

More than 11 years ago, I was looking for a place to live and a school for my kids to grow up in. I had finally decided that it would either be Calallen, or Portland. Unfortunately for my son Andrew, I picked Portland. Had I picked Calallen, I am sure that my son would have been a football starter his senior year. I am so disappointed with the current football coaching staff I cannot begin to tell you. I have never heard of a coaching staff that had so clearly given up on the current year. Treating the senior class with such active discrimination is something that is hard to believe. I have always felt that the senior football players were the leaders and a treasure of the school. But there is something here at GP that has created a completely different picture.

When I look at the tickets that I purchased, they were for this year. I wanted to see the best football team that our coaches could put together. What we got was far less than anyone expected. I really think that some type of a message should be sent to the coaching for doing such a poor job. Keep in mind that there was no nuclear storm, no exotic chemical compounds, and no bacterial agent that caused the upcoming seniors to be unworthy of any game time. They were good enough to follow the footsteps of the seniors before them and would have given us some high scores and put us into a few rounds of the playoffs. I guess it is good to know that playing mostly juniors, we can still win a few games. It just doesn't seem to be enough for me!

This senior discrimination started before the season did. My son heard Coulter, and Mckinney exclaim repeatedly during boot camp that they were not impressed with the senior talent. Coach Harris gave "the talk" to CJ Tanner, Jose Chavez, Ronnie Fyrrar, and Branden Doyle at the beginning of the season and told them that they were not good enough to play and would not get any game time. To this, they agreed to stay on with the players that they have spent the last 5 years with and run scout teams during practice.

Brad Stephens is a senior that was playing offensive guard and doing a great job of it. Andrew (my son) even commented that it was driving the offensive coach (Colter) crazy because he could not find a junior that could fill the position without getting overran. Well the coaches finally decided on a junior player and removed Stephens from offence line and put him special teams. This was really a terrible thing to do and it did nothing to better the team. Brad Stephens is an exciting player to watch; he gives 100 percent all the time and is a huge cheerleader. When he got demoted, we missed his performance and his leadership.

Tyler Vernon is another Senior Offence lineman who played second string under Guss Hernandez (a Junior). Tyler got some play time here and there, but he would never get promoted to first string even though he was the better player. He as many of our seniors had to endure this type of discrimination.

For most of the season we had no seniors on the offensive line. The senior players had been washed from the line. This is unusual because you usually do not get the size and experience needed to play the offensive line from juniors and sophomores. The coaching staff got so silly that they recruited a sophomore to play on the offensive line. Even though the seniors who had been given "the talk" were dominating the new sophomore during practice, they still put the sophomore in as a starter. We had benched senior talent that was better than the starting junior talent out there and even gone to the extreme of looking at the sophomores for starters.

The juniors that were starters had one of the easiest seasons I have ever seen. The seniors are not allowed to make any mistakes without grave consequences (being pulled

out of the game), while the juniors are free to make mistake after mistake and still continue playing the entire game. Later they may do some bear crawls, but nothing to challenge their starting position or playing time. This is simply not right and is sending a message to the juniors that they do not have to compete or perform for their position. Besides that they have their senior year to look forward to, which gives them another opportunity to play that team again. The message that the seniors get is quite different and is reason enough for them to have a bad attitude. It is no wonder why the leadership and spirit of the senior class was lost.

My son Andrew could not figure out why they put Sid in front of him. At the start of the season he told me that he did not feel that Sid was any competition to him because during one-on-one drills, he dominated Sid. Sid may have been taller and heavier, but it was not until about halfway through the season before Sid was able to compete against Andrew. Even at that, Sid had a problem with remembering his plays. He had to do bear crawls for that, but they never rotated Andrew in except for the last 3 minutes of one non-district game.

Andrew was second string behind Sid and remained as such until the district game that Sid had a stomach virus and was pulled out. Andrew was near Coulter and heard over the headset coach Arguijo say, "Put Andrew in". Andrew did not get put in; Coulter pulled a junior 2nd string guard to play tackle. When half time came about, I got a text message from Andrew that stated that coach Coulter lined up two more juniors as tackles. This means that Andrew had been demoted from 2nd string to 5th string just to keep him out of contention for game time. Andrew did not give up and asked coach Coulter if the junior out there starts messing up, or doing badly, could he go in. The coach Coulter said "We will see". It wasn't long before Andrew was telling coach Coulter that the junior wasn't doing well. To this coach Coulter replied "I'm keeping him in". This was the exact moment that Andrew discovered that he would never get any more game time.

The coaching staff is not a bunch of dummies. The only thing that I can think of that would allow a coaching staff to promote the juniors without regard to the loss of performance is because they were building for next year. The coaching staff sacrificed the senior's season so the juniors would return as seasoned seniors.

The coaching staff at GP owes the senior class an apology and needs to be replaced. Their actions this year endangered their jobs and have not put forth their best effort to win games. They decided that winning games this year was not as important as building next year's team. They have actively benched the seniors as soon as they can find an underclassman that can hold the spot with out being totally overrun. The majority of the talent of the senior class was deemed unexceptional and was replaced with out regard to the degradation in performance.

This year's football team did not represent the talent and power of the team that could have played. Had the coaches worked with what they had, we would have gone further into the play offs and had a much better team. The lack of competition and unnatural advancement of the underclassmen is simply not good for any team. Even the leadership (team captains) within the team suffered a great loss of enthusiasm because of this. There is simply no substitute for senior pride and leadership.

Our seniors, who should have been given a slight advantage when it came to getting game time, were actually punished just because they would not be returning next year. Our seniors' senior year was sacrificed by the coaches because of this recruiting

process. It simply came down to the idea that playing the underclassmen was more valuable for next years team than winning games this year. I guess we can be somewhat proud of the fact that we can win a few games without most of our seniors.

Developing and using the players we have along with a coaching staff that will find and play our best players will build a good team year after year. Ignoring the senior players and giving up on an entire season just to promote some vision of having a great year next year is simply bad coaching. Our coaching staff lost sight of winning and our record reflects this.

Our coaching staff should be dedicated to be winners each and every year. I think that we deserve to have a coaching staff that wants to be winners and will work hard to make that happen. I think that there should be a better understanding between the coaches and the community as to what is wanted. I will bet you that the majority of the Gregory-Portland football fans would rather win then lose. And if we lose, that will still be ok if we put forth our best effort (players as well as coaches). These football players are our children and we will be proud of them if they win, loose, or draw.

When we played Rockport and you could see that the fans and students lined up for the "spirit tunnel". The tunnel was about 40 yards long and had people packed on both sides of it. When you looked at our side you did not see that much support. The announcer thanked both the football and the band seniors for their years of commitment and dedication. It was a sincere hart-warming moment. Here were a bunch of football players that had not won a single district game and they were respected and treated like winners. I will bet you that the seniors will have fond memories of their coaches and senior year of football. I would rather have had my son play for that team than here at GP because they had the support and respect of their coaches and community. They will have fond memories of their 2006 season, most of our seniors will not.

It is a custom that the outgoing seniors put together a project for the school to reward the school for their memories. It is usually a decoration, statue, or other monument. If the senior football players get together and help decide, I wonder what they might come up with. It may well be something distasteful and inappropriate for public view. What could they come up that would properly thank the school and coaching staff for refusing to let them play football?

Bad behavior should not be rewarded. I think that this coaching staff should not get the opportunity to coach the next season's team which they created by sacrificing our senior's year. The season is over and nothing can be done to correct the injustice. My son only has one senior year and the coaching staff sacrificed it. I think that their jobs should be on the line for this. I do not want this year coaching staff to reap the rewards and take the credit of the upcoming "super team". If you let them stay on, it will be a slap in the face for the senior class of 2006-2007. It is bad enough for them to be remembered as the loosing seniors, when they had very little to do with the season's record. This football season should be more accurately remembered as the year of the loosing offensive junior and sophomore linemen.

Please take time out and discuss this at your next school board meeting.