

Watching our high school athletes compete is always a thrill, and everyone loves a winner.

Too often, however, we see one program become a winning one while another with good kids who try hard does not experience the same success.



Many times we point our fingers at a coach or question the commitment of the community toward that particular sport.

We like to say there is too much focus on another sport or activity.

While it is true that some communities focus on a sport, that focus has little or nothing to do with other programs.

What does affect programs is not what happens at the varsity level, or even in junior high.

It takes a commitment years before.

Liberal has an active group of parents who are working with kids with traveling teams in basketball, volleyball, softball and baseball.

At one time, these might have given teams an advantage, but that is no longer the case. Participating at the younger levels is necessary just to be competitive.

Without the extra work and development at the younger ages, we will not see success at the higher levels.

One sport that has had a tough season so far is softball. Coach Pat Knott is having to play several younger girls who are gaining varsity experience the hard way.

What may not be known is how many kids will be needed to have competitive varsity programs, and that is why keeping our young athletes active is important — not to the point of burnout, but in an effort to improve their skills and provide them some experience.

It's amazing how kids change in a few years, and someone who dominates in fifth or sixth grade can fall behind quickly if someone else is working hard.

Sunday, there will be a softball clinic for girls, and the more we get involved, the better.

It doesn't matter how good a girl is right now, but until they start learning the fundamentals, they can never move to the more advanced aspects of the game. That is true in any sport.

If a kid has interest, get them involved, and don't worry about how good they are right now.

Take the long-term view. How good will Liberal be when they are needed at the varsity level?

To be competitive, Liberal needs experienced numbers in all sports. To get those numbers means we need more kids participating when they are younger.

Varsity results are not based on high school experience. It is based on encouraging your kids to participate when they are young.

Success at the varsity level starts when kids are much younger

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