

Double Goal Marketing

Student-Athletes Can Play Significant Role In Success Of Program

By BRIAN CAIN

Special To Collegiate Baseball

NEWPORT, Vt. — I firmly believe that the best advocates who can successfully market your baseball program are your student-athletes.

Parents and community members are strongly influenced by what the student-athletes say and more importantly how they act.

In this article you will learn about some ideas and projects that we have used to maximize the educational and athletic experience of our athletes.

Maximizing Athletic Council

The goal of our athletic council is to provide an educational experience for them in which they can help market our school, and get a small taste of how great a career in athletics can be.

Our athletic council is comprised of athletes and non-athletes from the 9-12th grade.

In the second week of school, we have an application process in which students who are interested in joining the council answer questions about what types of projects they would like to take a lead on or help promote our program in the community. Also, what they think they can offer to the council as an individual is discussed. Students must maintain a GPA of 2.0 and be in good behavioral standing.

The following are some of the projects that the NCUHS Athletic Council has undertaken and excelled in to positively promote themselves and the school.



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School Poster Project

Collaborating with the school's business/marketing classes and the school's computer graphics design classes, the athletic council was able to develop a poster project in which the schedules for our season were placed over a photograph of our senior athletes.

On the bottom of the poster were advertisements from local businesses that wanted to show their support of NCUHS.

The advertisements were obtained by our students who used the opportunity as a "real world" educational part of their class.

The students presented the idea to the local businesses and were able to take what they learned in the classroom about sales and marketing and put it to use for the benefit of the school and their own education.

The computer graphics design class was responsible for designing the poster on the computer, also a "real world" educational experience for those students.

The poster project has produced an average of \$3-5,000 per season for the athletic department and has also served as a motivational source for our athletes to participate in sports through their senior year.

Falcon Fridays

One of the requirements to be on the athletic council was to sell at least five Falcon Friday T-shirts. The person was buying had to be committed to wearing it on Friday's as a way to demonstrate that they were a supporter of the school.

This project not only looks great when you walk down the halls of the school on a Friday, but it also serves as a common bond between students, faculty & staff, parents, community members and non-athletic students that are searching for a way to get connected to the school.

Web Site

Working with a group of students to better design the school's athletic web page has saved me a tremendous amount of time as an athletic director.

Coaching a class on how I wanted our web page to look as well as how I wanted it to function served as a positive challenge for them, but also a way for them as non-athletes to get committed and connected to the school and the athletic program.

I would spend 5-10 minutes a day/looking at other web pages and going over with the students what I wanted "ours" to look like.

They were able to exceed my expectations and develop a web page that provides information to parents, athletes and community members about what is happening in our program. It is amazing what the students will come up with if you give them some direction.

You can visit our great website at www.ncuhs.org/spots

Web Photos

A favorite link from our website is a link to www.phanfare.com.

Phanfare is a website that allows schools to upload photos for free to a site where people can then go and view, download or print their favorite photos. One of our students from the photography class comes to our games and takes as many digital photos as possible.

The student photographer will then upload all the photos to the Phanfare site for free.

This has not only promoted our athletic program in our community and with the families and friends of our athletes, but also statewide.

When a team comes to play North Country, instructions are given in our program on how to view the photos from the day's game.

We now have student-athletes from all over the state of Vermont excited to come play at NCUHS because they will be able to see their photos on the web.

That is quite a change in perspective from the days where kids would want to know if they could fly to play us because it was so far away.

A good experience for our student photographer, and a big piece of positive marketing for NCUHS state wide.

Positive Sportsmanship

The athletic council also sponsors a yearly Homecoming dance.

The dance is a good fundraiser but more importantly it is a great spirit raiser.

Instead of having the students dress in formal or semi-formal attire, they come dressed up in their most school spirited outfit.

You will see people who have altered their clothes so that one half of their outfit is Columbia Blue while the other is Maroon (our school colors).

The students will also participate in cheering contests which promote positive sportsmanship in competition.

This dance serves as a great springboard for our positive sportsmanship emphasis in which we encourage the students to use the cheers that they came up with for the dance at games.

Community Service

We stress the importance of giving back to the community and community service. Our emphasis is on developing an athletic program from K-12.

In order to do that I expect a lot from our coaches and players, part of which is to do a community service project.

The coaches are encouraged and supported in their efforts to hold youth coaching clinics so that they can get their philosophies and fundamentals out to the youth coaches in an attempt to provide consistency in quality of instruction and to help speed the athletic learning curve as much as possible.

We also put an emphasis on running Junior Falcon Camps in which the coach and their players organize summer camps which promote the school, our athletic program, our athletes and lead to developing solid relationships in the community.

Athletes Are Role Models

We also believe that our athletes are role models for the younger athletes in the community. We try to do as many projects as possible in which our athletes are put in a position to work with the youth in the area.

Our football team did a Helmet-to-Helmet program in which they went into the sending elementary schools and talked about the importance of bicycle helmet safety.

Their message was that we would never play football without a helmet, why would you ride a bike without a helmet?

Our athletes then gave out bike helmets that were donated by a local bike shop.

The athletes who were there also passed out the fall season posters which they then autographed for the kids.

Tickets to the next home game were also passed out.

That day our football coach also talked to his team about the importance of modeling the type of athlete that we want to be and how we need to carry ourselves as athletes because these young impressionable kids are coming to our game to watch us.

At the next game, many of those students who were educated the day before on bike helmet safety were there to watch those athletes play football.

Special Tournament

I challenged the athletic council to come up with an event that could bring students/faculty staff and the community together.

The final product was a Bonfire/Horseshoe tournament in which students had to team up with an adult from the school or community.

The tournament lasts about two hours while at the same time our students are cooking hamburgers and hotdogs which they sell at the concession.

Other students are playing waffle ball, others are playing student vs. faculty volleyball.

After the tournament is finished, the fall sports teams then participate in a lip-syn contest in which the loudest applause brings victory.

We had a plaque donated from a local supplier and what was at first thought of by students as an "off the wall idea" that would never work, has turned into a great evening for students, parents, and faculty.

24-Hour Walkathon

Last year we had a student athlete severely injured in an ATV crash.

When I approached the athletic council, they had already been thinking about how we could turn this adversity into a positive experience.

We organized a 24-hour walkathon in which the goal was to have at least one person walking on the track at all times and to raise at least \$2,400 total, an average of \$100 per hour.

The walkathon started at 12 p.m. on Thursday and concluded at 12 p.m. on Friday. Teachers had their classes fundraise monies and then go out to our track for part of their class that day to walk.

We had students cooking food, playing music and providing encouragement for those who were trying to help raise funds.

After the 24 hour period we had raised over \$8,400 for the individual and his family. There was one student that walked the entire 24 hours.

He was carried by his classmates for the entire last lap in front of a crowd of about 600 students, teachers and community members who were all there to help a member of the Falcon Family.

It was an extremely emotional day.

Halftime Entertainment

Our students wanted to do more marketing and provide more fan excitement to the halftimes of our games like they were seeing at the collegiate level.

We tried a halftime soccer shootout vs. the Athletic Director.

We also have done a punt, pass and kick contests at halftime of football games.

Basketball games featured the dress dribble and shoot contest in which young kids got to dress in a NCUHS Varsity uniform and try to make a lay up.

We also had 3-point contests and events in which the participants would try to make as many shots in a minute as possible.

The awards for winning any of these contests was a free large pizza donated from the local pizzeria.

Our students and a volunteer faculty member run the events, and the students have had a great experience in putting them on, indicative by the number of our students from last year's class that are studying athletic administration or sports management in college.

Pocket Schedules

If you are looking for a place to start with your athletic council and an easy way to get information about your games out to the public, try making pocket schedules.

Have a student type your schedules into a tri-fold brochure.

These schedules can then be distributed by your athletic council members, having them place the schedules on the counter tops at local businesses or restaurants.

You can also put information about your sportsmanship expectations or highlight the accomplishments of your athletes and coaches.

Brian M. Cain, MS, CAA is the Director of Brian Cain Baseball and one of the top Peak Performance Coaches in baseball today. He is also the Athletic Director at North Country Union High School in Newport, VT. NCUHS is one of the five largest schools in Vermont with a student enrollment of 1,050. Located in the beautiful Northeast Kingdom of VT, the average road trip for a NCUHS baseball game is just over two hours.

Cain, in his third year at NCUHS presented on Double Goal Coaching at the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association National Conference in Orlando, FL and shares some of the techniques he has used to promote both his school and the coaching profession. These techniques are easily applied to both high school and college programs looking to provide a more positive experience for their student-athletes and communities.

For more information or a free copy of the poster or pocket schedules mentioned in this article, or to have any of your questions answered please contact Brian M. Cain, MS, CAA at bcain@ncuhs.org or by calling (802) 334-7921 X 3025.

If you are looking for more information on how to get people at your games or for more ideas on developing mentally tough players, check out the Brian Cain Inner Circle at www.BrianCainInnerCircle.com