



**Letter to newspaper editors and publishers regarding the op-ed piece entitled “Dear Mom and Dad: Cool it”**

January 2019

Dear Sports Media Representatives:

If the headline of the attached op-ed piece that we are encouraging you to publish seems a bit provocative, it’s by design. You are welcome to edit it as you see fit. But before you do, please read on.

As the column points out, the parents of high school student-athletes in our community are not only causing a stir, they also are causing a problem. We have a shortage of licensed high school officials in our state. Not only are experienced officials retiring, but younger officials are quitting. Why? Because of parental abuse. In fact, research shows that 80 percent of all young officials quit after just two years on the job because of the verbal beating they get. And much of that abuse is coming not from high school coaches or athletes, but from overly-competitive, overly-ambitious parents who have an unrealistic vision of their sons’ and daughters’ future as a collegiate or professional athlete.

The net result is that athletic events in many communities in our state are being rescheduled, postponed or even cancelled because there aren’t enough men and women to officiate them. Fewer games mean fewer opportunities for the next generation to learn the leadership skills our community needs.

Will you please give serious consideration to publishing the attached op-ed? It addresses an urgent need that is affecting our community in a negative way.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert A. Lombardi  
Executive Director



## **Headline: Dear Mom and Dad: Cool it**

By Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and Bob Lombardi, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

If you are the mother or father of a high school athlete here in Pennsylvania, this message is primarily for you.

When you attend an athletic event that involves your son or daughter, cheer to your heart's content, enjoy the camaraderie that high school sports offer and have fun. But when it comes to verbally criticizing game officials or coaches, cool it.

Make no mistake about it. Your passion is admired, and your support of the hometown team is needed. But so is your self-control. Yelling, screaming and berating the officials humiliates your child, annoys those sitting around you, embarrasses your child's school and is the primary reason Pennsylvania has an alarming shortage of high school officials.

It's true. According to a recent survey by the National Association of Sports Officials, more than 75 percent of all high school officials say "adult behavior" is the primary reason they quit. And 80 percent of all young officials hang up their stripes after just two years of whistle blowing. Why? They don't need your abuse.

Plus, there's a ripple effect. There are more officials over 60 than under 30 in many areas. And as older, experienced officials retire, there aren't enough younger ones to replace them. If there are no officials, there are no games. The shortage of licensed high school officials is severe enough in some areas that athletic events are being postponed or cancelled—especially at the freshman and junior varsity levels.

Research confirms that participation in high school sports and activities instills a sense of pride in school and community, teaches lifelong lessons like the value of teamwork and self-discipline and facilitates the physical and emotional development of those who participate. So, if the games go away because there aren't enough men and women to officiate them, the loss will be infinitely greater than just an "L" on the scoreboard. It will be putting a dent in your community's future.

If you would like to be a part of the solution to the shortage of high school officials, you can sign up to become a licensed official at [HighSchoolOfficials.com](http://HighSchoolOfficials.com). Otherwise, adult role models at high school athletic events here in Pennsylvania are always welcome.