

## sports & outdoors

# Disappointment for girls varsity field hockey

After playing themselves into a position to control their own destiny by beating Wareham 2-1 last Tuesday, the girls varsity field hockey team faced a do or die situation.

Nantucket hosted Tyngsborough

high school on Saturday needing a win or at least a tie in order to amass enough points to put them into the playoffs. Unfortunately, Nantucket will have to wait another year to try it again, losing a tight match 3-0 and

dashing their hopes for this season.

On Saturday we were tied at the half 0-0 and they scored their first goal with 12 minutes remaining, and then the floodgates opened," said coach Lori Moran. "We were without senior

sweeper Marissa Moran and it was Cassie Moran and Jessica Norris' final game also." ■

— Linda Williams

## BOYS SOCCER

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Harvey Young, staunch supporter of the program and father of senior defenseman Jasper Young, one of four seniors leaving the team in the spring, along with Russell Bartlett, Carl Stevens and Josh Van Hoesen, was upset about the situation. "I am concerned there is no accountability. This was something beyond the kids' control that unfairly affected the team. We need to know how this happened and make sure it does not happen again. It may be a life learning experience, but part of that experience is that if someone messes up there should be consequences for that." He was impressed with the players' attitudes. "The mood was really good. It fits this team and the soccer family. They were just happy to be together and there was no blame for the player. They seemed to be basically moving onto the next chapter of their young lives. We need to get answers and pay closer attention to this in the future."

Senior captain Jasper Young felt that the impact was felt most keenly by the seniors as this was their last chance to take the season further. "Carl had played with us for only two years, but Russell and I had been playing for Rich for five years because we got a waiver as eighth graders to play. It was devastating to end our high school soccer careers like this. All season long we worked to get to the playoffs playing D1 teams when we could have played a bunch of easy teams. We deliberately played harder teams that were going to be in the playoffs to get match tough. It was simply taken out of our hands and the team should not have to pay for the administration's mistake." Young was positive about the season nonetheless. "I feel like this season the team dynamic was stronger, it was a lot more than just playing soccer and winning games, it was like a big family. I felt like we were closer than we have ever been in the five years I have been playing. I do not plan to play in college as I will be majoring in engineering. This was it for me." Young echoed his father's concerns about accountability. He stated that the players really appreciated Kelly's apology but felt there was more to the story. "The athletic director had an opportunity to apologize to the team after Mr. Kelly did and she did not."

Athletic Director Nancy Larrabee was on the field after Friday's game along with Kelly, who again apologized to the team and parents, expressing how proud he was of the team. According to Young, Larrabee did not specifically apologize. "That was the part that upsets the team" Young said. "Someone messed up somewhere and it was not our coach. The player messed up partly because of the language barrier and that made it harder on him. But the miscommunication between guidance and the AD is hard to deal with. Someone should have known."

The player at the center of the storm, his identity protected due to confidentiality concerns, spoke about the problem the day he was taken off the team at the end of September. "I knew nothing about this. My parents did not understand what happened when they got my report card in the mail. I did not know about the rules about whether I could play or not. I

did my best to pass those courses even though I did not understand the information all the time. I would have gone to summer school if I had known. It am really sad about this." He also stated that his grades were up to the standards set by the school for the fall semester. The irony is that he would have been eligible to play in the post season as of next week. He was visibly shaken at the game on Friday, having been talked into coming by the team as he was a part of the team nevertheless. Young reported that the player had felt responsible for costing the team the season. "None of us were blaming him or the mix up with his name. He was a part of this team and it was not his or the team's fault this happened. How many kids go around the school without the school knowing who the kid is? It does not make sense."

Brannigan questioned whether the alleged name change had any bearing on creating the problem. "The player has been using the same family name for three years and has been listed on the roster for the varsity as well as the NSSA spring travel teams under this name, despite the error within the school system as to the use of his other family name." Brannigan was unaware that there had allegedly been a legal name change. "It is the only name that I know and he did not change his name to avoid academic sanctions and that is ridiculous for sure. He is a great kid and was just as baffled by this as the rest of us. He knew nothing about this and his parents did not understand English well enough to have been able to deal with this in June. He is devastated by this."

Brannigan was unsure what happened. "I understood that guidance provided a list of ineligible students to the AD and Nancy is supposed to verify that the students are okay. I have never questioned this in the past. All players on a team should be verified, and had that been done, the name difference would have been immediately caught."

Brannigan also questioned the fairness of the MIAA rules about eligibility. "I hope that the MIAA looks at what the repercussions are for this type of situation. Why does the team need to suffer in a situation where they were not to blame for anything? Can't there be some sort of financial repercussions or more stringent transparency standards between the school and the MIAA, constructive type of stuff that will force change amongst a school system where something like this can easily be brushed under the rug. The team is out of the championship. What happens if we pay no attention to this and do not get to the bottom of this? Next year will roll around and nothing has changed. That is my biggest concern with this that nothing will change and there remains a potential for this to happen again."

Principal George Kelly was saddened by the turn of events. "I wanted to make sure that we had done everything possible. The legal department thought it was a useless exercise to pursue injunctive relief against the MIAA ruling and it could have negative repercussions later on." Kelly was pragmatic. "In situations like this, there are gray areas and things are not always fair. It is not black and white and I understand that. The courts seldom side with the

administration of the schools and are reluctant to overturn the state associations."

Kelly was encouraged by the response of the players to the news. "This team held itself together during a really hard season. It was not the kids, or the parents or the coach. It was the administration and I take full responsibility for the situation as the principal. The buck stops at my desk no matter what. I pursued the appeal process and nothing could be done." Kelly was looking forward. "What has to be done now is to begin the process on how to avoid this in the future. We need to put more checks and balances in place and we will certainly look into how much other personnel have to be educated in this process. We will do better."

Kelly was apologetic as well and concern for the players and their families was clearly visible. "I apologized to the team on Thursday. I told them how proud of them I was for the way they conducted themselves and they acted like the champions that they truly are." He understood that players and family members would be angry at the situation and welcomed the opportunity to discuss the matter with them. "Nantucket teams have established a positive reputation and I am impressed with the way the players have taken the high road here. The team deserves congratulations for the fine season and have set a good example for all of us."

Something went radically awry and nothing could be done about it. The team could have fallen apart on Thursday, but as they have done all season long, they regrouped and went on to beat Sturgis on Friday before a large home crowd 3-1 to end the season on a high note. Senior Carl Stevens scored the first two and senior Russell Bartlett, usually in goal, scored his one and only varsity goal for the Whalers to put the game out of reach.

"Despite everything, I am pleased with the season, I could not be happier and more proud of this group of kids," Brannigan added. "There were so many things that could have thrown a major wrench into the season and they kept going. It was so enjoyable to see them play on Friday less than 24 hours after receiving such devastating news they were able to pull it out and have a great time. I was grateful that they had one more chance to end the season on a high note."

Brannigan was also optimistic about the next year. "I see a lot of positives for next year, because we are only losing four seniors and have a lot of players coming up. They all got a lot of experience this year filling in for injured players."

In other soccer news, the varsity girls team trounced Lighthouse League foe Provincetown 10-0 last Tuesday, followed up by another shellacking of Sturgis 8-0. Both games saw the scoring spread out among several players, with neither of the opponents posing much of a challenge for the girls. In the latter game, JV players were started in each half before varsity players were substituted in. Sturgis crossed the center line only a few times during the game only to be turned back by Nantucket's defense. One more game remained for the girls this past Tuesday, the results of which were not available at press time. ■