

# Chalkboard

By

Dr. Randy C. Barrett, Superintendent  
Gentry Public Schools

Sometimes what you were not can affect you as much as what you were. Let me explain that nebulous remark. At our last school board meeting a gentleman spoke to the school board at some length regarding the athletic program at Gentry. His emphasis was on the importance of maintaining continuity of staff in relation to having successful athletic programs. He spoke to the need of having strong interaction between the school staff and community programs. He spoke regarding the need of the school board and administration to show visible support to athletics and other extra-curricular programs.

I listened carefully to his remarks, as I believe the board did. It was easy to do so as he made several noteworthy comments during his rather eloquent presentation. I listened carefully because I wanted to understand that person's position. In my heart I have always believed that I am high on the list of those who support Gentry Pioneers but I also believe that perception is indeed reality to the perceiver.

What I meant by the opening statement is that I have no coaching experience on my resume' other than helping with a T-Ball team one summer when Jonathan was five years old. He is 21 now. I was a decent enough athlete in high school but the last time I had shoulder pads on was in 1972. The point I am trying to make is that I do not eat, sleep, and breathe sports.

Yet I realize that some people do and it is okay by me that they do. In fact, I hope that each coach who is now, or ever will be, employed by the Gentry Public School district is, within reasonable bounds, consumed with having a successful program. My expectation is that every employee, regardless of assignment, be consumed with a passion to teach children skills necessary to be successful whether on the playing field or in the classroom. A corresponding desire that I have is that whatever we teach our students will be things that they can carry with them, in a positive manner, into their adult lives.

Ex-coach that I am not, I still do realize that coaches have an extra hurdle to jump that most classroom teachers do not. Coaches' abilities are tested in public settings with hundreds (hopefully) of evaluators sitting in judgment at each outing. They are measured generally by the outcome of

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the competitive event. For some “Saturday Morning” evaluators, if a W goes into the W-L column, the coach was successful. Others, perhaps having additional discernment, look at the performance of the team as a whole, the level of talent on the team, the play of individuals within the team, mistakes made that can be corrected, successful strategies that can be repeated, the quality of the competitor, and so on. These evaluators generally rate the coach as much on how well he or she had the team prepared to play and how well the coach managed the team and coaching assistants during the course of play as with whether the game was won or lost.

Does our school board and central administration support athletics? I think the answer to that is an unqualified yes? Does our school board and central administration give athletics precedence over all other programs at the school? In light of the school district’s mission, common sense, and current educational reform in Arkansas, the answer to that question needs to be, as I think it now is, an unqualified no.

The school board has assembled a committee to review the school’s extracurricular programs. The acting chairperson is Larry Cozens who serves not only as middle school principal but is also the district’s athletic director. The committee has parent and patron members. If you have suggestions that you would like considered, please call Mr. Cozens at 736-2251 to share your ideas.