



## **What to do When Student-Athletes Cross Line?**

By Bill Gosse

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Numerous e-mails with comments or questions have come my way since I began writing this weekly column. Some of the e-mails have inspired columns – like this one.

We've discussed before how some parents stick their noses into athletic programs and do their best creating havoc.

We've also discussed when it's appropriate to confront a coach.

One reader wanted to know when parents should confront administrators or school boards in the case of obvious athletic code violations.

This can be labeled as whistle blowing, which seems to have an ugly connotation, or tattletaling, which always seemed wrong as a kid.

What should happen when a student-athlete completes a sport season and it's obvious they were more athlete than student? The student was failing miserably in school, and that was when the student felt the need to even attend school. What about the student who simply followed parental example and began drinking as a minor?

These are obvious athletic code violations.

What to do may seem cut and dried when the violator is an average athlete, but always more difficult when the player is an all-conference running back or the best spiker in the league, or when the little town's team is about to go to state for the first time.

Nonetheless, every game night these fine young athletes were allowed to play, even though the coach, teachers and administrators knew the student-athlete was ineligible.

Since doing nothing would be apathetic and simply feed the problem, what action is appropriate for caring parents who've worked hard at instilling a great work ethic and a moral conscience in their kids?

Here are a few tips:

- Know the whole situation. Stories on the vine likely are missing facts. Loading blazing guns with gossip and making false accusations are good ways of getting escorted to the city limits.
- Before acting, review the motive. Revenge is never a good reason for public recourse. Wanting school programs to be pure and just is honorable. Maintaining the desire to have one's community as a beacon of truth is worth pursuing. The goals of the whole should be greater than the goals of a few. Cheating never is acceptable.
- Stepping forward and doing what's right may not be popular, but is always best. Long-term benefits await, even though the short-term results could include hate, cursing and mocking. Stepping out in a leadership role will identify who your friends really are.
- Whenever possible, proceed in a united front. A group bringing issues forward eliminates the whiny-parent scenario and softens the pointy finger of an individual looking to blame. Anonymous letters rarely work
- Problems must be confronted, and all sides must be given a fair hearing. The discussion should be held in the presence of mature, trustworthy leaders in order to come up with wise decisions. Everyone should then abide by the results.

We are given the choice between what is right and what is popular.

It's a challenge, but a worthy one.