

## **Guidelines for Post-Season Banquets and Events**

Post-season banquets and honors ceremonies should be joyous occasions. These events offer an opportunity for players, parents, patrons and coaches to gather for one final time as a group. This should be a time to celebrate the victories of the past season. Not all seasons are highly successful in terms of wins and losses. But every season generates individual victories for those that are part of the group effort to strive toward a goal. The post-season banquet or event should celebrate those successes.

Some athletic departments honor their teams and athletes in different manners. Some employ the combined format that honors all sports from a season or the year. Others employ individual banquets for each team. Still others use a combination of the two. Regardless of the mode of activity, it is imperative to establish and maintain a set of general guidelines to be followed by all parties in this type of event. Many athletic administrators have been involved in post-season banquets and ceremonies that were not well planned and/or well organized. Often the season that should have been capped by a wonderful post-season ceremony becomes marred by an ugly incident in a banquet or event. This must be avoided.

We publish our post-season banquet guidelines in our coaching handbook. These guidelines are a set of rules and suggestions that allow the coach to maintain order and decorum during the process. Some coaches have booster clubs or parents assist in the process. Regardless of the type of banquet or the process for planning and executing the event, a standard set of guidelines should be followed.

Our philosophy is that the head coach is the one person ultimately responsible for the planning and follow-through for the post-season banquets. Many larger sports employ parent clubs or committees to do much of the planning and work. Regardless of the administrative structure of the banquet, the head coach should have the final say in all decisions.

The dates for all post-season banquets or events should be placed on the school calendar months in advance. We require our coaches to receive approval from the Principal. If our building will be the site of the event, further paperwork is required by the school district early enough to plan for custodial help. In our community we also attempt to notify the local media of all post-season events at least two weeks in advance. This often allows for print or photographic coverage of the evening. Although not all events are covered, all banquets are part of the notification plan. Media coverage and the subsequent public relations exposure is very positive for not only the sport, but for the entire athletic department image with the public. Celebrating the success of young people should always be good news!

I require every sport that is going to have a post-season banquet to inform my office at least one month in advance. Dates, times and locations are recorded on my calendar as a back-up to the school calendar. We try to have at least one member of the school administrative team in attendance at every post-season banquet or ceremony. An administrative presence gives further evidence of administrative support.

We feel it is the responsibility of the head coach or his designee to inform all parents and athletic support personnel of the banquet or ceremony in writing. The list of contacts should include all those individuals that have directly assisted the program in any manner. Players can be kept informed during the course of the season. Written notification should reach all invitees several weeks before the event to assist in promoting maximum attendance for those being honored. This also allows for accurate meal counts helps plan for decorations and facility needs.

Our athletic department has made a determination that it will not be in the banquet business. We try to maximize our financial power by spending all of our available resources on players, coaches, supplies and

equipment during the regular season. It is our belief that parents and boosters are best equipped to help raise funds and obtain sponsorship for post-season banquets, ceremonies and/or events. Our athletic department purchases a pre-determined type and amount of trophies and awards for every team. We also purchase all letters, pins and numerals for letter jackets and sweaters. It is our position that it should be the responsibility of teams, parents and boosters to provide the little extras.

The basic guidelines for post-season banquets we provide include the following recommendations:

1. Pot-luck dinners or banquets in the high school cafeteria are recommended and preferred.
2. Picnic and carry-in dinners at local parks or facilities are also acceptable.
3. Catered dinners at the school should be at the expense of the parents and/or boosters.
4. Dinner banquets at off-site facilities should also be the responsibility of parents or boosters.
5. Coaches and parents may decide to meet and honor athletes without a meal being served.
6. All banquets should be completed in less than three hours. Two hours for small groups should be plenty of time. Get the job done, but do not wear people out in the process.

Most of us have been present at banquets where inappropriate language was used. Sometimes speakers do not complete their remarks in a timely manner. Often speakers make reference to athletes in ways which do not place the coach or the athlete in the best light. In some cases things can be said that ruin the event and create hard feelings that can last for years. It is recommended to give some direction to those that might speak at a post-season event. Think before you speak is always sound advice.

Several guidelines can be offered to those at the microphone. Some of our guidelines to specific banquet speakers include the following:

#### Head Coach

1. Thank everyone who helped with your program during the year.
2. Keep comments about the season short and positive.
3. Make sure every player, coach, trainer and manager is introduced by name.
4. Comments about individual players should be kept brief.
5. The majority of your player comments should be about your seniors.
6. Do your talking for the team. Players should rarely be given an open microphone.
7. You control the ceremony, not the parents or players.
8. Do not name next year's captains.

#### Junior Varsity and/or Freshman Coaches

1. Thank all those people that assisted your portion of the program.
2. Make your comments brief. The varsity coach should have the majority of time.
3. Introduce every player. You may have them stand as a group, but introduce each of them.
4. Be positive. If you do not have something nice to say, move on.
5. Do not make predictions about future success for younger team members.

#### General Guidelines for Every Speaker

1. Do not make comments about unexcused or absent players or personnel.
2. Do not make public predictions about next season.
3. There are parents who care only about their child. Don't do a play by play of the season.
4. Be positive and do not make excuses for poor performance or lack of success.
5. Check all names, spellings, awards, grade levels and honors well in advance.
6. Do not leave anybody out! There is no quicker way to ruin the evening.

#### Comments Every Speaker Should Avoid

1. Never talk about past players or coaches in a negative manner.
2. Do not make promises and/or predictions. They will come back to haunt you!
3. Anecdotes and jokes should be appropriate for the audience and should be kept to a minimum.
4. Do not spend time at the banquet recruiting for next year. This is about the past season.
5. Do not spend time at the banquet bad-mouthing opposing schools, teams or players.
6. Keep any season review brief and to the point. Do not dwell on the good or the bad.
7. If you plan to resign, the banquet is not the time or place for such an announcement.

#### Reminders about Awards

1. Do not wait until the last minute to plan, purchase or organize your awards.
2. Obtain letters, certificates, numerals and pins well in advance.
3. Organize all awards in a manner that allows easy and quick distribution to team members.
4. Plan to give most valuable player awards later in the banquet.
5. Double check spelling and lettering on all trophies and certificates before handing them out.
6. Keep multiple copies of all awards and file a copy with the athletic department.
7. Remember- Every Season is a Success!

Post-season banquets or ceremonies should be the highlight of the season. Make sure a great season is not spoiled by an unfortunate incident in a banquet or ceremony. Remember, failure to plan is planning to fail.