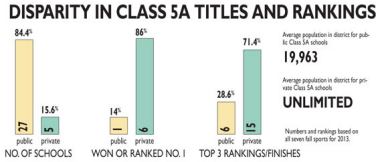


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Last year I made the point that I could not root for Carroll the rest of the way.

I received a lot of feedback from Carroll parents, students and administration defending their school and trying to convince me that there was something special about the Carroll family.

I was invited to visit their school and see the difference first-hand.

At some point, I would like to do that, but since emotions were running high among the Carroll family, I didn't believe the timing was right to do so.

They pointed out to me that they had very supportive parents of their athletes as well as an active booster club and staff at the school.

4th & GOAL



EARL WATT

I believe all of that.

I also believe that is true at every Class 5A school, public or private.

What is not true at every Class 5A school is the ability to pick and choose which students can attend.

I told them I believe this is a difference that affects athletics.

They disagreed. They believed it could actually be a hindrance that they couldn't take great athletes that were not Catholic.

Being Catholic, or any particular faith, requires very little. Attend a Catholic church, go through the initiation process and you are Catholic.

It is my position that many of the best athletes in Wichita attend either Carroll or Kapaun, to which they vehemently denied.

They said that most of their athletes come from several Catholic middle schools.

They did not say whether or not those kids come from all over Wichita, but one parent was honest enough to tell me that he lived 20 miles away.

While Carroll benefits from this, it is not isolated to football or just to Carroll. All Catholic schools in Class 5A benefit from this selective enrollment process athletically.

There are seven fall sports. Two of them have completed, and of the top three in each of them, private Catholic schools finished in five of the six spots. Only Andover finished first in tennis

while private schools Carroll and Kapaun took second and third respectively.

In girls golf it was a private school sweep. Kapaun won first, Carroll second and St. Thomas Aquinas was third.

In the other five sports, the rankings tell the same private school story.

In girls cross country, Aquinas is ranked first and Carroll is second.

In boys cross country, Carroll is ranked first, Aquinas second and Kapaun third.

In football Carroll is ranked first and Bishop Miege is second.

In soccer, St. James Academy is ranked first, Kapaun is fourth and Carroll is fifth.

In volleyball, St. James is ranked first and Aquinas is second.

In every fall sport, five private schools out of 32 in the classification are either ranked first or have won six of the seven titles.

The Kansas State High School Activities Association continues to turn a blind eye to this disparity, and it harms 27 other schools significantly.

Even more so, it harms the Wichita school system in general.

The private schools make the argument that they pay twice for education — the first through their taxes for public schools, and again for their private schools.

Perhaps they do, and I stand by their right and decision to send their kids to private school. That is what America is all about.

While they believe I am misinformed about private schools and their advantages, some comments I received were negative about public schools and Liberal in general.

On response said that Liberal fans spit at them when they came to Redskin Field, and another said they needed a police escort to their car after the game.

Carroll will be in Liberal tomorrow for a football game, and I would ask that our fans show the Carroll fans the utmost respect. It's not their fault that the rules are skewed in their direction. I blame, as I always have, KSHSAA for not providing an even playing field for athletics the way other states have done.

Carroll will be our guests tomorrow, and I am asking our community to come out and show support for the Redskin Nation as well as friendship to our visitors.

We can disagree without being disagreeable.

I will continue to make the case that it is not simply a superior Catholic ability that makes these school exceptional, but the ability to draw students that makes the difference.

It is my hope that other members of the media and the other 27 public Class 5A communities will demand fairness and equity.

But it's not Carroll or any of the private school's fault. If you had a rule that favored your school, would you take advantage of it?

The problem is, would winning the championship mean anything knowing how you won it?

If KSHSAA continues to refuse to play fair, perhaps the other 27 schools should award a public state championship to the best school that played by the same rules of open enrollment rather than selective enrollment. It's time we stop cheating these athletes from their accomplishments by schools who have taken advantage of an apathetic athletic association.

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