



Lions Athletic Philosophy Q & A

Note: The questions and answers in this section have been taken from many national athletic philosophies, including the Tri-State area and modeled around a sport parent guideline book by Mel Roustino and adapted to fit our individual situations at North Hunterdon High School Athletic Department. Its intent is to offer answers to some of the frequently asked questions in athletics in order to enable parents to enjoy their role and have the opportunity to provide their children with the experiences they all anticipate.

1. What are the pros and cons of “equal playing time” and at what age is it no longer an issue?

Children at the introductory level of sports programs get equal opportunity and approximate equal playing time. By the time they reach the middle school age, the equal-playing time debate should end. Some children have more natural ability and some practice more intently to develop athletic abilities. Those students with superior skills are rewarded with more playing time. There is a reason for keeping score. In the process of assessing capabilities, all students will not receive the same academic grades; all students will not receive the same amount of stage time in plays; and all athletes will not receive an equal amount of playing time in sports.

2. Most schools have try-outs resulting in students being cut from the team. Do educators realize how traumatic this experience can be for youngsters?

Prior to each sport season, I meet with our parents and coaches to discuss a range of issues pertaining to the upcoming season. One of those issues relates to “the selection of teams”. During this meeting we discuss a “team selection procedure” that minimizes the negative impact for the student who fails to make the team. Our “squad-cut policy” includes, but is not limited to (1) an honest and open discussion of

the skills needed to compete in the sport, (2) an explanation of the approximate size of the squad, and (3) the number and dates of try-out sessions. Parents and students should understand that team composition must be considered. For example, a football coach cannot keep fifteen (15) 150 pound running backs, or a basketball team ten (10) 5'8" point guards, regardless of how good they may be. There are other factors to be considered in assessing the talents for the other positions. However, it is my opinion that every coach makes an honest effort to select the best players available to create the right climate for a successful "team".

3. What are the benefits of sport participation as claimed by sport advocates?

We have all heard of the benefits of participating in sports. Any activity that creates a situation for children to interact with others, help build character and prepare participants to meet life challenges should be encouraged. Athletics provides the opportunity for many good things to take place, but these things are not automatic. The rewards occur when the individual sees the gap closing between present abilities and their potential. The student then recognizes the benefits of commitment, of following instructions, practicing skill development, working hard to achieve a goal, playing by the rules, self discipline and role-playing as it relates to the needs of the group. The greatest outcome from participating in athletics is the blueprint it leaves on the individual to follow in living experiences beyond the athletic arenas. The athletic experience will encourage an individual to become a more involved citizen and a more well-rounded adult who seeks the answer the larger questions: "How can I help others, and what can I do for my family, my school and my community?"

4. Should I be concerned with the increase in violence in sports?

You bet! We should all be concerned about the increase in violence, both in society and athletics. In the sports arena there seems to be two (2) major areas of concern: violence by players and violence by fans. Both can be addressed at the same time. The Skyland Conference and the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association has established proactive measures that specify acceptable rules of sportsmanship, acceptable athletic behaviors and ultimate consequences for their violation. Coaches, players and officials attend mandatory preseason meetings to review the concepts of good sportsmanship and fair-play. In addition, parents are encouraged to attend a preseason meeting hosted by the athletic office, read Student Athlete Disciplinary Code found in the student handbook and become familiar with the coaches communication methods which is reviewed by the athletes at the start of each season. Finally, prior to the start of each athletic contest, every member of the Skyland

Conference and the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association reads a prepared statement that offers a clear warning and subsequent consequences for violators of the standard of good sportsmanship. Then, we hire police and teachers to serve as security and give them the authority to enforce these standards. It is not an easy task, but one that North Hunterdon High School takes very seriously.

5. Will participation in sports help my child's self-esteem?

There is no definite answer to this question. Self-esteem is defined as “pride in oneself...self respect”. When an athlete works hard to develop a skill and can successfully apply it, they develop self-esteem. An athlete feels good about themselves and their accomplishment. In another situation, if an athlete does little to develop their skills, makes constant errors, and is embarrassed with their play, not willing to accept constructive criticism, it will be unlikely for them to develop self-esteem. Self-esteem comes at a steep price. There's no easy or magical way to acquire it. It's ultimately up to each athlete to determine for themselves how, or even if they are to attain their personal self-esteem.

6. What has changed in athletics' in the past 10 years?

We continue to grow as a school district. Many school districts nationwide have the same growing pains. Ten years ago North Hunterdon had a student enrollment number of approximately 900. This year North Hunterdon has approximately 1910 students. By the 2012-2013 school year, we anticipate a continuous student growth at a substantial rate. In the past ten years, the athletic department was able to add Girl's Lacrosse, Girl's Gymnastics and Boy's Swimming. The school budget has not passed the past couple of years so this has a direct impact on adding new sports or co-curricular activities. Please refer to HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN AMERICA.

Presently, the Board of Education is actively planning on how to best meet the educational facility needs of our students. Simply, the more students that are at North Hunterdon High School the more competition will take place in order for students to be part of Co-curricular activities including Athletics.

If you have any questions that you would like addressed, please email them to John Deutsch at jdeutsch@nhvweb.net and he will forward them to the appropriate coach.