
From: "Harrison, John R" <[REDACTED]>
Date: Sunday, June 07 2015 10:27 PM
To: "Powers, Scott (William S)" <[REDACTED]>; "Lowell, Jeff (Jeffrey R)" <[REDACTED]>
Attach: Seattle Times response-1 cotts-Letter.docx; Seattle Times response-2 Letter-Recommendation.docx
Subject: Editorial

Gents: Looks like we're in a holding pattern.

John

John Harrison
Executive Director of Schools
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (office)

From: Sytman, Elizabeth G
Sent: Sunday, June 7, 2015 6:06 PM
To: Mills, Tim (Justin T); Harrison, John R
Subject: Editorial

I just wanted to touch base on the editorial that ran on Saturday in the Seattle Times (link below). I know that Scott wrote a very heart felt response (attached) and as I have been working on it today, I would like to make a recommendation that we submit two shorter letters instead.

One letter from Scott, in support of Butch and his school. Since I feel that the editorial was an attack on the school and they are simply using Butch as the moving target. The second letter, should come from Jeff or John and address the district voice in all of this as well as shedding light on how we handle investigations. I've only finished the first letter, had to get it to 250 words, and will work on the second one. My draft is also attached.

Additionally, we learned that a Sea-King Director also submitted a letter questioning the editorial board on their coverage and basically called them out for not verifying facts. I think these three letters are a good start and response. My only concerns is if there is an additional article regarding TF in the next few days or weeks. We can talk about on Monday. My thought around that is trying to balance our response with what is in the best interest of our kids. I'm sure that we will have a lot of folks who feel very close to TF and they will be unhappy by anything we release, even as part of a public records request.

Seattle Times: <http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/editorials/bellevue-football-program-fumbles-its-integrity-harms-those-who-followed-the-rules/>

ELIZABETH SYTMAN , MCDM Director of Communications Bellevue School District No. 405 P: [REDACTED] F: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
To provide all students with an exemplary college preparatory education so they can succeed in college, career and life.

Letter one – Butch (done)

School sport programs are woven into the fabric of communities across the nation and can be an amazing experience for students. The academic and extra-curricular experiences provided in our school, Bellevue High School, is a reflection of our community. It also speaks to the dedication of adults who want the best for our students.

The Seattle Times Editorial on Butch and our football program was personal, misleading and lacked character. The Seattle Times Fund for the Needy raised nearly \$1.3 million last year to support “the most vulnerable members of our community, including children, families and seniors.” When two of our coaches were approached by a parent who was in need, one of those vulnerable families that the Fund for the Needy supports, they helped. Their student-athlete has been involved in the program for several years. Instead of connecting the family with District and community resources they took it upon themselves, from their own pockets, to help with the basic necessities of food and rent. Neither coach realized their actions were a violation of the WIAA recruiting articles. We accept that they should have known and self-reported the infraction. To portray this mistake however, as “illegal recruiting” is just wrong.

The portrayal of Butch, our coaches and school, by the editorial board is uninformed. Butch models team, family, respect, and brotherhood. It is through these values that his teams come together year after year. The championships are a by-product of the community he creates and his dedication to our students.

Letter two – District (in progress)

The Seattle Times Editorial Board simply got it wrong in their editorial on the Bellevue High football program. They connected earlier investigations to the outcomes that took place this spring and willfully mislead the public.

We know that the Bellevue High football program’s success makes it both high visible and scrutinized. It is no surprise that similar to other successful programs, it is subject to regular rumors.

The school and District administration have and continue to investigate complaints as they arrive and have uncovered nothing that is a violation during the four years of my tenure. The Seattle Times editorial references earlier investigations that did not find any violations.

High school athletics can be an amazing experience for the students in our schools. School sport programs are woven into the fabric of communities across the nation. Bellevue High School takes great pride in the academic and extra-curricular experiences it provides for all students.

Coach Goncharoff has been my colleague for the four years I have been the principal. What I have witnessed is a coach whose passion is working with any young man who expresses a desire to be part of the football program. I have experienced the loyalty and dedication from his players and their families. Butch doesn't talk about winning championships, he talks about team, family, respect, and a brotherhood. It is through these values that his teams come together and work hard achieve these values. The championships are a by-product of the community he creates.

The Seattle Times Fund for the Needy raised nearly \$1.3 million last year to support "the most vulnerable members of our community, including children, families and seniors". Two of our coaches were approached by a parent who was in need, one of those vulnerable families that the Fund for the Needy supports. Their student-athlete has been involved in the program for several years. Instead of connecting that family with other District and community resources they took it upon themselves, from their own pockets to help this family with the basic necessities of food and rent. Neither coach realized their actions were a violation of the WIAA recruiting articles. We accept that they should have known and self-reported the infraction. To portray this mistake however, as "illegal recruiting" is misleading.

The Bellevue School District and Bellevue High School work hard to ensure our athletic programs comply with KingCo Conference and WIAA rules. The Seattle Times reporter and Editorial Board simply got it wrong in their editorial this morning. They connected earlier investigations to the outcomes that took place this spring. My administration and the District's athletic department recognizes the high visibility of our football program and that because the program is highly scrutinized, is subject to regular rumors. The school and District administration have and continue to investigate complaints as they arrive and have uncovered nothing that is a violation during the four years of my tenure. The Seattle Times editorial references earlier investigations that did not find any violations. We have always been transparent and ensure that all of our athletes are eligible to compete in high school athletics for Bellevue High School. Bellevue High School sends more student athletes through the WIAA transfer process than nearly all other schools in KingCo and Metro combined, yet with this violation the Seattle Times appears to suggest that rumors about the program are true. There is no smoking gun here, there is no "corrosive effect" on high school sports.

The KingCo conference has had 10 of its 16 schools sanctioned for out of season coaching violations this year. Mistakes are made, corrective actions are taken, which is how the process is designed to work. Bellevue High School found potential violations, reported them, made recommendations, and will monitor our football program; just like the other nine schools in the league that were sanctioned for out of season coaching violations.

The Seattle Times reporter and Editorial Board was negligent in that it did not hold its reporters to the same standard of integrity that they suggest was lacking at Bellevue High School. The subtle comparisons to the FIFA bribery scandal and the New England Patriot "Deflate gate" is simply hyperbole intended to create the impression of issues that don't exist.