

A Year in Review 2017/18 and looking forward to 2018/19

At two months in, and after an excellent ASAA Golf and XC Championships

The times they are a changein.....

Have times ever changed since I started with ASAA in 1993. There was no computer at my desk, group faxes were the most efficient form of mass communication. Then this thing called email came and wow, what an amazing way to communication with people. Next was an association website in 1996, and so the technological age came to life at the ASAA. We even did away with hard copy quadruplicate team registration forms in favour of online registrations in 2002. Even more of the 'wow.'

Before internet was also a time where we made decisions and people actually accepted them. We made phone calls and sent handwritten notes in the mail. The internet age has created so many dynamics for us as an association that we are significantly hampered each time a server goes down or if we cannot get internet access. However, at the same time the things we can do for our constituents has increased dramatically in such a short number of years thanks to technology. Of course, this age of *instant everything* and the entitlement that some of today's parents and their children have grown to expect puts a lot of pressure on all of us to address their issues immediately and make decisions on the fly, with them not caring about how this might impact us but only about how they can get their way. On a positive, note it means that many parents are more involved than ever before ... but they are not always the parents we want to have more active involvement with, are they?

Given the issues that have come across my desk in the past few years, I don't think that doing the same old thing will work anymore. We have to take a deep look into our philosophy, our Bylaws and Policies and take whatever steps we need to that will protect school sport. But at the same time, we must recognize that the world many of us grew up with has changed. The delivery of education has changed, and will continue to change, choices available to today's youth in the education system have expanded dramatically, and I believe the delivery of school sport must be open to change as well. How that will look will be for the ASAA membership to decide, but the leadership of that membership comes from the Executive Committee, our Commissioners and other members of our Board of Governors – people who come together twice per year to chart the territory for school sport – people who are expected to take a global view and to make decisions in the best interests of all, not just themselves. The "larger good" should always be the focus, not "what is best for me." In the next few years we have to expand our thinking, make some controversial decisions and be open to change. At the same time, whatever decisions we make as a collective should be made with the best interests of students in mind.

I hope the summer of 2018 allowed each of you the time to breathe, to relax, ...to step aside from your phones and work emails for a little while and smell the roses. Those who volunteer in high school sport system have always given 110% to their students, and with the technological expectations today, they are less away from their devices than ever before; this can be unhealthy, and in some cases lead to burnout. To me, the 110% effort of old is now the 130% or more – there is simply more expected of school coaches and school athletic administrators with little or no additional support or prep time provided. If we can nurture the up and coming Athletic Directors and coaches in our schools to have a balance in life, we will be doing them a favour. If we can challenge our school administrators and trustees for whom school sport and other cocurricular activities have "fringe value" to recognize these activities for the positive ways they impact school culture and school communities, the better our schools will be. To those school administrators, trustees and politicians who value school sport and all the positive things it represents, and who accordingly provide the in-school supports required for students coaches and athletic administrators, including prep time, I cannot thank you enough.

For those of us "more experienced" folks, let's do what we can to provide our newer teachers and coaches the support they need so that they will want to stay in school sports. The new teachers, new coaches and new AD's need good mentors, and many of you out there are perfectly placed to play that role, but it may require you to step outside your comfort zone. Will you rise to the challenge?

The ASAA continues to be served by an outstanding team of individuals who have taken on roles of Executive Committee, Commissioner, Zone Executive, other board positions, administrating and coaching school sport. We have a staff who come to work each day, happy to be there (at least that's my perspective) and who do an outstanding job helping to serve our member schools, AD's Executive Board and of course student athletes. They take their roles seriously too and for that I am very appreciative for my team.

Your Executive Committee is a group of outstanding individuals who put in more time on ASAA matters that you could ever know. I bounce many things off them and they are always ready and willing to assist me and the other staff. Your Commissioners are our experts and we are so thankful for their commitment. Your Zone Executive members commit significant time to their roles and Zone athletics would be a mess without their dedication and expertise.

Some exciting things from the last school year:

- The re-emergence of the IMPACT workshops and our "sold out" attendance for May 15
- An agreement signed with Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) that will see the courses at schoolcoach.ca move over to CAC's portal in 2019/20 and each course registrant obtaining a CAC #
- The continued rapid growth of Unified sports and the excitement of the Unified Basketball Demonstration event at our 3A provincials
- The slower, yet encouraging growth of para athletics and overall reach in inclusion-based activities, especially compared to what is happening across the country
- Superbly run ASAA Championships by outstanding volunteers
- Excellent Alberta involvement at the 3rd annual CIAAA National Conference in Regina
- Coming closer to our second consecutive balanced budget.

Some not so exciting things this past year:

An increase in reports of unsportsmanlike actions by student athletes and coaches at ASAA Provincials, parents (and their children by extension) for whom the answer "no" is not good enough for whom their first action is to come out swinging when things don't go their way. Threats of "going to the media" or "plastering this over social media" or threatening legal action is becoming far too common and what is most frustrating to me is the significant time it takes me to deal with these types of situations when my time would be much better spent trying to make the world of school sport better for our constituents. Frustrating are the challenges from outside groups who feel they should have some say over how high school sport is conducted or who say that we should not have the rules that we have – rules that protect the integrity of sport in schools; rules that promote educational athletics and multi-sport participation, situations where the ASAA, our teacher coaches and AD's are constantly trying to do more with less. ASAA has not had a funding increase from the government since we had our annual funding cut by 18% in 2010. This is frustrating and the current economic climate does not show much promise for an improvement to this situation. We also experienced a number of frustrating issues with our web/SRS provider – but on the upside, we have moved to a different provider and are encouraged by our initial interactions with them – may improvements to SRS have already occurred and others will be put in place throughout the coming year. I encourage AD's to let us know how to improve this system further.

I am consistently grateful for the support we receive from all of you and I particularly want to thank by name, our Executive Committee and staff without whom we would not be able to face daily challenges and capitalize on regular opportunities that cross our desks:

ASAA President Rick Gilson, ASAA Vice-President George Hoyt, ASAA Executive Member at Large Tim Main, Athletic Directors on the ASAA Executive: Sheila Garber, Cody Magneson and Hank Smid. ASAA staff members: Senior Assistant Director Mike Steele, Assistant Director Deanna Metro, Unified Sports

Director Shanna Kurylo, Compliance Officer Morgan Munroe, CIAAA Executive Director Drew Hanson and our new Administrative Assistant Heidi MacDonald.

As we start a new school year, I encourage all of you to continue to ask yourself “what can we do better?” and to share those thoughts with both the ASAA Executive and ASAA staff so we can act on some of your ideas. Let’s hope 2018/19 is another great year of high school sports in Alberta.

John Paton, Executive Director