred to?

We all recognize how athletics improves the high school experience for not only the athletes but for the entire school. A lost and bewildered freshman or introverted student can feel connected to the school and meet 15 to 40 new friends by finding a home on one of our teams. We collectively feel tremendous pride when one of our teams makes great strides and makes the playoffs for the first time. Watching our diverse student body’s cheer, side by side, at the top of their lungs at basketball or football games brings pure joy. We all know students whose sole purpose for continuing to attend and to do their best in school is for the opportunity to participate in sports – the one thing that some students will feel



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connected to. There are students whose self-esteem and self-worth will increase by inconceivable leaps and bounds because they have had success on one of our teams. When our former students see each other at their 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 year reunions their athletic experiences will be the most talked about topic. We know that the four years of high school would be less fulfilling for the vast majority of our students without athletics.

All of these rewards could not be realized without the strong leadership of an AD. And there are *very* few people who can do this job effectively and that if it was not for us very few, our schools would not be the outstanding places of learning that they are.

As Bill Walsh said about playing football, like football, being an AD is not fun. But it definitely has its rewards.