

Does H T Ignore Excellence?

by Coach Anthony Canino

Is the Hinsdale student so involved in other activities that he finds but a few hours left for support of the athletic squads in their efforts toward excellence? Is our community complacent about what is going on in our high schools? Why is our Sunday Band concert attended by only a few interested appreciators of this type of achievement? Why does a nationally recognized swimming team fail to draw a capacity crowd for every dual meet? Is it true that a team which is striving for the first state championship in the school — that sport — gymnastics — can finish their dual meet as easily as the state championships at nearby LaGrange with no more than a few spectators themselves involved?

Why is it that our basketball fans are made up of almost as many visiting spectators as Hinsdale fans? Can it be that we allow a wrestling team, which won a district meet for the first time in years, to finish this with only a handful of supporters to encourage them? Why is it that when Hersey versus Hersey dual gymnastics meet last week, there was standing room only in a gym which holds 4000 people? Hersey, the visiting school, had six student buses attend the meet. Compare this to the probability of our student body having a difficult time of finding seats for an away contest in any sport. At this meet I watched involved parents and spectators who were appreciative of their representative athletes.

Our Athletic Director, Mr. Dickinson, has completed a series of dual meets in a decade of championships which definitely brought out the quality of performance of our athletes as compared to the other schools in the conference and the state. This quality was not only in the state, but throughout the country. Is our community complacent about what is going on? Can we be accepting of this as a matter of fact? Can our community and student body be so busy on the weekend that involvement in the high school program is a thing of the past? Can the community and our student body take for granted the amount of time that the school gives to these young boys and the amount of time that they in turn give to the school? Can we be willing to show appreciation through recognition and support?

Can the answer lie in the race? Would people come to see a contest which is close, regardless of the quality of the performance? Would it be better for our swimmers to keep the quality of performance down to the level of their competitors in order to keep the average spectator interested? Can it really be better to have the race or contest close in order to draw interest of the public? Can the "gap" of quality of performance be the reason for lack of interest or attendance at our meets? Must we bridge this gap by lowering standards of performance? Having been involved in sports for over 20 years, as a competitor and coach, I find it hard to accept this as being the answer, and I am sure our community and athletes would not be content with such a situation.

We are in the process of finishing what could be one of the most successful winter sports seasons in the history of our school. We have already won four championships this winter, with the possibility of one more in basketball. Our record so far includes two district championships with one more in sight in gymnastics. We are looking toward a couple of sectional titles, along with three state championships in swimming, gymnastics and basketball.

What psyches up a young man more than to know that his student body and community are in there rooting for him to attain that quality of performance which our athletes strive — and that is to be No. 1? Wouldn't it be better to have the season if the continued lack of support in attendance contributed to the finalization of our winter program: namely — conference, district, sectional and state championships in gymnastics; conference, district and state in swimming; the first individual state championship in wrestling; to beat LaGrange and Hinsdale South, thereby gaining the impetus to go all the way to a state title in basketball. Your attendance and support may be the ingredients needed to attain the "hit routine" in gymnastics, the "winning basket" in basketball, a "national record time" in swimming, and the "quick pin" in wrestling.

As a coach I can only state again that nothing motivates and turn on an athlete more than his own peer group and the community people, for after all, this is the reason he is competing; not only for recognition for himself, but also for the school, family and community. Why not do everything possible to help your athletes achieve these goals by giving your support through attendance at these events. Wouldn't it be great if our student body and community could attain the quality of No. 1 in the spectator category, as our athletes have in the competitive phase? Are we in this community accepting excellence of performance as a matter of fact? Can we continue the quality of performance with this apathy of the student body and the community; or can we fill our gyms again with interested, loyal, dedicated fans who appreciate the quality of performances — not just the closeness of the race. I for one hope we can and will in the near future.