

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT



I have always been proud of the fact that I graduated from a CIF Southern Section high school. For the record, Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California, where my Father, my Mother, my sister and my wife also graduated. Though many years have passed since I was a Wilson Bruin, the experiences that I had as a student-athlete, the teachers and coaches who had such a strong impact on my life, the friendships and relationships with teammates and classmates, that continue to this day, have made special memories that have been with me since my high school days. My time at Wilson had such an important effect on me that it led me directly into choosing my career path as a high school Social Studies teacher, Football and Baseball coach and Athletic Director before I came to work for the CIF Southern Section.

Recently, I came across an article from a local news organization in Long Beach called the 562.org. It was written by sportswriter J.J Fiddler as a preview of the upcoming season for the Woodrow Wilson High School Boys' Water Polo team and I was struck by some of the comments from current Wilson Bruins that were contained in that article.

From Senior Gray Carson, a UCLA commit, "You see some other teams who have a lot of guys who are Division 1 commits and they're good but they kind of play for themselves. This year at Wilson what we've got going on is super special because we're playing for each other this year. We all have such a great bond. Even if we're not the strongest team I think our chemistry will be very good. If you know how to move the ball around and play well together you can achieve anything."

From Senior Zac Crenshaw, "If we win, we win, if we lose, we lose, it's just one last season with the boys. We're just a bunch of guys trying to have fun and I think we can be the best because we have the best people to be around. It's a brotherhood. It's about the journey and working hard in training with the guys."

From Senior Hank Rivers, a two-time Southern Section Division 1 Swimming Champion in 2021, and a University of California, Berkeley commit in Swimming who did not play Water Polo last season, "I kind of miss the game and the guys want me back and it's my Senior year, so let's have some fun. Me, Gray and Zac have been playing together for so long, they're my best friends and it totally went into my decision for sure. Why not go out with a bang?"

In today's high school environment, there are those who lose sight of what these young men are speaking of. Those who believe education-based athletics should prioritize the pursuit of college scholarships, who think that transferring schools, sometimes multiple times, to try and make that happen, hiring private coaches to train outside of high school programs, joining club/travel programs to ensure that sports participation is year-round, etc., are missing what makes education-based athletics the special and unique experience that it is. At the heart of education-based athletics, as it was when I was a high school student-athlete and still resonates with the young men mentioned above, is the concept of being part of a team. It is a feeling of brotherhood/sisterhood, loyalty, trust, a bond with those you know, not those that transferred in to your school last week. That is what high school felt like to me. I am gratified to know that there are still student-athletes at my alma mater who feel the same way today and understand what it is all about.

As always, I sincerely thank you for your help and support, it is truly appreciated.

All the best,

Rob Wigzel

