

- * **HOW TO BE A BETTER ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATOR**
- * **NFHS HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES MONTH**
- * **IHSAA SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING - 1st and Final Readings**
- * **PROTECTING WHAT MAKES HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS DIFFERENT**
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- * **5 WAYS TO MAKE SPORTS FUN AGAIN**
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**October
2026 ISSUE**



IHSAA EXPRESS

Supporting Education Through Activities



Protecting What Makes High School Sports Different

The NFHS Report

Davis Whitfield,
NFHS Executive Director



In a changing sports landscape, one question matters more than ever: What do we want high school sports to be?

College athletics is having a national conversation about its future and what it wants to become. Those debates are a good reminder that high school sports are unlike any other

level of athletics, and that distinction is worth protecting.

The scoreboard matters, but the purpose of education-based athletics and activities extends far beyond wins and losses. High school athletics gives students the opportunity to compete, grow, learn valuable life lessons and develop the character and skills that will prepare them for success long after their playing days are over.

Change is inevitable, and high school athletics must continue to evolve to meet the needs of today's students. But as the landscape changes, we must make sure the experience remains recognizable for what it has always been: designed to serve high school students as a supplement to the educational experience.

That responsibility becomes even more important as outside forces continue to shape the sports landscape, and leaders in high school athletics have an opportunity to be intentional about preserving the distinct identity of high school sports.

That is where the 51 NFHS-member state high school athletics and activities associations play such an important role. Across the country, these state associations work every day to create opportunities for students to participate while establishing the guardrails necessary to protect student-athletes and their schools.

Those guardrails are not restrictions; they are protections designed to promote competitive equity, establish consistent eligibility standards, protect the well-being of students and keep athletics connected to the educational mission of schools. The decisions being made at the collegiate level today could shape expectations for athletics at every level tomorrow, and the best time to decide what high school athletics should be is now – before someone else makes that decision.

High school athletics is more than a collection of games and competitions. Every week during the school year, thousands of communities across the country come together around high school athletics and activities. In a time when many Americans feel increasingly disconnected from one another, schools remain places where people come together.

A Friday night football game, a basketball tournament, a state championship, a concert or a theater performance can bring students, families, educators and entire communities together around a shared experience.

That is the power of education-based athletics and activities. They not only benefit the participants, but society as well, and it's why protecting the purpose of high school sports matters and why the work of our 51-member state associations matters.

The NFHS will continue to support our state associations as they work to ensure that students across the country have meaningful opportunities to play, perform and compete – together.

Sports will continue to change, and it's our responsibility to ensure that, through that change, high school athletics remains true to its purpose and focuses on the students it serves.



Idaho High School Activities Association

FACT SHEET

The IHSAA exists to serve, not to rule.

Without associations like us, high school sports and activities would be inequitable, inconsistent, unsafe and disorganized.


Year Founded

1925


Member Schools

173


Sports + Activities

22


Participants

73,200

State associations like the IHSAA were formed to govern high school sports and activities by developing rules for fair play, establishing eligibility standards, and addressing the health and safety of students participating in these programs.

Services We Provide

-  Support Student Academic Achievement
-  Conduct 576 State Championship Events
-  Promote Student Safety & Minimize Risk
-  Wellness Programs
-  Sportsmanship Initiatives
-  Provide Structure for Regular-Season Competition for Schools
-  Establish Consistent Playing Rules in Concert with the NFHS
-  Coaches Education Programs
-  Coaches, Officials, Administrators Recognition Programs

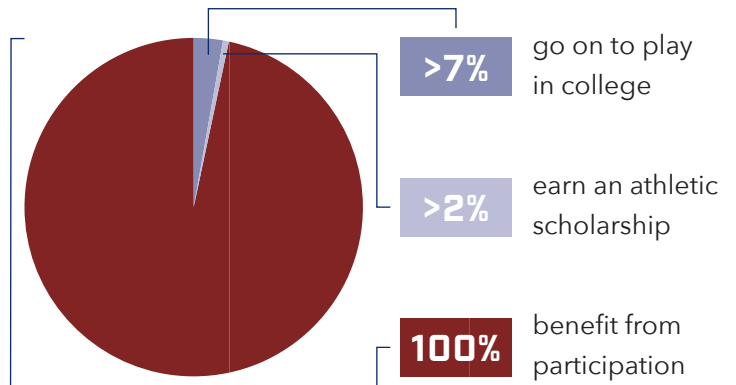
... and so much more!

The Purpose of High School Sports and Activities

High involvement in education-based athletics and activities leads to ...

-  **Higher GPAs**
-  **Higher graduation rates**
-  **Greater college aspirations**
-  **Fewer school absences**
-  **Fewer discipline problems**
-  **Lower risk of drug use**

Of the **8 million+** student-athletes nationwide ...



Visit
idhsaa.org
to learn more



Sources: NCAA, NFHS, Women's Sports Foundation

ADMINISTRATORS

“In The Know”

FROM THE IHSAA

- + Review State Tournament Manuals with Coaches
- + Finalize Rosters & Pictures on MaxPreps
- + Verify ALL Team Scores in MaxPreps (Avoid \$1500.00 fine)

DATES TO REMEMBER

10/8	5A/6A District Golf Completion
10/12	5A/6A State Golf
10/12	State Soccer Pictures/Rosters Due
10/13	District Soccer Completion & MaxPreps Scores Due
10/19	Wrestling Weight Assessment Window Opens
10/19	State Volleyball Pictures/Rosters Due
10/20	District Volleyball Completion & MaxPreps Scores Due
10/22-24	State Soccer
10/24	Football MaxPreps Scores Due
10/24	District Cross Country Completion
10/29-31	State Volleyball
10/31	State Cross Country
10/31	District Swim Completion

OCTOBER AD CHECKLIST

- ___ Make time for family
- ___ Check basketball scoreboard & PA system
- ___ Prepare winter practice schedules for gyms
- ___ Order spring sports equipment
- ___ Train winter PA announcer
- ___ Arrange/finalize winter bus schedules
- ___ Review winter event cancellation procedures
- ___ Schedule winter jamboree with the YEA
- ___ Verify winter coaching requirements are met
- ___ Review winter game management procedures
- ___ Confirm BB and WR schedules in DragonFly & MaxPreps
- ___ Prepare evaluations for fall programs
- ___ Verify winter coaches certifications
- ___ Review Sportsmanship Manual with winter coaches
- ___ Distribute sportsmanship information to coaches/players/parents



STUDENT PERFORMANCE: ALCOHOL, MARIJUANA, AND VAPING



Every student wants to perform at their best. That might mean competing in athletics, performing in music or theater, succeeding in the classroom, or simply staying focused and motivated throughout the school day. Performance is not just about talent. It is about how well your body and brain work together. This course is about understanding how certain substances—specifically alcohol, marijuana, and vaping products—can affect how your body and brain function, and how that directly impacts performance.

Throughout this course, we will look at how these substances affect:

- Physical performance, such as reaction time, coordination, endurance, and recovery
- Academic performance, including focus, memory, learning, and motivation
- Decision-making and judgment, especially in high-pressure or social situations

The goal is to give you accurate, research-based information so you can make informed decisions that support your goals—both now and in the future.

HOW TO BE A BETTER ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATOR



- Scott Garvis, CMAA

From managing schedules and staff to building school culture and setting a vision, the responsibilities of an athletic director go far beyond game day.

In this guide, Scott will share practical ways to become a more effective, respected, and impactful athletic director.

Whether you're new to the role or a seasoned vet, these strategies will help you lead your program with confidence and clarity.

Embrace Technological Advancements

In today's fast-paced and data-driven environment, embracing technology isn't just a convenience—it's a necessity for effective athletic program management. The best Athletic Directors leverage modern tools to automate routine tasks, enhance communication, and provide stakeholders with real-time information. Here's how to make the most of tech in your role:

Here are specific recommendations to help you embrace technological advancements:

Adopt All-in-One Management Platforms

Invest in a comprehensive system that integrates scheduling, rosters, eligibility, facilities, team communication, ticketing, financial reporting, and more. These platforms eliminate the need for juggling multiple apps and spreadsheets and instead centralize all athletic operations. This saves time, reduces errors, and ensures consistent communication with coaches, parents, and students.

Go Mobile and meet Stakeholders Where They Are

Encourage your school community to use a mobile app tied to your management platform. A well-designed app allows parents to receive instant updates, purchase tickets, follow their child's team, and more—all from their phone. When your community is engaged digitally, you'll spend less time fielding calls and emails for basic info.

Use Data to Inform Decisions

Technology gives you access to valuable insights—from attendance trends at games to the performance of various teams. Use this data to guide resource allocation, facility use, coaching evaluations, and event planning. Over time, you'll spot patterns that help you lead with intention rather than react to problems.

Streamline Communication

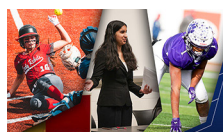
Adopt tools that allow you to easily message segmented audiences (like only coaches, or only parents of fall athletes). With a robust communication system, you can send last-minute schedule changes, weather alerts, or reminders with just a few clicks.

Keep It Secure and Compliant

Use technology that helps you stay FERPA and HIPAA compliant, especially when dealing with student data and medical forms. Choose platforms that offer role-based access, audit trails, and secure document management.

Stay Informed on What's Next

Set aside time to learn about new tools, trends, and platforms entering the athletic space. Attend tech-focused workshops at conferences, subscribe to industry newsletters, and network with other tech-forward ADs. Being open to innovation helps your program remain modern and competitive.



**GROW HERE.
GO ANYWHERE.**





COACHES CORNER



Four People. Four Hours. One Terrible Dinner. A famous leadership lesson about false consensus

ABILENE PARADOX



Jerry Harvey's family was sitting on the porch, playing dominoes in the heat, when his father-in-law suggested a drive to Abilene for dinner. It was the summer of 1974 in Coleman, Texas. The drive was 53 miles each way. One hundred and four degrees in a car without air conditioning, windows down, hot air blowing in every direction, no one was cool. Still, no one objected.

The meal was bad. The drive back felt longer. The heat never subsided. When they finally returned, someone admitted they hadn't wanted to go. Then another. Then another. Then the father-in-law himself: he hadn't wanted to go either. He thought

the others did, so he was trying to be nice.

Four people drove four hours for a meal nobody wanted because each of them assumed someone else did, and none of them was willing to be the one to say otherwise.

Harvey spent the rest of his career thinking about that drive. He called it the Abilene Paradox, the organizational tendency to pursue exactly what nobody wanted because everyone assumed someone else did. His conclusion was precise and unsettling: organizations didn't fail because people can't agree. They failed because they agreed on something they didn't believe in.

We have all been in that car, doing something we didn't want to do because we were trying to please others.

In the workplace, we encounter the same problem. Think of that initiative with the thin numbers that got approved anyway, or the strategy that looked wrong from the first slide but moved forward without pushback. Then there's the player who was selected because the media loved him. The plan everyone privately doubted that became the quarter's priority because nobody stopped it. Then, in the postmortem, everyone found out the consensus had never existed. Everyone around the coffee maker knew it. Nobody said it.

This is not a failure of analysis. In these moments, everyone had the right instinct. What failed was the environment.

Ogilvy Advertising's Rory Sutherland, one of the sharpest thinkers on human behaviour, framed these scenarios with uncomfortable precision: **the social cost of saying, "I think this is wrong," was higher than the organizational cost of going to Abilene.**

That calculation happens below the level of conscious thought, in every meeting in every organization. People are not weighing only the strategic merits. They are weighing what it costs them to be the one who said no. It could cost them status in the organization, media approval, or earn them the label of a malcontent or, even worse, disloyal.

They're also measuring what happened the last time someone said, "I think we're going in the wrong direction." What happened the last time a meeting got stopped? That answer, the real one, not the version you'd have given in a hiring conversation, is the culture. Everything else is decoration.

Here's what the leaders who build the right kind of room do: they speak last. Not as a courtesy, but as a strategy. When a leader speaks first, the room stops thinking and starts calibrating. Every answer that follows positioned itself against what the boss has just said, not against what is true. Going last is not deference. It is information.

Before the decision locks, Sutherland adds one more move: assume it has already failed. It's two years from now. This didn't work. Walk me back through what went wrong. That question surfaces doubt that was already in the room that had nowhere to land. It makes the private concern public before it costs everyone four hours, they can't get back.

Sometimes the most direct move is to say the name itself. Are we going to Abilene here? That question changes the cost calculation for everyone in the room. It gives permission to the person who was about to go along because no one else was stopping it.

One question, asked once, at the right moment: Does anyone believe this is the right call?

The question is whether you've built the room where someone can afford to stop the car.

ABILENE PARADOX

— “

The Abilene Paradox refers to a situation when a group makes a collective decision that is counter to the thoughts and feelings of its individual members. The Abilene Paradox occurs because individuals do not want to 'rock the boat' or 'be a killjoy,' even though their perceptions of the other members' feelings are incorrect.

” —

—Jerry B. Harvey

THE BEST ASSISTANT COACHES

— DO THREE THINGS WELL: —

1



SUPPORT

THE HEAD COACH PUBLICLY

We have his back in front of everyone.

2



CHALLENGE

THE HEAD COACH PRIVATELY

We speak the truth in private to make him better.

3



SERVE

THE PLAYERS DAILY

We show up every day to help our players grow and win.



LOYALTY DOESN'T MEAN SILENCE.

IT MEANS ALIGNMENT AND TRUST.

★ By Greg Berge ★

WWW.GB1LEADERSHIP.COM

5 WAYS COACHES CAN MAKE SPORTS FUN AGAIN

1

Remember the reason

Most athletes started playing because they loved the game. Create an environment that reminds them why they fell in love with it in the first place.

2

Compete more, lecture less

Athletes learn best when they are actively engaged. Build practices around competition, challenges, and opportunities to play instead of constant instruction.

3

Celebrate more than success

Don't let the scoreboard be the only measure of achievement. Celebrate effort, improvement, toughness, teamwork, and the small moments that build great teams.

4

Give them freedom to play

Athletes need opportunities to make decisions, take risks, and be creative. Allowing them to play instead of constantly worrying about mistakes builds confidence and enjoyment.

5

Build relationships before results

The best teams are built on trust. When athletes know their coach cares about them as people, they are more likely to enjoy the process and give their best effort.





PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.

HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES MONTH CELEBRATE WITH US

Sept 28 - Oct 4: #HighSchoolColorsWeek

Oct 5 - 11: #OfficialsAppreciationWeek

Oct 12 - 18: #MadePossibleWeek

Oct 19 - 25: #BeyondTheBellWeek

Oct 26 - 31: #NextStepPrepWeek

2026 FALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



October 12-13

6A Avondale CC, Coeur d'Alene
5A The Links CC, Post Falls



October 29-31

*6A Coeur d'Alene HS, Coeur d'Alene
*5A Post Falls HS, Post Falls
*4A Lake City HS, Coeur d'Alene
3A Lewiston HS, Lewiston
2A Madison HS, Rexburg
1A Thunder Ridge HS, Idaho Falls



November 6-7
West YMCA, Meridian



October 22-24

6A Girls Bonneville HS, Idaho Falls
6A Boys Hillcrest HS, Idaho Falls
5A Girls Field of Dreams, Sandpoint
5A Boys Field of Dreams, Sandpoint
4A Girls Twin Falls HS, Twin Falls
4A Boys Burley HS, Burley



October 31

Portneuf Wellness Center, Pocatello



Quarterfinals - November 6-7
Semi-Finals - November 13-14
Milk Bowl - November 20-21

OFFICIAL FUEL OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS



DAIRY WEST
REAL GOOD™

Packaging is illustrative. Nutrition varies by brand; see product labels.



SEPTEMBER 29TH BOARD OF DIRECTORS RULINGS

FINAL READINGS



Approved Winter Season Proposal



Approved Rule 11-3



Approved PitchKount requirement in Baseball beginning with the 2027 season



Approved the 26-27 Legends of the Game

Girls Team - 2003 Timberline Wolves

Boys Team - 1974 West Jefferson Panthers



Approved modification of the 26-28 4A baseball representation



Approved moving the 26-27 April IHSA Board of Directors meeting to April 13th, 2027

1ST READINGS

(Final Readings at the December 8th Meeting)



Approved Rule 18: Appeals editorial changes



Approved 3A Soccer Classification Proposal



Approved moving the 2027-2028 calendar from tentative to approved



Approved moving the 2028-2029 calendars from to suggested to tentative



Approved moving the 2029-2030 calendar to suggested



GET IN THE GAME

What's today?

If you answered "game day," then we want you!

Let your love of the game become your life when you sign up to #BecomeAnOfficial at HighSchoolOfficials.com.



BECOME AN **OFFICIAL**



THESE MEMORIES LAST A LIFETIME.

More than winning and losing, high school sports and activities are about CONNECTION:

The bus rides. The banter. The huddles. The team dinners. The traditions. The celebrations. The moment when your teammates became your friends.

It's the little things that you'll remember forever.

What sport or activity will you choose?

PlayPerformCompeteTogether.com



RESPECT THE GAME

THE GAME IS ABOUT THE TEAM.

It's about the players, the passion and the will to win.

Show your student-athletes, officials and fellow fans that you're a team player.

Respect the game and #BenchBadBehavior.

Visit BenchBadBehavior.com for resources and more information on how you can make high school sporting events a positive place for everyone.



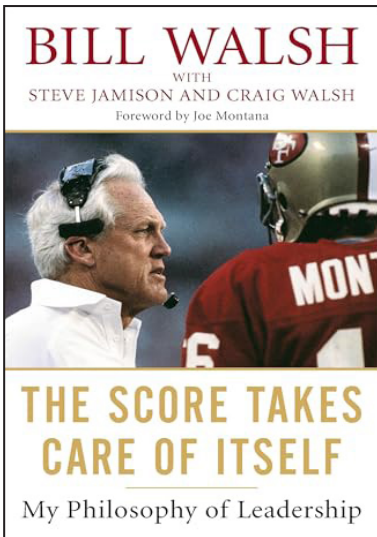
PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.





Favorite Leadership Book of the Month

by the **IHSAA Staff**



The Score Takes Care of Itself: My Philosophy of Leadership

by Bill Walsh, Steve Jamison, and Craig Walsh

Bill Walsh was a towering figure in the history of the NFL. His advanced leadership transformed the San Francisco 49ers from the worst franchise in sports to a legendary dynasty. In the process, he changed the way football is played.

Walsh taught that the requirements of successful leadership are the same whether you run an NFL franchise, a fortune 500 company, or a hardware store with 12 employees.

Prior to his death, Walsh granted a series of exclusive interviews to bestselling author Steve Jamison. These final words of "wisdom by Walsh" became his ultimate lecture on leadership. Additional insights and perspectives are provided by Hall of

Conlin's favorite quote from the book:

"Here's a good question to write on a Post-it Note and put on your desk: 'What assets do we have right now that we're not taking advantage of?'"

BELIEVE

10 BEST TED LASSO QUOTES

SIMPLE WORDS. A HAPPIER LIFE.

Be a Goldfish.

1 "Be curious, not judgmental." - TED LASSO A BETTER WORLD STARTS HERE.	2 "You know what the happiest animal on Earth is? A goldfish. Ten-second memory. Be a goldfish." - TED LASSO LET THE GOOD STUFF LAST LONGER.	3 "There's something worse out there than being sad, and that's being alone and sad." - TED LASSO PEOPLE > EVERYTHING.	4 "I try to love my dad for who he is and forgive him for who he isn't." - TED LASSO GRACE GOES A LONG WAY.	5 "Taking on a challenge is a lot like riding a horse. If you're comfortable doing it, you're probably doing it wrong." - TED LASSO GROWTH LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE.
6 "There's two buttons I never like hittin', and that's panic and snooze." - TED LASSO STAY CALM. STAY IN THE GAME.	7 "Living in the moment, it's a gift. That's why they call it the present." - TED LASSO TODAY MATTERS.	8 "I think that you might be so sure a person is one thing, that sometimes you completely miss who they really are." - TED LASSO PEOPLE ARE MORE THAN YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION.	9 "There's a reason why the rearview mirror is smaller than the windshield. Where you're headed is so much more important than what you've left behind." - TED LASSO KEEP GOING.	10 "Do you believe in ghosts, Ted?" "I do, but more importantly, I think they need to believe in themselves." - TED LASSO BELIEVE IN PEOPLE. ALWAYS.

KIND PEOPLE ARE MY KIND OF PEOPLE.

BETTER PLAYERS. BETTER PEOPLE.

FOOTBALL IS LIFE. BUT PEOPLE ARE EVERYTHING.