

SPORTS

PIAA may be talking to a brick wall this time

The official PIAA Newsletter arrived recently. Dated Aug. 2, it passed across my desk 24 days later. Better late than never, right?

Anyway, it has this peculiar, square logo slapped on the front and back pages. The picture on the front page is tiny. It reads: "Be A Sport" and shows a handshake.

Not bad.

So I turn to Page 4 and find two lists of "Acceptable" and "Unacceptable" conduct at sporting events. The guidelines were submitted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (they're the IRS of high school sports), which is trying to push them upon state athletic associations, such as the PIAA.

It says in the newsletter that these are guidelines "to be considered" by PIAA member schools for the 1991-92 school year. That means they'll probably become law sometime soon.

I like the list of "unacceptable behavior":

"Yelling or waving arms during opponent's free-throw attempt."

There's a good one. Let's see them enforce that at Bristol High playoff games, preferably ones at Plymouth-Whitemarsh, where the end stands practically touch the court and spectators grab the loose balls.

"Booing or heckling an official's decision."

That seldom happens when C.B. East and C.B. West get together on Thanksgiving Day, right?

"Criticizing officials in any way; displays of temper with an official's call."

Have these guys ever caught basketball coach Bruce Simon's act at Neshaminy? Obviously not. You'd have to put

By TIM PANACCIO



a straitjacket on Simon to keep him on the bench.

"Yells that antagonize opponents."

You mean like the ones with which Neshaminy's football players taunted C.B. West during an all-star game a few years ago?

"Blaming loss of game on officials, coaches or participants."

Like Berwick football coach George Curry blaming officials for a loss to Perry High of Pittsburgh in the Class AAA state championship in 1989. Berwick had two TDs called back and lost the game. Curry's comments made news throughout the state.

"Use of profanity or displays of anger that draw attention away from the game."

You mean like slamming the ball to the floor after a foul call? I thought that was part of our younger generation emulating professionals?

"Doing own yells instead of following lead of cheerleaders."

Does this mean first-amendment free-speech rights have to yield to a cheerleader's choice of yells, such as, I-N-D-I-A-N-S, what does that spell? What about the wave and beach balls? That stuff begins in the stands, not with the cheerleaders.

Of course, there are some suggestions on acceptable behavior that the good folks at the National Federation would like to impart upon us:

"Applause during introduction of players, coaches and officials."

What about the introduction of the bands? High school bands are the forgotten soldiers of football season. Few fans seem to appreciate the performance of rather intricate marching routines by high school-aged students.

"Players shaking hands with opponent who fouls out while both sets of fans recognize player's performance with applause."

You seldom see players shake hands when they foul out. However, you do see things like this on the foul line: Bensalem's Chris Smith missing the first of two free throws last season against Pennsbury. A Pennsbury player steps in front of Smith, claps his hands and mutters something to Smith while the officials look on.

"Accept all decisions of officials."

Even when the scorebook doesn't agree with the scoreboard? That happens just about every night in Suburban One basketball because the scorekeepers can't add, much less keep a running basketball score.

"Handshakes between participants and coaches at end of contest, regardless of outcome."

I would have liked to have seen that one enforced during the altercation between EMC and Morrisville after a football game a few years ago.

"Treat competition as a game, not as a war."

Obviously, none of these people has ever stepped foot inside Abington's gym when former Abington basketball coach Jim Wilkinson was around. Or been to a Chester-Glen Mills basketball game, either.

"Coaches/players search out opposing participants to recognize them for outstanding performance or coaching."

I considered doing just that last season at a Council Rock football game after the officials kept the halftime to 15 minutes as the rules stipulate instead of 30-40 minutes, which seems to be the norm in Bucks County. Hey, even the officials deserve some credit sometime.

"Applause at end of contest for performances of all participants."

Especially after baseball games that seem to drag on for nearly three hours. If you can get through a 7-inning high school game without using a half-dozen pitchers, in less than 2:30, you deserve applause.

"Encourage surrounding people to display only sportsmanlike conduct."

And bar fans from attending Bishop Egan/Archbishop Wood wrestling matches to ensure it happens.

Frankly, a lot of these rules seem to take some of the fun out of going to games. Can you imagine people attending a Redskins-Eagles football game at Veterans Stadium adhering to such folly? No way.

Likewise, I don't think these guidelines will play out very well at most high schools. Still, you've got to give the National Federation some applause.

They tried to add a little sanity to the games that people — not always kids — play.

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