

Civic Minds

Date: Friday, April 29, 2016

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Article Title: Bellevue football probe slams coaches, district

Section: Main, A1

Vocabulary:

Look up the definition of **redacted**. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

“Citing **redacted** transcripts of Bellevue football players at AI, the report found other “dramatic improvements” in players’ grades once they attended the institute.”

Comprehension Questions

1. What did an independent investigation into the Bellevue High football team uncover?
2. How many pages is the report?
3. What 4 main points does the report focus on?
4. The widespread findings were backed by what?
5. The investigators wrote that their work was hampered by the district’s practice of what?
6. The WIAA inquiry focused much of its attention on the Academic Institute (AI). What is it?
7. In a news story last year, The Seattle Times found that at least _____ football players in recent years had attended Academic Institute.
8. Bellevue football boosters had helped coordinate what?
9. Why were some players attending AI?
10. With new information from the district and the institute, the WIAA investigation found that _____ Bellevue football players attended the school either full time or part time between 2011 and 2015, according to the report. What was surprising about what the study found? How many other football players were at AI from the other Bellevue high schools?
11. Investigators said the district for four months refused to provide residential address information for _____ players who appeared to have transferred to Bellevue High and played football, even though the district itself, through the WIAA, had requested that the investigation examine whether athletes had used false addresses to gain eligibility.
12. The inquiry focused on 42 players — at least _____ of them minorities — who had transferred into Bellevue between 2008 and 2015.

Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts:

Goncharoff wanted a player to take four summer classes “to replace the grades he had received at BHS,” the investigators wrote. The player had received four Fs in his Bellevue High classes, making him ineligible to play football. At the for-profit school, however, he took the same four classes and got three Bs and an A, according to the report.

Citing redacted transcripts of Bellevue football players at AI, the report found other “dramatic improvements” in players’ grades once they attended the institute. One player who attended AI told investigators that one teacher provided him answers to tests. He called the program a “joke” that served as a “day care” for players.

The Academic Institute defended its academic standards after a Seattle Times story last year cited two former AI teachers calling the school a “diploma mill.”

- What do you think about the academic program at AI after reading the article?
- Are these teachers helping or hurting these students?
- What type of program would be considered a “diploma mill?”
- Do you see something wrong with transferring players to a private school (and paying for it), so students would be eligible to play football? Why or why not?
- Are athletes treated differently at your school? How?

The report also provides fuller details about cash that Goncharoff gave to a player’s family, a violation that contributed to the coach’s two-game suspension last year.

The district, in a report to the WIAA last spring, said Goncharoff had given \$300 to the family of a player for food and rent, and that another coach had provided the family with a \$3,000 loan. But the player’s father told the WIAA investigators that the \$3,000 was actually a gift, according to the report. And on two occasions, Goncharoff gave the father at least \$1,200 in cash, handed over in envelopes during meetings at Starbucks, the report said.

Through his lawyer, Goncharoff denied the father’s account Tuesday.

- Money handed over in envelopes at Starbucks. Doesn’t that seem suspicious to you?
- Do you believe that player’s father or Goncharoff?

After months of saying federal privacy laws would not let it share addresses with investigators, the district did allow investigators to see address information for some football players, the report said.

Several problems were noted: One student’s address was at a Mail Plus store inside a Bellevue mall; at another address provided, people who lived there said the student athlete had never lived there. In one case, the investigators uncovered a falsified lease agreement used to establish residence in the district.

The report said Bellevue administrators exhibited “willful blindness,” failing to exercise appropriate oversight of the numerous football players who transferred to the program.

- What do you think about the above findings? Random addresses and falsified lease agreements?

Essay

For several months, booster-club supporters and others have suggested the investigation was racially biased because the inquiry appeared to focus solely on minority players. The investigators said in the report such accusations were “absolutely unwarranted” and “blatant attempts at intimidation.”

“Our investigation has led to a disproportionate number of questions regarding players of color because a disproportionate number of football players who have transferred to BHS are players of color,” the investigators wrote.

The investigators also said the district failed to adequately investigate allegations of improper recruiting, which was the subject of another Times story last year. They said their efforts to explore the issue much further were thwarted in part due to the district’s insistence that the investigation be limited to other issues.

- Do you consider this investigation racially biased? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that “a disproportionate number of football players that transferred to BHS are players of color?” Is it just a coincidence? Why or why not?
- Do you believe improper recruiting took place? Why or why not?
- Do you think the coaches and staff think they would be caught?
- What do you think led to the spiral effect of lies and cheating the system?
- Who should be held accountable? What should their punishment be?

Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy

How the United States government interacts with the world affects people across the globe. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of US foreign policy on people in the United States and across the world.

- Using The Seattle Times e-edition, find an article from this week that deals with world politics or foreign policy.
- What are the main points of view from someone living in that particular country? How is that “view” similar and different than your own opinion, regarding the specific issue the article is discussing?
- Why is it important to study and learn about foreign policy? How does it help you understand the world we live in, using current issues and events?

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