

PRINCE Leadership MONTHLY



April 2017

Higher Standards

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What purpose do spectators have at athletic events? In early March, I had the pleasure of attending the GHSA basketball finals in Stegeman Coliseum. As a basketball coach, it was great to be able to see some of the best basketball the State of Georgia has to offer. For one of the games, I picked a seat right in the middle of one of the participating team's spectators.

As the game got going, I began watching intently. I was not watching the players or coaches, but rather the moms, dads, grandparents, and friends that were there "supporting" their team. I tried to keep in mind that their team was playing in the state championship game. A lot of hard work, time, and sacrifice had been given for their team to get to this game.

During the game, I realized I was seated right behind the mom of one of the players. It didn't take a private detective to figure this out! Her child never committed any of the fouls or calls made against him. How dare those "crooked" referees pick on her child! She proceeded to call one referee "an embarrassment," a "blind idiot," and "incompetent." I, of course, didn't let her know that I thought the referee probably got all the calls right. To be honest, I was afraid to make any subtle movements that would indicate that I agreed with the calls.

Later in the game, the same child threw a pass that Manute Bol could not have caught. Immediately, a man I later figured out to be his dad yelled, "Get that kid out of there! His head is not in the game! If it was, he would have caught that pass!" I began feeling like I was sitting in the middle of a bunch of lunatics.

Near the end of the game, everyone in the area around me began mocking one of the other team's cheerleaders. Kids and adults both hurled insults that I couldn't believe. The game ended with their team coming up just short. I heard

their fans blame their coach, blame the officials, and blame the other team for having better "recruits."

On the way home that night I reflected on what I had observed. My immediate conclusion was that xxx high school supporters had no class, no sportsmanship, and were obviously not worried about what others thought of them. I also thought, "What would an outsider think of me when they watch me coach? What would someone unassociated with Prince think if they sat in the middle of our spectators?"

As Christians, we must always hold ourselves to a higher standard when we coach, play, and "cheer" on our teams. Can others see a difference in us? Are we different? I am a competitor. Our kids and our coaches are competitors. We should be! But do we draw others to Christ with our words and actions?

As a whole, Prince players, coaches, and spectators do a good job. My prayer is that I coach and lead our athletic programs in a way that is different than the world, in a way that attracts others to Christ -- the Wolverine Way!

