

**FROM THE DESK OF ...
The Executive Director**

The RIIL has made it a point to stress teaching of values of good sportsmanship and fair play and to make it an integral part of the total student-athlete's educational experience. Few things are more vital to the survival of high school activities than the preservation of these values and the life lessons that involvement in high school athletics can teach.

There is a disturbing trend in gymnasiums, ice rinks, and on athletic fields today around the nation. More and more spectators, coaches, and even players are showing disrespect to each other, to officials, and to the integrity of the game(s) themselves. Those of us involved directly in the administration of high school sports must look at this problem as a challenge for the new century – a challenge to work at improving sportsmanship in order to preserve our programs.

Steve Oldfield, editor and publisher of *the Adrian Journal* and Don Ginnings of the *Hermitage Index* are sportswriters in Missouri who share the same concern we do and have gracefully shared their thoughts with the Missouri State High School Athletic Association in recent correspondence. *The following appeared in The Index* on December 1, 1999 and is reprinted here with permission from its author, Mr. Ginnings:

The 1999-2000 basketball season is underway, and it holds promise of some exciting and enjoyable competition for area basketball fans.

The new season includes some returning talent for some teams, and new talent for others. Some teams have experienced coaches, and others have new coaches. Some teams have exceptional height, and others will count on quickness.

But what fans must keep in mind is that these youngsters have only one school career to enjoy athletic competition. They deserve the support and encouragement of their families, their schoolmates, and the public.

A recent survey published by the state's activities association showed that students overwhelmingly gave one response when asked why they participate in athletic competition – *FUN*. These young competitors are on the ball teams for the enjoyment of the sport. Coaches, parents, and fans should keep that in mind while attending ball games to avoid ruining the fun for the youngsters.

Winning attitudes are important, and winning is usually more fun than losing. But we must all remember that these busy teens are involved in school work, are making plans for future careers, are dealing with serious social issues and are considering future family plans. Athletic competition often falls

well down their list of important considerations during this difficult and challenging phase in their lives.

Hundreds of teams are competing across the state, and few will win all games. And a few years from now, no one will remember much about this season, except the participants who may recall it with fond memories or bitter feelings.

All schools have their ups and downs in athletic talent, height and drive. Smaller schools are especially vulnerable to the luck of the draw in student athletes where student numbers are low. When a strong class comes along, the school will be more competitive than when class numbers, talent and size are lower. But students who compete during the down years deserve just as much support as those who compete during the up times.

When team supporters place too much stress and pressure on their team members, the fun of competition often disappears for the team members. So, let's encourage them to do their best, support them when they win, support them when they lose, compliment them when they do their best, and boost them when they're down.

As area teams begin this notable season, let's encourage coaches, parents and fans to be positive in their support and encouragement of these young athletes for the most important part of the game – **THE FUN OF COMPETITION.**

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WAIVER REQUEST HEARING DATES

Requests for Waivers of RIIL rules may be heard on the following dates:

Monday, February 14, 2000
Monday, March 6, 2000

Please make a note of these dates on your calendar.

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**“A teacher is a messenger
from the past and
an escort to the future.”**

Albert Einstein

**** IMPORTANT NOTICE ****
Volunteer Coaches

Please be advised that so-called "volunteer" coaches are considered by the Rhode Island Interscholastic League to be an official part of a high school coaching staff. Therefore, they are subject to all of the Rules and Regulations of the League.

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The following article was written by John Gillooly, Sportswriter for The Providence Journal, and appeared in The Providence Journal on Tuesday, January 11, 2000.

This well-written article speaks to the core of why the RIIL was founded by the principals before us in 1932. They came to realize that a common set of rules was needed to ensure fair play and that all participants play by the same standards and that the playing field is level for all schools and participants.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS SUFFERING FROM PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

by John Gillooly

Nothing in sports these days is as simple as it seems.

Take the St. Raphael-St. Andrew's basketball game, for example.

On the surface it seemed like a game between two high school teams, a game that has drawn huge crowds the last few years. So a lot of people are asking what's the big deal? Why are R.I. Interscholastic League officials saying St. Raphael can't play the game this year.

Nothing in sports is simple anymore.

The St. Raphael-St. Andrew's game is more than a clash of two talented basketball teams; it's a clash of philosophies involving the marriage of sports and a high school education.

St. Raphael is a member of the Interscholastic League, the league in which the athletic teams from all Rhode Island public high schools play along with the teams from several private and parochial schools. Because the vast majority of the league teams are from the public-school sector, at least in most cases, it's four years and you graduate.

Under Interscholastic League rules a student has four years of athletic eligibility from the time s/he starts the freshman year. Occasionally the League will grant a student a fifth year of eligibility, but only because of extreme hardship. Usually, it's because health or family problems caused the student to miss

a large portion of a school year and the student is repeating that year.

St. Andrew's is a private school which is not a member of the Interscholastic League so it does not have to abide by Interscholastic League rules. At St. Andrew's, you can play for the high school sports teams as long as you haven't graduated, even if you're in your fifth year of high school.

What happens at St. Andrew's and other non-Interscholastic League private schools is that occasionally a student will repeat a year before s/he graduates to improve the chances for college admission. Often these fifth-year students are transfers from other schools, usually public schools. Sometimes the students' academic records are so bad at the public school that they never would have graduated in four years. In the case of student-athletes it also could improve their chances for an athletic scholarship.

Essentially it's a high school redshirt year.

As an educational philosophy there's nothing wrong with the practice. Any additional time spent in an educational environment is beneficial. But it creates two levels of student-athletes. The four-year public school student and the fifth-year private school student. The idea of repeating a grade at a private school isn't new. Rhode Island hockey players have been doing it at out-of-state prep schools for decades. Now, more and more basketball players are following the prep route after spending a few years at a public high school.

The result, unlike years ago when the best high school basketball players were found at the public city schools, is that now the big games are played in the prep-school gyms.

The problem is when a star basketball player gets a fifth year that creates attention. That doesn't happen when a kid who's good in music spends an extra year in high school.

That's all very interesting you say, but it still doesn't explain why the Interscholastic League has adopted a rule, similar to the rule in Massachusetts, that prevents its member schools from playing teams with fifth year players.

Why can't St. Raphael take on the challenge of playing a high-powered team like St. Andrew's? After all, isn't one of the great lessons of education about taking on challenges?

Remember, nothing is as simple as it seems.

One of the reasons Interscholastic League officials give for the rule is that they don't want Interscholastic League athletes playing against older,

fifth-year students. They say it's not safe for a 14-year old public school freshman to play against a 19-year-old private school fifth-year student.

There's some truth to that, but for the most part I don't think age is a big factor in the decision. I think you will find most of the fifth-year private school students would have no problem qualifying under the Interscholastic League age rule that states you can't have reached your 19th birthday before the first day of school in September.

I think it has more to do with trying to keep the playing field level.

Since the inception of the modern Interscholastic League back in the 1930's there has been a constant debate whether it's fair having public schools, with their geographically limited student body, compete against parochial schools that can attract students from throughout the state, even Massachusetts.

There's no question the private schools have an advantage. For the most part, however, having the public and private schools compete together has worked well in Rhode Island through the years.

But it's a constant debate and it becomes more heated when you have a year like last year when private schools won most of the state titles in the boys major divisions.

So League officials are constantly trying to keep the playing field level. The private schools are constantly marketing their programs, both academic and athletic. One thing that enhances the reputation of a school's athletic program, whether in high school or college, is the quality of its schedule. These days young athletes, or at least their parents, are very impressed by a schedule that includes non-league games against teams with regional reputations.

Playing a game in front of a few thousand fans against a team that has built its reputation with fifth-year players like St. Andrew's has definitely helped the image of St. Raphael basketball. For the most part, it's the private schools that play other private schools in these special non-league games and tournaments.

Maybe they didn't mean it that way, but I think Interscholastic League officials are sending St. Raphael and the League's other private schools a message. You can't have your cake and eat it too, if the public school teams can't even get into the bakery.

If you want to play in a league against teams that have virtually all four-year students, you can't gain an additional advantage by playing other private schools that have developed big reputations in ways that the Interscholastic League teams can't.

If you want to do that, go play in a league with just private schools. I doubt if St. Raphael wants to do that.

As for St. Andrew's, it's developed a great basketball program. It just uses different rules than the state's other high schools. There have been too many good fifth-year basketball players at St. Andrew's the past few years to think it's coincidental that they end up in Barrington. There's nothing wrong with that. There are a lot of other schools throughout New England that have developed good athletic programs the same way.

They're just not in Rhode Island.

Reprinted with permission from The Providence Journal

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LET'S ALWAYS DO THE RIGHT THING

The following is an excerpt from the speech delivered at the closing of the National High School Sports Hall of Fame Banquet on July 5 in Washington, DC by Robert F. Kanaby, NFHS Executive Director.

We have met this century in 80 of its 100 years. Meetings that served to bring us together, inform us and give us the opportunity to share with one another. We close this century of meetings and look forward to our next gathering in the year 2000. This has been a century when we have organized and grown. We have led, and been challenged to lead more. We have responded to an overwhelming number of these challenges and sometimes we sat on our hands. We have enjoyed success and known failure. We have been party to all of the experiences the activities that we support in our nation's schools provide to young people. The teacher has also been the learner.

We bring to a close this chapter in the story of your federation that will reflect this century. But as we have learned in our own lives, when one door closes, another is opened. The next millennium does not await us – it invites us.

If time is a frontier, we stand on its edge. Like every time before this one, it will be a time of unknown opportunities, hopes and desires, and a time of threats, challenges and perils.

Our reactions to both sets of circumstances will become our story for this next century.

It will be a story of the collective efforts of individuals. Some who will rise to lead nationally, and some who will support your organization, this federation, at the state level.

It will be our story.

But as we write stories that ultimately belong to each of us, know well that each page, each paragraph will be a challenge. If fear or doubt should raise their heads – heed the message of this poem whose author is unknown.

People are unreasonable, illogical self-centered and for their own personal reason, may distrust you – Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives – Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you'll win false friends and true enemies – Succeed anyway.

Honesty and frankness may make you vulnerable – Be honest and frank anyway.

The good you do today may very well be forgotten tomorrow – Do good anyway.

The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest minds – Think big anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight – Build anyway.

Give the world the best you've got. You may just get kicked in the teeth. But give the world the best you've got – Anyway.

I invite us all to make it a story of which we are proud and adds to the legacy of your federation.

God grant us the strength to always do the right thing – Anyway!

God bless our efforts.

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Women
Helping
Inspire:
Sports,
Training,
Leadership,
Education &
Sportsmanship

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The value you place on a goal determines the strength of your persistence.

Unknown

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School Administrators

PREVENTIVE ADMINISTRATION

Protecting Yourself, Your Students and Your School

As we begin the new year, it is an appropriate time to review methods that many schools take to protect staff, students and schools from injury and possible litigation. The following list may provide you with a simplified set of guidelines to review with your staff. The following ideas are points which could be covered at staff in-service with coaches/sponsors.

Common Sense

Use good common sense in making decisions relating to your activity. Drills used by coaches in practice, the names given to drills, supervision of participants, and techniques taught to participants, should be reasonable and related to the improvement of the student. The actions of the staff should always be reasonable and prudent in the eyes of the law. Failing to meet this standard invites the possibility of law suit and possible punitive damages.

Follow the Rules

RULE activities follow rules adopted by the National Federation. *Coaches should make every effort to make sure that rules are taught and followed.* Rules are not made to be broken. If coaches disagree with a rule, they should visit with their school administrator about going through the proper channels to try to bring about a possible rule change. Part of the learning experience in school activities is an exercise in understanding and participating in the democratic process.

Record Keeping

Keeping good records can prevent many problems for coaches and the school. Records need to be kept on incidents, accidents, warning of risk, physicals, permit slips, facilities, policies, practice plans, equipment inspections and proper procedures to be utilized by staff and student trainers.

continued

Injuries

Coaches should exercise caution to be sure that appropriate procedures are followed when handling injuries. Some schools are able to contract for services of a professional trainer. Although this is desirable, it is not an option available to many schools. If a trainer or certified person cannot be provided, then consider establishing a seminar or school in-service with coaches and other key personnel which will cover injury prevention and management issues. Many schools also provide CPR training for staff members.

Facilities

Inspect all facilities on a regular basis. Inspection records should be kept and items which need to be repaired before practices or competitions should be noted. School guidelines for transporting students to and from events at all facilities should be shared with both students and parents.

Equipment

It is important to keep good records on equipment. Some equipment must be reconditioned yearly and record keeping is vital. Many schools consider a replacement system to replace old inventory on a regular basis. Make every effort to provide safe equipment which is properly fitted.

In-Service Training

Activities staff benefit from a well-planned in-service program which educates them about school objectives, philosophy, methodology, communication, time management as well as first-aid education. All personnel deserve to be in-serviced to improve their effectiveness as educators. In-service training is a must and directly benefits both the professional staff and the students they serve. Good documentation of a well designed in-service program is an important component of a school's improvement plan.

These basic areas are by no means a comprehensive set of guidelines but may serve to remind schools of how comprehensive a well administered activities program can be. Best wishes in your continuing efforts to provide a safe and educationally sound activities program in your school.

To Achieve your Dream ...

“Avoid negative sources, people, places, things and habits ...

“Believe in yourself ...

“Consider things from every angle ...

“Don't give up and don't give in.”

Wanda Hope Carter



Guest Editorial

HIGH SCHOOL EXPOSURE OUT OF CONTROL

by Michael Wilbon

Reprinted from the Washington Post

I went to one of those mega bookstores the other day to find a couple of preseason football magazines and right there in the middle of all those college and NFL forecasts was a magazine touting the upcoming high school football season. I nearly fainted. Increasingly, publications are picking preseason All-American high school teams. More high school games are being televised. ESPN and ABC cover the Little League sectionals and World Series a little too well for my taste.

Not long ago, Fox sports Net declared its intention to begin a national top-50 ranking this fall and then stage and broadcast a national championship game by December 2000.

The world does not need a made-for-TV national high school football championship. It's a bad idea that has absolutely no redeeming value. Don't get me wrong. I love high school sports; I played varsity baseball and tennis. It can't be overstated how valuable those experiences were. When it appeared last winter that there wouldn't be a high school championship basketball game in the District, I got fairly indignant in this space. But that's about participation even more than competition.

But what's happening now, with newsletters, magazines and a national newspaper, *USA Today*, covering high school football with preseason rankings and all-star teams and a major network talking about staging a championship game, is not about boys and girls competing. Publications and telecasts are about adults. And any time you get adults too involved in kids' games, there's going to be big trouble, particularly when it involves money.

An increase in participation is welcome. An increase in exposure is frightening.

A long time ago, I started wishing every high school football team in American could go 3-7, or every high school basketball team 12-18. That would stop parents from acting like fools in the stands and at home, and perhaps prevent them from calling the newspaper every week to insist their kid is the next Michael Jordan. It would almost certainly slow the parade of groupies, AAU coaches, leeches posing as relatives, and other hangers-on who manage to charm their way into the lives of the all-state quarterback/shooting guard/midfielder/pitcher. And it would tell more and more kids "You're not really that good, or your team wouldn't be 3-7. You're not

invincible; you're not the next John Elway. Now go do your math homework."

Yesterday, I talked to Fritz McGinness, the associate director of the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the concern in his voice was unmistakable. McGinness' organization is against Fox Sports Net's proposed high school football playoff. He has devoted his professional life to the administration of high school sports, yet when asked about the deifying of high school jocks and sports, he said, "I don't know where it's headed." I could envision him shaking his head from side to side. "Our No. 1 concern is the infringement on academic time. And okay, even if we say it would be fun to have a national tournament, how feasible is it? Quite frankly, any rankings at the high school level would be geared toward particular areas and teams who've had a certain level of success in the past. Also, how could you confine something like this to one sport? How could you say no to boys and girls basketball, or girls volleyball, for example? It becomes an insurmountable issue at the high school level."

Even if it could be done, it shouldn't be done. Anything that tends to make gods of these teenagers is something that should be avoided at all costs. If you're the MVP of a nationally televised football playoff game at 15, where's the incentive to spend a little extra time on that English Lit paper? You'd have some little brute grabbing a FOX microphone to announce, "I'm going to Disney World" before challenging Brett Favre for the starting job in Green Bay.

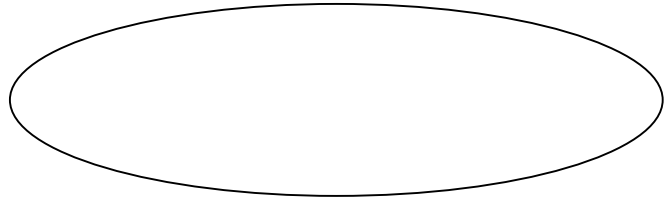
Where does it go from there? "We're looking live at the Middle School Championship best-of-five series and down on the sideline standing with 12-year-old John Dough is our sideline reporter."

I don't have to ask "When is enough?" because I know we passed that point a long time ago. I used to be relatively upset at my parents – both of whom worked full-time jobs – because they rarely attended any of my baseball games or tennis matches. In hindsight, I'm glad. Never once, as obsessed as I was with sports, did I think my baseball game was the most important thing going on in my household. Would there have been that perspective if cameras and a blazer-wearing anchor had been showing up for the game?

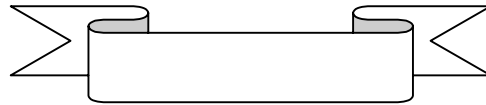
Inflated sense of self leads all too often to a sense of entitlement, and high school jocks can feel pretty self-important anyway, without the help of network TV and sycophants who feel the need to know factoids about some 15-year-old left tackle from Deadwood, Texas. This knowledge gets you what, exactly? You mean getting your name (and perhaps picture) in the local newspaper, and playing in the district playoffs, aren't enough anymore?

It all comes back to adults trying to make a buck, and the misguided emphasis on competition over participation. McGinness, who said he worries that the pressure on high school kids to compete is "climbing" said, "When you talk about national rankings and a tournament for high school kids, you risk defeating the purpose of what high school programs are supposed to be all about." ♦

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The following is a summary of the December 20, 1999 meeting of the Principals' Committee on Athletics:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Executive Director's Report was approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's Report was approved. Ms. Hale reported that five (5) member schools have not yet paid their 1999-2000 dues and fees to the R. I. Interscholastic League.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Lynch referred to several memoranda and publications which were placed in member's folders or filed in the League office.

WEB SITE UPDATE

Craig Blanchard, web master for the Rhode Island Interscholastic League, reported on the status of the RIIL website. The League has made great progress in achieving its technological goals, and is receiving favorable response to the information provided on the site.

FOOTBALL

**Mr. Thomas Mezzanotte
Mr. James Murano**

Mr. Mezzanotte submitted the following 1999 Football Championships for approval:

Division Championships

Division I	East Providence High School
Division II	South Kingstown High School
Division III	Barrington High School
Division IV	Tiverton High School

State Championships

Division I	East Providence High School
Division II	St. Raphael Academy
Division III	East Greenwich High School
Division IV	Narragansett High School

On a motion made and seconded, the Principals' Committee unanimously approved the 1999 Football Championships.

In other business, Mr. Mezzanotte reported on the Football Committee's progress regarding alignment. He stated that the Football Committee followed the criteria set forth for alignment; i.e., enrollment, geography, and win/loss record. [first draft] proposed alignment survey will be sent to all participating schools. In addition, an Injury Data Report survey will be sent to schools that participated in the 1998 and 1999 football playoffs [semi-finals].

BASKETBALL

Mr. Gerald Foley
Mr. David Light
Ms. Cindy Neal

Mr. Foley reported that the Boys' and Girls' Basketball [Joint] Committee has met to discuss the criteria and timelines for alignment. The committee will meet again in January.

In other business, Mr. Foley reported that he received a request from Mt. St. Charles Academy in which they were seeking a waiver of the practice/conditioning limitation rule. This request was necessary because Mt. St. Charles Academy was in the process of having a new gymnasium installed and students were unable to 'get ready' in the mandated five (5) days. This request was granted by Mr. Foley and Mr. Lynch prior to the Principals' Committee on Athletics meeting.

HOCKEY

Mr. Lynch reported that North Providence High School has submitted a request to move from Class C to Class B. This request will be submitted to Daniel Sheehan, Director of Hockey, for further review and consideration.

INDOOR TRACK

Ms. Jane Headley
Mr. Charles Sweeney

Ms. Headley reported that the Girls' Indoor Track Committee has met regarding alignment. A proposed alignment survey will be sent to all participating schools. The Track Committee is meeting again on January 12th and Ms. Headley will report back to the Principals' Committee on Athletics.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding schools not submitting eligibility lists to the League office. This problem seems to be more prevalent in track than in any other sport. As a result, several teams were not allowed to participate in recent boys 'and girls' track meets. It was recommended that the League allow teams to participate in meets and deal with the consequences after the fact.

A committee has been formed to review the ongoing issue of missed or late submission of eligibility lists. Serving on this committee will be Thomas Mezzanotte, Kathryn Crowley, John Gray, Charles Sweeney, and a representative(s) from the athletic directors' association.

CROSS COUNTRY

Mr. Charles Sweeney

Mr. Sweeney reported that the Cross Country Committee met on November 15, 1999 to discuss alignment. The general consensus among coaches was that they are all satisfied with the present alignment. A proposed 2000 schedule was submitted for review and consideration. However, one (1) school was moved from one division to another without prior approval by the school itself. Therefore, this matter was tabled until the school grants permission for a change in division placement.

GYMNASTICS

Ms. Susan McNamara

Ms. McNamara reported that there is some confusion regarding the procedure for payment of gymnastics judges for both team and individual meets. After some discussion, it was recommended that a voucher system be implemented whereby a [payment] voucher would be completed by the working judge(s) and signed by the meet director/home school coach. The judge would then be paid directly by the home school.

A voucher will be designed and submitted for approval.

SWIMMING

There was no report in Swimming at this meeting.

WRESTLING

Mr. Edmond Lemoi

Mr. Lemoi reported that the Wrestling Committee has met regarding alignment. A proposed alignment will be presented to the Committee on Athletics at a future meeting.

FIELD HOCKEY

Ms. Jean Angell

Mr. Lynch reported on a letter from the R. I. Field Hockey Coaches' Association in which they requested that the Principals' Committee on Athletics declare indoor and outdoor field hockey different sports.

On a motion made and seconded, the Principals Committee on Athletics unanimously approved the request to declare indoor and outdoor field hockey different sports.

TENNIS

There was no report in Tennis at this meeting.

MEETING DATES – PRINCIPALS’ COMMITTEE ON ATHLETICS

It was reported that there is a conflict with the date for the March [20] meeting of the Committee on Athletics. Because of the lateness of the February [28] meeting, it was recommended that both the February 28th and the March 20th meetings be cancelled. It was further recommended that a meeting be held on Thursday, March 9th, which would replace the two cancelled meetings. This date was tentatively agreed upon and will be finalized at the January 24th meeting of the Committee on Athletics.

SPRING SPORT SCHEDULES/ INTERPRETATION MEETING DATES

Mr. Lynch reminded directors of spring sports that all spring sport schedules are due at the January 24th meeting of the Principals’ Committee on Athletics. He also requested that all directors contact the League office as soon as possible with dates for the spring sport interpretation meetings.

OTHER SPORTS/ ISSUES

- **Resignation of Director of Girls’ Soccer**
Ms. Jane Hale, submitted her resignation as Director of Girls’ Soccer, effective immediately. The Committee accepted her resignation with regret and thanked her for her dedication and commitment to girls’ soccer. It was also noted that Ms. Hale was a role model and influence in the growth of girls’ soccer during her tenure.

- **Report of Soccer Committee**
Mr. Victor Mercurio, Director of Boys’ Soccer, submitted a summary of all yellow and red cards issued during the 1999-2000 boys’ soccer season.

On a motion made and seconded, the Principals’ Committee on Athletics unanimously approved sending the summary to all schools.

The December meeting of the Principals’ Committee on Athletics was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

→ **FOR YOUR PLANNING** ←

Spring Sports Interpretation Meeting Dates

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Girls Volleyball

6:00 pm
RIIL Office

Wednesday, February 9, 2000

Baseball

6:00 pm
RIIL Office

Tuesday, February 15, 2000

Slow Pitch Softball

6:30 pm
RIIL Office

Wednesday, February 16, 2000

Golf

6:00 pm
Barrington High School

Monday, February 28, 2000

Fast Pitch Softball

6:30 pm
RIIL Office

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Boys Outdoor Track

7:00 pm
RIIL Office

Wednesday, March 1, 2000

Girls Outdoor Track

7:00 pm
RIIL Office

Tuesday, March 7, 2000

Boys Tennis

7:00 pm
RIIL Office