Football team unfairly overshadows other school activities

By Sarah Darby, Mill Valley News, November 15, 2011

In recent weeks, rumors surrounding special privileges afforded to the football team have filled the whispered conversations I have overheard in the hallways. Although many of these ramblings are inaccurate, even lies tend to reflect some truth.

At every high school, football is inevitably favored in many respects simply because it usually makes the most money and draws the largest crowds. However, in the last year, many decisions and events have favored the football team.

Starting at the beginning of the year, the football team seemed to command the high school stage when it presented a proposal to play recorded music in favor of traditional band songs during the games. Although the recorded music was played sparingly and the band input was involved to some degree in the decision, the music suggestion came from football team staff, and without a doubt, cut down on band playing time.

This left many in the band feeling as if they weren’t equal partners in creating the Friday night football experience.

Another new addition to the football field was the inflatable jaguar head. The jaguar head is awesome and creates a spirited environment at the football games. When first introduced, the Booster Club defended the purchase (which was paid for completely by sponsors) by saying it could be used at other school events.

It is great that the Booster Club originally intended for this to be true, however, the football team has run through the jaguar head at every event it has been used at. This seems like a case of actions conflicting intentions. Although it is understandable that the jaguar head should not make an appearance at every sporting event, it has seemed unfairly exclusive to football.

In staff number, the football team also seems skewed. The district has no set number for the number of athletes a team must have in order to gain more coaching staff, although the higher risk the sport, the larger the staff is. Most athletic teams have sufficient staff, including the football team which has a total of 8 coaches for 92 players, or a 1:12 ratio.

On the other hand, there are over 60 students in the largest choir class and 90 students in the largest band class. Both classes are taught by one teacher who “coaches” alone. The district should be consistent with its policies and give all activities proper staff numbers.

When the football team was exclusively featured on a segment for the KCTV5 Cool School event, designed to spotlight non-athletic clubs, the team again seemed to be favored. Under such short notice of the event, the school used the itinerary of De Soto High School which was featured last year on KCTV5. At DHS, one segment featured multiple athletic teams that read to elementary school children. At Mill Valley High School, the football team was the only team that participated in such work, so the school chose to feature the team.

Although it is understandable to look to DHS to some extent, did administration not consider how the decision could appear to favor the football team? Other groups serve the community far more consistently than the football team. For example, NHS tutors two times a week and could have been included in a segment as well, especially for a program that again was supposed to feature only non-athletic clubs.

Additionally, football players were allowed to arrive at the Cool School event at 6:15 a.m., an hour and 15 minutes after the rest of the students had to arrive.

The decision was made after administration gave the football team the option to arrive later because they had a game that night. However, the cross country team that was competing at state the next day, according to coaching staff, was not made aware of the possibility of allowing athletes to arrive later to school. It is difficult to compare importance of sports here, but it certainly seems like a team that was competing at state should have been clearly informed of the same opportunity as a team still competing in the regular season had been offered.

The message sent was that the team still expects school support at the football games, but that the football team itself can’t wake up early to support the school.

It is necessary to note that many rumors about the team are false. For example, some have said the football staff set the date of Homecoming this year. This assumption is false and further extreme rumors have only added fuel to the fire. In fact, almost every grievance listed above could have been eliminated if administration and the football team had worked together to relay information about decisions concerning the team effectively to students and staff members who have since spread inaccurate information.

Unfortunately, some members of the football team, by virtue of comments made to other students and reported to me on numerous occasions, seem to be sending a cocky attitude to their peers. It might be time for an ego check in order to gain more school support.

These types of comments negate the many positive things the team, its coaches and players do for the school. I just hope a few inaccuracies and unfair proposals will not destroy the reputation of a program that has the potential to only create positive school spirit.

I also hope the football team will be able to recognize their boundaries more accurately in the future. Administration must also examine its decisions carefully to make sure all groups at our school, regardless if they bring in the most revenue, crowd or neither at all, are treated as fairly as possible.

- See more at: http://www.mvnews.org/opinion/2011/11/15/football-team-unfairly-overshadows-other-school-activities/#comments