

Recruiting for High School Teams – A True Story...

I have coached in the AAU leagues for many years and I would like to see a high profile group like yours address the subject of private high schools "recruiting" high school players. I was on a private high school athletic department board of directors and I was amazed at the intense and wide range of opinions parents and players held. The topic potentially could have disrupted the multi generation basketball program and threatened to end it.

Many of the traditional teams that the school had played each season started having more and more extremely talented players start playing on their teams, and the new players began having a major impact on the competitive balance.

Our school, without input from the parent community decided in just one off season to suddenly provide major "student aid" to about ten players from a distant geographic area that had been playing together in AAU for an extended period of time. The next season the school went far up the ladder in the rankings, and the following season won the league championship.

Many problems resulted however. Few of the students at the school knew the players, and attendance at games was low. Many of the parents of the "local" talent were outraged by the fact that their "local" but deemed "less talented" children were not given an opportunity to play on the team. Some said that "professional programs" had no place at the high school level. Many lost interest because the players they had watched play for so many years growing up in the local competition were no longer playing. When the department budget was increased to pay for the significantly more expensive program -(uniforms, travel, PR, etc.) although the tickets sales plummeted - rigid factions became very vocal and the school environment was a haven of hostility.

The board was asked to make a decision on how the athletic program should proceed in the future and our own internal board became suspicious of each other and splintered into subgroups with various agendas.

The local; and extremely high profile, newspaper and asked them to expose the issue. They were concerned and chose not to get involved because of the firestorm it would create. A nationally known high school coach was asked to address the board, knowing that he had voiced his opinion on the subject at a national coaches forum, and he said he did not wish to take a high profile position again so soon after his previous remarks.

Since you are involved with the subject of college recruiting, you might find that your constituents will be very interested if you address what I was surprised to learn was a very emotional issue.

Great web site.

J.A.