

Mentor Newsletter

May 2022



Note from the Director:

Thank you to Rebecca Moe and the WSSAAA Board for a fantastic conference. The opportunity to connect with colleagues in person in Kennewick was energizing! It was also fantastic that the conference provided space for over 60 first time attendees to connect with the organization and build their professional network. The WSSAAA mentor program will use the energy from the conference to strengthen these networking opportunities for all athletic directors across the state.

WIAA Updates:

- 5/6: Deadline for Representative Assembly voting on proposed amendments.
- 5/11: WIAA Wednesday
- 5/16: Post season information submission (MyWIAA)
- 5/29: First possible day of summer activities

WIAA Rule(s) of the Month: *Jeff Lowell, Bellevue SD*

WIAA Rules 17.9 and 17.10 provide athletic directors guidance for summer activities. Even as you are in the midst of spring sports, find time to survey your coaches and plan any summer activities now. Planning should include: authorization of facility use, equipment use, uniform use, travel with students, and compensation for coaches at minimum.

TIP OF THE MONTH:

Make the time to update your calendar for the summer. Be sure to include these items:

- Any approved summer activities for your teams
- Time to update coaches handbook and other documents for fall
- Family time
- August school district, league, WIAA district meetings, eligibility dates for fall

WIAA Wednesdays:

Please remember that the WIAA staff hosts a webinar to update the membership on important topics and initiatives following Executive Board meetings. Here are links for completed webinars for those who may have missed them.

WSSAAA Mentors

Director:

[Jeff Lowell](#), Bellevue SD

District Mentors:

- 1: [Don Beazizo](#), B-E SD
- 2: [Lance Gatter](#), Inglemoor HS
- 3: [Lauren McDaniel](#), Central Kitsap S.D.
- 4: [Robert Blackman](#): Mark Morris HS
- 5: [Lance DenBoer](#), Kiona-Benton HS
- 6: [Loren Sandhop](#), Moses Lake HS
- 7: [Ryan Peplinski](#), St. Georges School
- 8: [Paul Manfred](#), Gonzaga Prep HS
- 9: [Toddette McGreevy](#), Pomeroy HS
- MS: [Pat Round](#), Northwood MS

DATE	RECORDING	PPT SLIDES
9/29/2021	WATCH	VIEW
10/20/2021	WATCH	VIEW
11/17/2021	WATCH	VIEW
1/26/2022	WATCH	VIEW
3/16/2022	WATCH	

Monthly Spotlight: Interview with retired Oregon Athletic Director and author, Kevin Bryant

On the following pages is an interview with Kevin, conducted by District 4 mentor, Robert Blackmon



Kevin Bryant, CMAA is a recently retired after serving thirty years as an athletic director and forty plus years in Education, mostly in Oregon. Kevin earned many local, state, and national awards as an athletic administrator, including the NIAAA State Award of Merit, the NIAAA Distinguished Service Award and an NHFS Citation. He is an accomplished writer who has had over sixty articles published and the author of The Athletic Director's Survival Guide. Recently, District 4 Mentor Robert Blackmon had the opportunity to interview Kevin. His insights are wise and impactful.

1. What three pieces of advice would you give a first year Athletic Director, a tenth year Athletic Director, and a twenty-year Athletic Director?

- **First year AD:** Find a mentor/experienced AD to connect with on a regular basis. Use checklists to connect with your most regular important tasks; LOVE your coaching staff and student athletes.
- **10th year AD:** Find a newer AD to give your life away to on a regular basis; Love your coaches and athletes and help them to grow and have a joint vision of impact on your community; Commit to personal growth NIAAA, State AD Board or other place to serve to stay engaged in your profession.
- **20 Year AD:** If not a reader, become one. Leaders are readers; Make your coaching staff your most important investment - hire, evaluate and grow together; Use your experience to impact others in the state association, NIAAA. League, District.

2. What are some major challenges you see for Athletic Administrators in the next five years?

The consistent challenge of educational based athletics vs. club sports. We need to continually make the effort to explain what educational based athletics stands for and continue the challenging work of living it out not just saying it in our communities and especially to school leadership.

Coming out of the pandemic we need to figure out what is next. What freedoms will we have? Restrictions? What have we learned about HS sport from this time of COVID? Relationships matter. Our kids are suffering from anxiety and depression and in fitness. We need to renew our efforts to make sure the SEL of athletics is doing all that it can. Most coaches do this naturally, but we do have some that prioritize winning over this. Shame on us for allowing this.

Continued deterioration of the family structure that impacts our ability to talk about athletics in those terms. What do we say to those that family situation is bad and when we say we are like a family that does not have positive connotations for those student-athletes? We say family like everyone has had an Ozzie and Harriet existence. It falls then on deaf ears. How will we define what we mean when we say we are family?

Competitive imbalances that currently exist in our states. We must talk about winning and losing but we need to have clearly defined opportunities to compete with other schools on an equal footing. So, continuing to define competition and the benefit of it and its place in our society. As we have loud voices saying that we must get rid of HS sports as it is something that is having a negative impact on the overall academic success of our schools. Kids cannot be told to go play club sports because that is how you get a college scholarship etc. Having kids play a college sport is a great cherry on top of the sundae but is it not the reason HS sport exists. Only 2-5% of our athletes will go on to play a college sport and 1-2% a pro sport. We are about the 95% plain and simple. We cannot allow the disintegration of HS sport to take place. Our 95% need these opportunities. Our communities need these opportunities as well. They are the fabric of many of our communities across our states and country.

The viability of the AD position will continue to be an issue to be battled. We must have jobs (full time) that allow us to do our important work each day. We cannot take on so many other duties as assigned that our work becomes more about buses, officials, equipment, facilities than it does culture/climate/values and character development. Higher ordered success comes when we have the actual margin in our lives to make this happen in our communities. We have such incredible turnover each year in this profession. We need AD's to see this as a profession vs. a job. The commitment to stay engaged is greater if we see what we do as a profession.

We have so many requirements of our coaches that we are losing many who might consider taking part but do not want to commit to the 18 things they must do to get out on the field. The pay of our coaches is also another discouragement to finding and keeping coaches. We must have more of a balance between the two. We need to keep the banner high on this issue to find a way to get great people without killing them with paperwork etc.

COVID or not we need to find ways to solve the bus driver issues and lack of athletic officials we are currently faced with. In Oregon anyway these are two MAJOR issues facing HS sport becoming 7 days a week in games due to the lack of both drivers and officials. In nearly every sport in Oregon we had to adjust game days and times to meet the lack of officials. In the fall we had so few drivers we were taking kids out of class at 1:30 pm for 4:30 games and dropping kids at game sites two hours or more in advance of game times due to a lack of drivers.

We need to continue to find ways to share the importance, value and impact of athletics and activities with our admin who fewer and fewer were athletes or coaches themselves and as a result seem to lack knowledge, will or importance of what we are doing.

3. What role do parents play in athletics? How do you foster positive relationships with parents?

Parents are a critical and often forgotten resource. Often off-putting relationships develop with parents. In loco parentis would suggest that though we stand in the gap for parents, they are still the parents. Parents need to have a voice and need to be connected to our programs and not just when money is needed to fund things. Our AD role allows us to have different relationships than coaches do, we must take the advantage of our perspective to “speak the truth in love to parents”. If we can establish relationships with parents of depth, then we can live out the encouragement that “true friends stab each other in the front”. If we are going to speak from our heart to the heart of parents we must live by the adage “you have two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion”. If we can live this out in our communities, we will have a significant impact. We will not always agree on every issue, but we must be in this together not seeing parents as opponents. Bruce Browns booklet on the Role of Parents in Athletics is the best I have seen. Find ways to help parents with the issues facing their children in more than just preseason and postseason meetings. Parents have a strong BS detector, and they can tell a mile off if we are being genuine and authentic or not. If we truly want our athletic programs to impact our communities, we must jump in with parents and care about them and care for them as hard as it might be at times.

4. How do you create and maintain a positive athletic department climate?

Author Lewis Carroll wrote “if you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there”. We are the originators of the map that makes the way clearly known for our schools, coaching staffs, student athletes and communities as to what we will commit to being about. Ownership is people supporting what they have helped to create. We cannot create climate/culture on our own. We cannot impose culture on others we need to discover it together and our coaching staffs and student athlete leadership teams will assist us in doing this. We must be about much more than slogans, signage, and PA announcements. We must commit each one to living and working through the challenges of creating our culture together. I start with the idea that as the AD I am the chief climate and culture officer, and I will not let down EVER in the pursuit of our goals/objectives. I tell my coaching staffs that they are my team, like their teams. When we have a coaching staff meeting, we must have them all in attendance and buying in to being involved. Coaches’ meetings need to be at least monthly and have their purpose not being talking about details or news that can be shared via email or text. I developed a one-page SID type publication I would work on each Sunday getting help from in season coaches. I would send it each Sunday night to coaches, athletes, parents, media, and staff so they could keep up with our schedule for the coming week, the results from the week past and individual performances that allow us to love on kids. We also worked through a process called the Ideal Athletic Program that was a 10–12-month process of answering the question of what does the Ideal Athletic Program look like in their community or what do we want it to look like? Result is a 3–5-year strategic plan for success in that community. You also come out with a concise mission statement that you can continue to refer to and focus on. A big one to me is food and coaches. Must create a climate of fellowship and welcome. Breaking bread together can make that happen. I cooked breakfast each month for my staff for our coaches’ meetings as a result. Must be practical, relatable, and engaging to keep our athletic program culture moving ahead.

5. What do you see to be the primary role of the athletic director?

The role of the athletic director is that of creating, vision, energy, purpose and focus on the athletic program in the community. The end goal of our program is to graduate HS students. Athletics can keep otherwise disinterested students engaged to get to graduation and complete their studies, that is job one. Next, we can teach lifetime values but only will take place if we make it much more than a “line, phrase or poster”. Must be real, authentic, meaningful, and ongoing. We should be about Character as one of our primary outcomes. If we are to do this, we must define character, create opportunities to learn about character and push our coaches to grow in their own understanding of what Character is and what it is not. There are two types of character, performance character and moral character. Performance character is not usually moral character related. We must do more

than mention it at the parent meeting, and then at the post season celebration meeting regarding Character. Like any practice plan, we do not learn any sport skills that are not on the practice plan, practiced and worked on consistently toward mastery. Teachable moments are a cop out to teach the values we expect/want our athletes to learn that WILL impact the remainder of their lives.

6. I'm thumbing through you AD Survival Guide right now, any other nuggets you would like to add from your book please?

Leaders are readers. Read and reflect if you want to be a growing and successful athletic leader. Get your coaches on board with you. Some books to consider:

Inside Out Coaching	Joe Ehrmann
Values of the Game	Bill Bradley
Its How you Play the Game	Brian Kilmeade
The Games do Count	Brian Kilmeade
Coach 25 writers reflect on people who made a difference	Edited by Andrew Blauner
Bruce Brown —booklets especially, The role of Parents, Turning around Athletic Programs, The Impact of Trust, Great teams, the 7 essentials,	
Extreme Ownership,	Jocko Willink and Leif Babin
Leaders Eat Last	Simon Sinek
What drives winning?	Ledbetter
The only way to win	Jim Loehr
Practice Perfect	Doug Lemov
Leading with Character	Jim Loehr
Grit	Angela Duckworth
Mindset	Carol Dweck
How to build and sustain a championship culture	Jeff Janssen