

March 10, 2020

Open letter to our Trinity Catholic boys' basketball family:

By now, you've all heard the disappointing news that the Connecticut State Championship basketball tournament has been cancelled. This brings to an unfortunate end an otherwise amazing season for us. I won't weigh-in too heavily on the wisdom (or lack thereof) of the CIAC's decision. I've heard others argue for an ongoing tournament that excludes fans and/or for other more rational alternatives, which frankly I agree with. At the same time, I do want to express to you all how sad I am for you, your families, our Crusader Nation, and on some level the broader world based upon all we're dealing with today.

First, I want to commend you on all you've accomplished as a team this year. You've put an incredible amount of time and effort into achieving your goals for the season. For many of you, basketball is your primary sport, and I know how much time you spent together this Fall in the weight room, in open gym sessions, and developing your individual skills. I challenged you at the end of last season to practice according to your aspirations, and you've done that many times over. Our unfinished business does nothing to diminish how proud I am of you, or even more importantly how proud you should be of yourselves.

Of course, within the Trinity Catholic community it's understandable if our disappointment is magnified. The Diocese of Bridgeport decided earlier this month to close Trinity Catholic High School at the end of the current academic year; and with that, the CIAC's announcement today puts a premature end not only to the current basketball season but to a storied basketball history. Thus, not only our Seniors are effected by the CIAC's decision as they are at other schools; but our underclassmen, teachers, alumni and coaches are effected as well. I can understand full well the collective disappointment each of these constituencies feel. Please know that I share in this disappointment in spades.

Even more significantly, I empathize with the fact that you might be feeling as if the CIAC's decision in this instance might be only the latest example of adult decision-making effecting you guys that has much more to do with covering their own butts than it does with what is in fact in your best interest. The litigious and second-guessing world that adults have created undoubtedly leads them to decisions designed to ensure no criticism after the fact, which unfortunately sometimes comes at your expense. I'm sorry for that as well.

In turn, what I am most concerned with – as both a coach and father – is the level of anxiety adults continue to produce in you. In the current situation, I can only imagine

that the CIAC's decision leaves you feeling either worried about the serious risk the Corona virus must pose to us, or if the risks aren't quite so great then how decisions are being made without adequately considering your true best interest. This is one of a series of mixed messages our generation continues to send you. Invest in the future; but live your best life today. You can self-advocate; yet we hover over you at every turn. How on earth can you possibly know the right balance to strike among all these competing messages? Of course, you're confused and angry with us. We're supposed to be keeping you happy, safe and at peace; and yet at every turn we seem to ratchet up the pressure upon you. At this point, all I can say is please stay the course – with your mental health and well-being at the top of my wish list for you.

I know how much you have sacrificed to get here – for yourselves; for each other; for me and the other coaches; and for all of Crusader Nation. I speak for our entire community when I express just how grateful we all are to you. For the last five months, you have defied your young age, putting us all on your backs as you've exclaimed “follow the leaders!” Words don't do justice to how proud everyone continues to be of how you battled adversity in the FCIAC Championship game last week.

At this point, I'm afraid there's nothing we can do to steal back the opportunity to win a Connecticut State Championship that's been taken from us. I wish there was. However, in the words of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I will simply say that “not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck”. Even from this event you can draw life lessons about how tomorrow is not guaranteed to any of us, and that the ball stops bouncing at some point. As you continue to pursue your hoop goals and dreams, don't lose sight of the fact that your education is the ticket to the life you want. Pursue it with vigor; and leave it all on the “court” each time out.

From an older head, let me promise you that the disappointment of this moment WILL fade. In the meantime, try not to spend all of your time focusing on this unhappy ending, at the expense of instead remembering always the love we've been lucky to have playing both for and with one another. You are a truly incredible group of high-character young men.

Fellas, the best IS yet to come. But level-headedness and leadership from young people is unfortunately what it will take for us to get us there. Be the change you want to see in the world! PEACE!!!

— Coach K

#speedbumpnostopsign