



## ENJOY INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS, EVEN IF IT DOESN'T LEAD TO A D1 SCHOLARSHIP!

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Many kids who compete in interscholastic sports dream of one day playing college sports, and who can blame them with all the year-round training, sport specialization and travel leagues that often comprise their childhood sport experience? In some cases, these kids (and their parents) dedicate enormous amounts of time, energy, and money toward that "D1 scholarship," and in worst-case scenarios even obsess about it.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with kids who pursue college athletic scholarships, nor are they automatically destined to experience some kind of psychological disorder if they fail to reach this goal. What these kids may be missing, however, is the fun, joy and excitement that is the interscholastic sport experience – regardless of whether the child ever plays in college. It is sad when kids see their sport as a job instead of a healthy recreational activity.

Many of the kids I see in my practice talk openly about what camps they need to attend to "be seen" by college coaches, or how early they need to get their highlight video out to colleges. In addition to seeing me, they might also be working with a private strength coach, a nutritionist and other professionals designed to help the athlete maximize his or her abilities. None of these endeavors are "bad," per se, but they often create a paradigm for kids that becoming a D1 athlete is, in fact, a job.

Research has consistently shown that the #1 reason why kids play sports is to have fun. We must wonder how much fun some of these kids are having today when their sports experience is filled with non-stop training, marketing themselves to college coaches and prioritizing a future college athletic scholarship over everything else in life. Not only does this not sound like much fun, it actually sounds like a lot of stress!

The realities show that only about 5 percent of all high school student-athletes will ever play in college (this includes Div. III non-scholarships, walk-ons and other partial athletic scholarships). This is not meant to be a pessimistic view, but instead a realistic view. Secondly, when kids lose the fun element typically associated with playing sports, they leave themselves open to a much higher degree of stress, which can leave them vulnerable to academic, social and psychological problems.

If you are a school administrator, coach, parent, or student-athlete, think about how the following tips can help you have more fun playing your sport (and experience less stress, too):

- Interscholastic sports only come once in a lifetime, and they are designed to be FUN! Do everything you can to enjoy the experience while you can.
- Know the realities about earning full-ride D1 scholarships, as well as the work that will be needed to play college sports. In some cases kids have elevated odds of making it but don't fully understand all the work involved in competing at the college level.
- Try to maintain a healthy and balanced schedule while competing as a student-athlete by investing time in academics, school activities and community service. By developing a balanced lifestyle, student-athletes will actually stay fresh and less at-risk for burnout.
- Seek and use school and community resources if things become confusing, stressful or interfere with academics. Oftentimes student-athletes feel stressed when competing in interscholastic sports, yet do not feel comfortable opening up about their stress – or don't know where to go for help. Be sure kids know it's OK to talk about their unique sport stressors and that seeking counseling can be a big help.

Senior guard Chad Nelson helped lead **Pickerington Central** to a 26-2 record and the 2012 OHSAA Division I boys state basketball championship. The Tigers defeated Toledo Whitmer 45-40 to win their first state basketball championship in their first appearance. The 2013 boys basketball state championship will be held March 21-23, 2013 at the Jerome Schottenstein Center on the campus of The Ohio State University.



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**Convoy Crestview** freshman Terra Crowle is surrounded by happy teammates during the 2012 OHSAA Division IV softball state championship game. The Lady Knights had plenty to smile about as Crowle pitched seven innings, allowing only two runs to Vienna Mathews, while Crestview scored six to take home the state championship. The title was the Lady Knights second in softball, previously winning in 2005.