

Lakeville Football

This is a letter from a football guy in Lakeville to remind parents what it is really all about.

Thought it was very interesting and good for all sports parents to read.

This year's seniors were in 6th grade in 2004. I still have our "draft sheet" from that year. There are some interesting observations you can make by looking back at this age group.

I send this information out to the board to try to make sure that all coaches are given the consistent message that our mission as an association is to keep kids playing the game and not to focus a disproportionate amount of our attention and praise on the kids that appear to be the best athletes when they are younger. The statistics say quite clearly that a good number of the players that play a significant role in high school football are not those that are identified at an early age as the star athletes.

Of the 125 kids we had in 6th grade football in 2004, it appears that 19 will be starters or key contributors this year at LSHS or LNHS.

Of those 19 starters:

5 of them were ranked in the top 20 in LFA in 2004

4 of them were ranked in the top 21-40 in LFA in 2004

4 of them were ranked in the top 41-60 in LFA in 2004

6 of them were ranked in the BOTTOM 45 in LFA in 2004

(Of the 44 starters at the two high schools, many are Juniors, there also have been some move-ins and a few didn't even play football when they were in 6th grade)

One of the team captains at the high school was ranked 115th out of 125 in LFA in 6th grade.

One senior who has taken a visit at two D-1 schools so far this year was ranked 95th out of 125. (He is very likely to receive a full ride - 6'7" and 330 lbs)

The #1 ranked LFA player in 2004 is either 2nd or 3rd string right now on the depth chart. Of the top 5 players ranked in 2004, only one is going to start for their high school team this year.

Of the top 10 players ranked in 2004, only two are going to start for their high school teams this year.

This is not to say that all great athletes at 6th grade wash out and become lesser athletes. The #5 ranked LFA player from 2004 is still an excellent player and started as a Junior. The #10 ranked player from 2004 is a team captain. A couple of the top 10 players quit to focus on hockey. But most in the top 20-30 players just didn't grow or they got passed by kids below them that had a stronger work ethic or they simply found other interests.

The key thing I take away from this is that we have to continue to be vigilant about making sure that all of our players have a great experience when they are younger so they

stay involved with the game. It is easy to get excited about athletes that have matured earlier than others and focus much of our time and praise on these kids. Some of these players that mature early absolutely continue to improve and become great players, but there are also many others below them (at that point in time) that end up being excellent players and athletes when they get older. It is a good perspective to have as a coach that literally any kid on their team could develop into a great player some day, even more so at the younger levels within LFA, so you need to coach the entire team and try to give every player your time and energy.

Robert Bernier