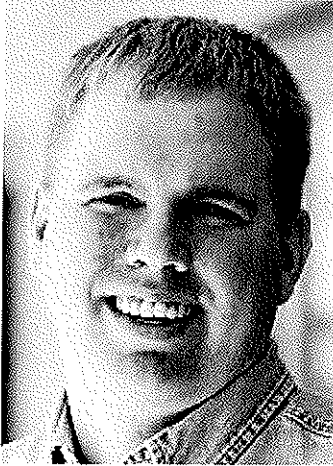


HIS VIEW: You play the game you are dealt



Johnston

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So a Bear and a Viking walk into a bar, except just before they get there the Bear turns around and leaves. The bartender looks at the Viking and says, "What is this, a joke?" As unfunny as this joke is, so was the little scuttlebutt surrounding whether or not Moscow High School should play the Coeur d'Alene Vikings in a scheduled football game.

The situation truly was much ado about nothing, but seems to have stemmed from a very small, but vocal group of parents who were afraid of possible injuries the team might sustain while playing.

The term "injuries" was never defined by the school or the parents, though many cited the huge scoring gap that Sandpoint faced weeks prior. If you're a follower of high school sports, you know that Coeur d'Alene didn't intentionally run up the score and that Sandpoint basically handed them the ball four times and gave them a red carpet to the end zone.

I wasn't able to get a solid answer as to why Moscow would ever consider canceling a scheduled game to begin with. If these parents were really that concerned about health (or self esteem, for that matter), then junior shouldn't be playing football to begin with. And while Coeur d'Alene holds an impressive 6-0 record and is ranked No. 1 in the state, I'd be more concerned about playing Timberlake, a school whose football program sent a Priest River player to the hospital in a coma.

Sure, Friday's game against the Vikings ultimately ended in a 55-0 shutout, and the week prior the Bears suffered a loss to Bonners Ferry. But one has to imagine whether the Bears would have performed differently in those two games had it not been suggested that they somehow weren't up to the challenge. More importantly, what would have happened had we forfeited to Coeur d'Alene? Could we really blaze a path to postseason play knowing that we chickened out instead of charging the field and taking on Goliath? Would Moscow's 2011 record, state championship or not, always be tarnished with an asterisk?

The rules of good sportsmanship demand you follow through on your word and play a scheduled match with honor, dignity and within the realm of the rules. The administration made the right call to follow through, and Moscow's players deserve kudos for their efforts Friday night.

I wish some Vandal fans would take note.

See, I attended the Vandal homecoming game against Louisiana Tech on Saturday. Toward the end of the game I was saddened to see that a majority of the student body had left their seats and headed home. As the scoring gap widened, things got ugly when some Vandal fans began heckling their own quarterback with boos and other unpalatable phrases.

One fan in front of me quipped that Reader was the Gerald Ford of college quarterbacks, ascending to his position without any skill or ability, but only because he was next in line after his predecessor left.

Ouch.

The moral of the story is that a game is just that - a game.

You win some and you lose some, but at the end of the day you post a score and move on to play the next team. If you win, you feel good and that energy carries into the next match. If you lose, you fire yourself up and approach the next game with renewed vigor and energy. But regardless of the outcome, your team resolves to power through until the final buzzer sounds.

It's something the Bears and Vandals both displayed this weekend, and is something their fans should learn to do as well.

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