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**Would football face same fate as school band?**

By [CLIFF WILTSHIRE](#)

Did you hear the news? South High School won't be fielding a varsity football team this fall.

The official explanation is that the program couldn't get enough linemen to try out for the team, so the season had to be canceled. They had quarterbacks, running backs, wide receivers -- but not enough linemen.

Students and people close to the program were stunned. Parents and fans reacted with a mixture of sadness and anger, furious that their beloved football team would not take the field for homecoming or senior parents night or to compete for a league title.

Administrators shrugged their shoulders and said, "Well, numbers have been down for a few years now, with high student fees and several coaching changes scaring players away. And the team wanted to travel to away games, which really put a strain on the budget. Without enough students to play on the line, we thought it was best to take a break this fall and try again next year."

School district leaders acknowledge there are plenty of students who still want to play this season. Those kids have been working hard in the off-season, all for a chance to shine this fall -- perhaps even for a chance to earn college scholarships.

So those players will be given the opportunity to make the football team at crosstown rival North High School. That might be a little awkward, especially with two all-district running backs and only one ball. But kids are flexible, right?

Administrators admit this might not be the optimum solution. But it will be a good lesson in life for the students who are involved. Life isn't always fair, after all, and sometimes you need to hit rock bottom before things get better.

Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Yet this is a true story, with one revision. It's the Westerville South High School marching band that's having its season canceled this fall instead of the football team.

There are more similarities between the two programs than you might think. Those go beyond the uniforms and the hundreds of students involved and the stadiums they share.

High school marching bands participate in intense practice sessions, including two-a-days and special camps during the summer. The work helps them prepare for the precision marching they will need to accomplish throughout the fall.

Band members work as a team, with participants needing to physically and mentally contribute in order for the group to succeed.

Many marching bands also compete. They strive for excellence, judging themselves by how they improve their own scores as well as how they compare to bands from other schools.

Along the way, band members hopefully learn the value of hard work, of pulling together as a unit, of combining individual efforts to achieve successes as a group. Rewards are found in the efforts as much as in the results.

Of course, there are striking differences as well.

If a football program was canceled, most of the school community would be up at arms. Parents would threaten lawsuits. Passionate fans would demand an investigation.

School board members would insist upon accountability, asking how such a valuable and nationally recognized program could fall so precipitously in such a short amount of time. Coaches, athletic directors, principals and even the superintendent would be called on the carpet to explain what happened and instructed to quickly come up with solutions.

But do you know what the bottom line difference in the two situations is?

If this was high school football, we would have never reached this point. None of the interested parties would have allowed the situation to deteriorate to the extent that a season would need to be canceled.

The fact that this was allowed to occur for a high school marching band is a shame for the entire community.

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