

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

UNFORGETTABLE

We have just concluded our Winter Sports Championships in the Southern Section and I want to congratulate all of our student-athletes, coaches and communities for their participation and spirited efforts in pursuit of Southern Section Championships. We still have State Basketball Championships to go and I look forward to being in Sacramento this weekend to cheer on our teams as they chase their dreams of a state title.



During our Winter Sports Championships, I get the incredible opportunity to travel around our section, watch several sports in a variety of venues, and see lifetime memories being made right before my eyes. This Winter season was no exception and I witnessed something that I simply refer to as, "Unforgettable."

The event was the Division 1 Girls Water Polo Championship Final between Dos Pueblos High School and San Marcos High School. It took place at Dos Pueblos High School in Goleta on a beautiful Saturday night. As a backdrop, we are all aware that the Santa Barbara community, along with the neighboring communities of Ventura, Santa Paula, Ojai and others, have experienced some extremely difficult times this year: devastating fires, severe mudslides, loss of life, destruction of property and their sense of normalcy being disrupted like never before.

When Dos Pueblos and San Marcos won their Semifinal water polo matches, we immediately went to work with both schools, specifically, Athletic Directors Dan Feldhaus (Dos Pueblos) and Abe Jahadhmy (San Marcos), to see if we could play the Championship Final contest in their community. They could not have been more agreeable and did a fantastic job of taking care of the many details that needed to get done to make it all happen. We all felt that this would be a great way to celebrate the achievements of these two outstanding teams in front of as many people as possible who love and support them every day. Certainly, it was a way for those in Santa Barbara to come together for a brief period and enjoy a break from what they have been through.

When the game began, there were approximately 1,000 people in attendance! It was a very emotional night, with players, coaches, student sections, parents and fans in a fever pitch, as it should be. The pride they all have for their schools was clearly on display from start to finish. The competition was hard-fought and extremely close, with San Marcos winning by a score of 4-3.

That in itself was enough to make it a night to remember for me, but there is one more thing. When I arrived at the venue, a gentleman was coming through the main gate with a large balloon arch that had one half of the balloons in red and blue for San Marcos and the other half in blue and gold for Dos Pueblos. He placed the arch on the pool deck and as people arrived they walked beneath it as a show of solidarity for both schools. What we found out later was the balloon arch was purchased and sent to the venue by Santa Barbara High School's Water Polo program, who are in the same school district and same league as Dos Pueblos and San Marcos. What a thoughtful and classy gesture by Santa Barbara High School, who truly contributed to the sense of celebration for all who were there, and I sincerely thank them for doing so.

I feel so fortunate to have been able to share that night with everyone who was there from the Santa Barbara community. Always know that for me, and hopefully for you, it was unforgettable.

All the best,

Rob Wigzel

