

Neighbors React to Allegations of Coach's Bad Behavior

By Cathy Tyson

Recently Acalanes Varsity Basketball coach Russ Scheibley found himself the subject of two players' family's claims. John Clouse, one of the disgruntled parents, is quite open about what he wants to see happen. "I hope he gets fired. You don't need to abuse them every day to motivate the players. The school is condoning his behavior." Mr. and Mrs. Clouse along with Mr. and Mrs. Hampton allege coach Scheibley has a history of throwing basketballs at players and being verbally abusive.

Other players on the team signed a letter in support of the coach. Where does the truth lie? On August 15th, a third party investigator is scheduled to report to the school board with its findings. "This is a personnel issue, and employees have a right to privacy," says District Superintendent Jim Negri. "We are

currently working through our complaint policy." The Board will issue a response upon completion of the investigation. In addition to filing complaints, the two sets of parents also filed Tort claims. The District has taken no action on those, as it is still within the 45-day window to accept or reject the claims.

Coach Ken Nelson, who is currently the Campolindo Junior Varsity Coach, had worked with coach Scheibley in the past said, "He can be very loud at times. I never personally heard him use foul language. I never saw him cross the line. The problem is the parents don't see the kids during practice." Campo wrestling coach Bob McLaughlin states, "Why would you subject yourself to the long hours and low pay if you didn't love to work with kids and enjoy being a mentor? There's more to coaching

than helping with athletic skills, you teach right and wrong."

In the meantime, parents throughout Lamorinda have definite opinions about what's going on. In a very unscientific poll, Lamorinda parents I spoke with had comments that fell into two camps, coaches can definitely be abusive or parents are way too involved in their kids' teams. Of the many parents I spoke with most seemed to agree with parent micro-management. One parent and long time coach echoed these sentiments, "Coaches haven't changed much, it's the sensitivity from the parents that has changed. 'Can't be my kid, must be the coach.' Lamorinda parents are just more involved, there hasn't been one sport without controversy." He went on to name several high school coaches who have been the subject of parental

complaints.

In the alternative, a concerned mom stated, "My son couldn't stand to be the object of his anger. (This particular coach) turned him off to sports entirely. He certainly is abusive, at times choosing to humiliate players." Lately some students have quit high schools sports teams because they felt the coaches were mean or abusive or both. Mr. Clouse clearly falls into this school of thought, "As a father, I'm not going to sit back and let my son take that kind of abuse."

Where is the line between constructive criticism and abuse? How loud is too loud? No one seems quite sure at the moment. When the Acalanes Union High School Board holds their regular meeting on the 15th, perhaps at least Mr. Scheibley will find out.

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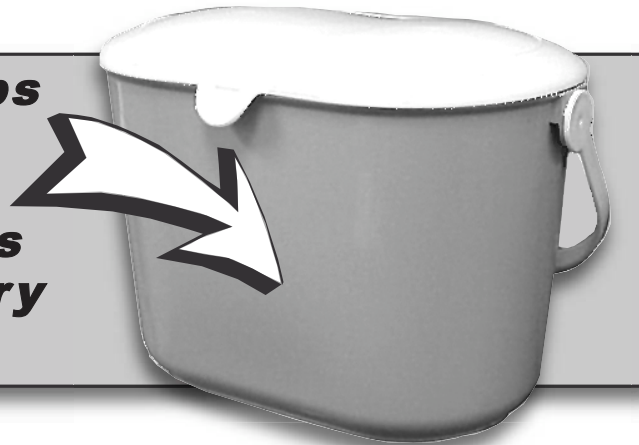
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