

“The Purpose of High School Athletics is not for the Development of College or Professional Athletes” by Mike Blackburn, CMAA, Athletic Director at Northwestern High School, in Kokomo, Indiana, edited by Karl Heimbach, CMAA, Athletic Director at Magruder High School

The purpose of a high school athletic program is not to provide Division 1 college scholarships, develop athletes to produce a college national championship, to provide candidates for professional sports, or to prepare gifted athletes for Olympic competition. All of these high levels of play are tremendous accomplishments for a few; however, they are not our goal at the high school level.

High school sports should be a continuation of the classroom so that such lifetime values as citizenship, sportsmanship, teamwork, and hard work are taught and reinforced. For some parents, the reason for their sons or daughters to be involved in athletics stems from their assumption that athletics is a means to an end with the goal of a scholarship being the main focus.

Scholarships are not why we offer athletic opportunities for our young athletes. Almost seven million student-athletes competed nationally in high school sports according to the 2003-04 NFHS survey. While 100,000 athletic scholarships are given annually by colleges in the United States, 98% of the young people who participate in high school sports will not earn one of those scholarships.

The following percentage of high school participants that will play that sport at an NCAA school after graduation is:

Men’s Basketball	2.9	Women’s Basketball	3.1
Football	3.1	Baseball	5.6
Men’s Soccer	5.7	Softball	4.3
Women’s Soccer	6.3		

There are approximately 20,000 high schools in the United States and only 300 Division 1 schools. Only 1-2% of high school athletes will receive a Division 1 scholarship.

Of the 920,000 high school football players, 50,000 will play at an NCAA school and 215 will play in the NFL. The odds of becoming a pro are 1 in 1000. The average NFL career is 3.5 years and 67% of all players do not have a college degree.

Of the 515,000 high school basketball players, 13,000 will play at an NCAA school, while 60 will play in the NBA. The odds of becoming a pro are 3 in 10,000. The odds of becoming a brain surgeon are greater than earning a spot on an NBA team. The average NBA career is 4.0 years and 80% of all players do not have a college degree.

For each position available to an athlete at the professional level, the following opportunities exist in other career fields:

Teachers	325	Engineers	153
Health Care	125	Computers	80
Attorneys	70	Physicians	60
Social workers	40	Dentists	15

With statistics like these, the emphasis on high school athletics should be to prepare the young people of today with necessary skills that will allow them to become future productive citizens of tomorrow. High school sports should be a positive experience for everyone with priorities placed on developing values rather than earning scholarships and becoming professional athletes.