

Resource Allocation in a Public High School Athletic Department

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Bob Marcus could not have been more excited. After serving 15 years as head boys basketball coach and another eight as assistant principal at Evergreen High School in the Dallas area, he had just been named athletic director for the entire Woodlakes Independent School District near Houston, Texas. One of the most exciting aspects of his new job was the opening of Pine Forest Senior High. Bob would be charged with developing the athletic budget, staff, and facility design.

Before he could begin on the new school project, however, he was faced with difficult problems at the existing district high school, Oakbend Senior High. Oakbend was a growing school and had recently been classified in the largest competitive league in Texas. It was bursting at the seams, with 2,500 students, and more were entering each year (hence the need for an additional high school). In spite of a growing tax base, recent bonds had failed to pass and the district found itself with a deficit for the third year in a row. Budget cuts were on the horizon.

As the new athletic director, Bob was charged with creating and balancing the budget for the 19 sports offered at Oakbend. Based on two assumptions, Bob felt the athletic budget would be safe from the budget slashing other departments were facing. First, athletics had always been a top priority for the Woodlakes District. Their football team had made the playoffs every year for the past nine years, volleyball had made the final four two years ago, baseball had been district champions for the past six years, and the girls softball team was state runner-up just last season. Second, even in the short time he'd been there, Bob felt the athletic department already ran a very tight ship, with little room for adjustment.

In spite of his assumptions and lengthy experience as an administrator, Bob Marcus could not have been more wrong. When he received the memo mid-morning on Friday outlining the new budgets for all departments, he could not believe his eyes. On the fourth line down, he saw the bad news:

Athletic Department: \$312,000 (all dollars in this case are US\$)

He quickly ran through the numbers. Currently, the athletic department operated on \$364,500. The cut would be \$52,500!

He dialed the district superintendent, Mark Hudson, planning to plead his case for more money.

"Mark, you know we run a tight ship over here and we have to provide opportunities for these kids to play. That's a stated goal of the district and a big reason why I came here."

"I understand your frustration, Bob, but the cuts are district-wide. We need athletics to tighten their belts a little bit as well. I know you can find the money somewhere, even if you have to raise it. I know we've always had a district policy of fully funding our athletic programs, but we just can't seem to get the tax support to do it. I hate to think about it, but there's even been some talk about following other programs in the state and implementing a fee for participation."

"Really? I thought that would be the last move by our administration. Surely there's another way?"

"I certainly hope so and I'm sure you can find it, Bob. Be sure to keep me updated on your progress. We're counting on you to help the district in this crunch time."

Bob hung up. Implementing a participation fee was the last option he wanted to try. Surely he could find the money to cut in the budgets or figure out how the booster clubs for each team could help.

After several hours of contemplation, he e-mailed all the head coaches, informing them of the current budget request (see Table 1) and the impending cuts, and soliciting their suggestions. He emphasised that their voices would be heard, but that final decisions would remain his. He set a staff meeting for two weeks from that day, where he would share his plan for the adjusted budgets and try to begin the fall season on a positive note.

Even before lunch, Bob received his second major surprise. The coaches had not seen the entire athletic budget for as long as any of them could remember. His conversation with Gary Morehead, the boys basketball coach, was probably the most pointed, but was similar to those he had with at least six other coaches.

"Thanks for the memo, Bob. I can't believe we are in this mess of having to cut budgets. Why won't the people in this district support us more?"

"I don't know," said Bob. "I've done all I can to ask for more money, but the superintendent won't budge. He feels we need to make cuts just like everyone else. Have any brilliant solutions come to mind yet?"

"Well, since you ask, I do have one question. I realise that we pay for officials, training room supplies, insurance, uniforms, buses, and major equipment out of

Table 1: Oakbend Senior High School Athletic Budget**Woodlakes Independent School District Athletic Department****Athletic Department Budget Request – 2002–2003 Fiscal Year**

Account no.	Account	Amount
36-6219-14	Officials	38,000
36-6249-14	Maintenance and repair	10,000
36-6299-14	Safety services – parking	7,500
36-6341-14	Team meals	40,000
36-6396-14	Medical supplies	13,000
36-6398-14	Grounds supplies	13,000
36-6399-14	Supplies – coaching	5,500
36-6399-B1	Supplies – football	22,000
36-6399-B2	Supplies – boys basketball	4,000
36-6399-B3	Supplies – boys track	5,000
36-6399-B4	Supplies – tennis	4,000
36-6399-B5	Supplies – boys baseball	5,000
36-6399-B6	Supplies – golf	2,000
36-6399-B7	Supplies – cross country	1,500
36-6399-B8	Supplies – boys soccer	5,000
36-6399-B9	Supplies – powerlifting	1,000
36-6399-G2	Supplies – girls basketball	4,000
36-6399-G4	Supplies – girls track	5,000
36-6399-G5	Supplies – girls softball	4,000
36-6399-G6	Supplies – girls volleyball	4,000
36-6399-G8	Supplies – girls soccer	4,500
36-6399-G9	Supplies – swimming	4,000
36-6411-14	Coaching travel	15,000
36-6412-14	Student travel	32,000
36-6426-14	Player insurance	25,000
36-6497-14	Awards	12,000
36-6499-14	Fees and dues	12,000
36-6647-14	Uniforms	33,000
36-6649-14	Equipment	32,000
36-6648-00	Computer equipment	1,500
		\$ 364,500

a central budget, but I had no idea we also had a budget for team meals, coaching travel, other equipment, and awards. For the five years I've been here, I've been paying for all those things out of my \$4,000–\$5,000 supply budget. No wonder I feel like we never have any money! I am never able to sponsor trips for my assistant coaches to clinics or development activities. We hardly ever stop and eat after a game. We simply never have any money for that. Now I know why; football has been taking all that money for themselves, haven't they?"

"Wow, Gary, I'm stunned. This is the first time I've even looked at the budget myself. I just assumed that every team was covered in the central budget items. I don't know where the extra money is going, but I'll find out and we'll come to a fair solution. I promise. Give me a little time to check it out."

"Thanks, Bob. I didn't mean to jump on you, but this is really a concern. This money is not being spent fairly. Everyone should have equal access to meal, travel and equipment money. It's only fair."

Bob returned to his office and phoned the defensive coordinator from the football team, Jerry Stephens. Jerry was one of the only coaches left from the previous head coach's staff. The previous head coach, who also served as athletic director, had been fired the previous spring in spite of a winning season. Bob casually asked Jerry if he knew anything about the budget for football and the other sports. Jerry was reluctant to share information, but eventually told Bob that football seemed to enjoy a luxurious budget, one that did not seem to be enjoyed by other sports. He did not know any exact numbers, but he knew that football players had new uniforms every year, always ate a nice meal after games, and the coaches went to several clinics in the fall and summer, all without any parent or booster support. He was not sure how other teams operated, but he knew that the head coach definitely told his staff not to advertise their perks.

Bob was beginning to piece the puzzle together. No wonder the head coach/athletic director disappeared so mysteriously. He'd have to find out more about that issue. For now, he had to work not only on making cuts to the existing budget, but also on figuring out how to assess the needs of the other programs so that he could more fairly allocate the funds.

Bob grabbed the current budget, tucked it in his brown leather bag, and headed home for a weekend of crunching numbers. Although he was frustrated and discouraged, he was determined to find the best solution to his first major challenge as athletic director.

When he returned to work on Monday morning, Bob had outlined a plan for attacking the issue. In order to be acceptable to both the coaches and the administration, he knew that his solution must fill two aims: (1) it must be fair to all the programs, and (2) it must be in line with the district's stated mission and goals.

Fairness. It was always at the forefront of coaching concerns. Just this week he'd been confronted by the girls basketball coach, Becky Garrison, who wanted to know why the volleyball team was allowed to practise in the main gym four times a week and basketball only once. At the centre of the fairness issues was money: Who was receiving what funds? Why did one program get more money than another? And at the centre of budget concerns was football.

After a full morning of consulting with the central office regarding budgeting procedures, Bob set to work on his plan. His first action was to outline a shell budget, centralising some items, and creating new lines for each of the sports. Appendix A shows his outline. He placed central items such as maintenance and repair and player insurance in the departmental budget. Items that each team would spend, however, he placed within individual budgets, so that each coach could see where the money was being spent.

Next, he compiled a memo to all the coaches (see Appendix B). They were to submit their information and requests by the end of the week, giving Bob an additional week to create a workable solution from their requests.

By Friday, Bob had received the information. He and his administrative assistant, Glenda, compiled the information into two tables. Table 2 shows a compilation of the teams' coaches and records. Table 3 shows the composite budget requests. After viewing the composite table, Bob had to laugh a bit. "Well, initially I've created an even bigger monster," he thought. Now, instead of having to cut from \$364,000, he was going to have to cut from nearly \$392,000. Still, he was convinced he had done the right thing by allowing the coaches control over most of their budget.

As he viewed the chart, he noticed several encouraging lines. First, Glenda had obviously done a good job informing coaches about their past expenses on officials, uniforms and equipment. Those items were at or under the totals of the old departmental budget. He also noticed that the coaches had not had control over their coaching supplies and travel, awards, or team meals. These items far exceeded amounts spent in the past (and allocated in the old department budget). "Looks like they are asking for all they can possibly get," he thought. He also noted that the volleyball, softball, and girls basketball coaches had apparently collaborated on their budgets. The amounts requested for meals, supplies, coach travel and awards were simply too similar to be coincidental. Finally, he noted that costs per participant were extremely varied, ranging from a projected \$235 for cross country to over \$600 per football player. This situation would certainly need to be rectified before presenting the budget to either the coaches or the parents.

He then perused the comments made by the different coaches regarding how the money was to be spent. Several comments seemed particularly relevant. First, John Stephens, head football coach, had compiled a very detailed layout of how the money was to be spent. His memo of almost three pages detailed the increasing

Table 2: Oakbend Senior High School Composite Teams, Coaches and Records

Team	Head coach	Record 00-01	Record 01-02	Participants (per year)
Football	John Stephens	5-5, regionals	6-4, regionals	130
Boys basketball	Gary Morehead	10-15	16-9, districts	60
Boys track	Fred Berringer	2 state qualifiers	2 state qualifiers	60
Boys baseball	Jim Shelby	22-9, regionals	18-12, districts	45
Boys soccer	Dean Flaco	2-18	4-15	40
Boys powerlifting	Greg Louis	N/A	N/A	10
Girls volleyball	Margaret Whaley	22-7, state	20-10, regionals	50
Girls softball	Ron Villone	23-9, state runners-up	25-6, regionals	30
Girls basketball	Becky Garrison	12-13	18-7, districts	40
Girls track	Jane Morris	1 state qualifier	3 state qualifiers	60
Girls soccer	Scott Williams	3-17	5-16	40
Boys/girls golf	Charles Adams	District 2nd place (B), District 6th place (G)	District 3rd place (B), District 4th place (G)	20
Boys/girls tennis	Mary Lloyd	7-5 (B), 10-2 (G)	9-3 (B), 10-2 (G)	30
Boys/girls swimming	Dennis Martin	Did not exist	4 state qualifiers	25
Boys/girls cross country	Dave Gentry	District 6th place (B), District 4th place (G)	District 7th place (B), District 7th place (G)	30

costs of football and the need to spend the requested amount of money in order to remain competitive in a football-oriented state. He commented that a number of coaches had mentioned in passing the possibility of implementing a participation fee. He explained the number of disadvantaged students who were able to play football and find a future because of the district's full support of the program and stressed the need for the district to continue supporting its athletic programs without initiating a participation fee.

Another group of comments came from Gary Morehead, Dean Flaco and Scott Williams. These comments centred around the parent booster clubs. Flaco wrote:

One concern of mine is the lack of a line item in the old budget (or the new one) for booster club contributions. In the past, each team has had a support group of parents who have run fundraisers for them such as candy sales, concession stands and walkathons. We were told that the money raised from those activities went

Table 3: Oakbend Senior High School Athletic Budget Requests

Department												
Maintenance & repair	10000											
Contingency services, parking	7500											
Medical supplies	13000											
Player insurance	25000											
Fees and dues	12000											
Computer equipment	1500											
Grounds supplies	13000											
Total	82,000											

Team	Foot- ball	Boys basket	Boys track	Boys base	Boys soccer	Girls volley	Girls softball	Girls basket	Girls track	Girls soccer	Golf	Tennis	Swim	Cross entry	Power- lifting	Total line
Officials	8000	3100	3000	2800	1900	3800	2500	3100	3000	1900	300	1550	500	1000	500	36950
Team meals	15000	2900	2600	3500	2200	4000	2200	4000	4000	1600	1400	1700	1500	1300	750	48650
Supplies	22000	4000	5000	4000	5000	4000	4000	4000	4000	4500	2000	2000	1000	1500	1000	68000
Coaching supplies	2000	600	500	500	300	600	600	600	500	500	200	500	500	250	100	8250
Coaching travel	5000	3000	1000	2500	1000	3500	1200	3000	800	850	500	600	600	400	150	24100
Student travel	6400	2500	1900	2500	1600	3200	2100	2500	1900	1600	4100	1400	5000	1250	600	38550
Awards	6000	1300	700	1000	600	1600	800	1600	750	600	1100	500	300	450	200	17500
Uniforms	8000	2600	2000	2700	1750	3300	2200	2500	1800	1750	1200	1500	500	500	250	32550
Equipment	10000	2600	1900	2700	2000	3200	2100	2500	1700	1600	1000	1300	400	400	1200	34600
TOTAL																
BUDGET	82400	22600	18600	22200	16350	27200	17700	23800	18450	14900	11800	11050	10300	7050	4750	309150

Participants	130	60	60	45	40	50	30	40	60	40	20	30	25	30	10	670
\$ per participant	633.85	376.67	310.00	493.33	408.75	544.00	590.00	595.00	307.50	372.50	590.00	368.33	412.00	235.00	475.00	447.46

GRAND TOTAL	\$ 391,150.00															
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into an account allocated to each sport. Then, when we needed special items, we could ask the AD and he would give us some money. I don't have any idea how much my booster parents raised, but I was always able to purchase extra equipment. I guess I'm just wondering first, how much money was raised through booster club efforts and where that money went, and second, what is your policy going to be on booster clubs? Personally, I would like to have them all be separate – each team has its own boosters who raise money for their own program that stays in their program. Thank you.

Coach Morehead and Coach Williams raised similar concerns. They also seemed to feel that each sport should have their own boosters and that the money should be kept within the sports.

Like the overall budget allocations, Bob had not anticipated the booster issue, either. He asked Glenda if she knew how the booster club funds had been handled in the past.

“Well,” she said, “It seems that the booster club people would bring the money in as cash to Coach Huntsman (the former AD/head football coach). He kept it in his petty cash drawer and would give it to people for reimbursements and such.”

“Reimbursements and such? That sounds rather vague. Do you have any idea how much money we're talking about?”

“I certainly have no clue as to a total, but it seems we could bring in about \$1,000–\$1,500 a night at the concession stand at home football games, and maybe \$300–\$400 at basketball. I have no idea how much came from M&M sales and other little fundraisers the teams did.”

“Hmmm. I suppose this issue could be positive and negative. On the one hand, we have a problem with not being able to estimate the amount of money, but on the other, maybe we have a source of income that I had not planned on. I think the coaches are right; each team should have their own booster club and keep the money from that club. Then, if they want to take a special trip or buy some elaborate piece of equipment, they can use their booster club funds to purchase it. Not bad. Not bad. We can deal with this, too.”

Bob walked back to his office and perused the remainder of the coaches' suggestions. Coach Garrison's (basketball) comments had some figures from her previous school district. She wrote:

I took the liberty of investigating the very real possibility of implementing a participation fee for our students. We had such a fee at my previous school and it didn't seem to affect participation at all. I contacted my AD there and he shared with me that the school was able to raise about \$25,000–\$30,000 a year from student fees. The students paid \$50.00 to play sports for the year. If a student played more than one sport, though, he or she didn't pay again, the fee covered

the whole year. We had about 650–700 participants, but a lot of them played more than one sport.

I don't think \$50 is too much to ask for playing a whole season. Most outside clubs cost \$1,000–\$5,000 for a season depending on how much they travel. I think we should seriously consider this option for supplementing our athletic budget, regardless of what the district policy has been in the past. Times are changing and we need to change with them.

Bob thought \$30,000 would be a lot of money, but he was also opposed to a participation fee, and he knew the district was, too. Public school participation was supposed to be free. It was part of the educational system, just like clubs, the band, or any other extracurricular activity. In spite of the potential money, he knew it would be difficult to convince the school board of the necessity of implementing a participation fee.

Finally, Coach Martin (swimming) and Coach Adams (golf) had included notations regarding how they would like their money allocated. Both wanted to emphasise the travel component of their programs. Coach Martin's memo summarised the feelings of both coaches.

Bob,

I know that these budgets will take a hit in the final process and as you view my requests, you might think that my travel requests are out of line with some of the amounts that other coaches have requested (I know, because I asked them how much they requested). As you know, our district is not very strong in swimming, but our program has proven that it can compete with the best in the state. In order to build the quality of the Oakbend swimming program, we need to go beyond the local area and compete with the best swimmers in the state. Each year, prominent meets are held in Austin, Dallas and San Antonio. These are two-day meets, requiring us to leave on Thursday evening and return late Saturday night. Hotel stays and meals for these trips are rather expensive, but I feel the cost is fully worth it for the success of our program. Specific cost estimates for these trips are attached to this memo. Further, you will see that in exchange for requesting more money on travel, I have asked for minimal amounts of supplies and equipment.

Please consider this information as you make your budget cuts. In order to be the best, we must compete against the best.

By six o'clock on Friday, Bob had compiled the information he needed for another weekend of problem-solving. "What a mess," he thought. Sometime he'd have to dig to the bottom of the apparent financial abuses within the athletic department. For now, he hoped there would be no more major surprises and that he could finally sit down to develop a reasonable solution to the immediate budget crisis. He walked out the door with the magic number – \$312,000 – at the forefront of his thoughts.

APPENDIX B

Memo to coaches

Inter-office Memorandum

TO: OAKBEND HIGH SCHOOL HEAD COACHES
FROM: BOB MARCUS
SUBJECT: BUDGET INFORMATION AND REQUESTS
DATE: August 1, 2002
CC: JERRY SULLIVAN, PRINCIPAL

As you have become aware, the district is asking us to make a \$50,500 cut in our departmental budget for the upcoming school year. I share your concerns at such a large cut, but I know we can work together at the best possible solution.

It has also come to my attention that budget items may not have been allocated appropriately in the past, leaving many of you with concerns over the fairness of distributions. I assure you that steps are being taken to correct this problem and to arrive at an equitable solution.

The purpose of this communication is twofold: First, I want to take the opportunity to remind you of the district's mission and goals toward athletics, so that you can make sure your budget and your coaching practices align with this mission. Second, I want you to communicate to me your budget requests, the records of your teams for the past two years, the number of participants in your sport, and any other suggestions you have to offer regarding our funding dilemma.

I realise that some of you may have difficulty allocating an appropriate amount of funding to some line items (e.g., officials, uniforms) over which you have not had control in the past. Glenda will be happy to assist you with these areas and provide you with past spending records if necessary.

Budget requests should be submitted using the line items outlined on the enclosed template. They are due in my office by Friday at 12 noon.

Please feel free to stop by in the meantime with any questions or concerns.

Attachments:

Athletic Mission Statement

Budget Request Template

Woodlakes Independent School District Athletic Department

MISSION STATEMENT:

The athletics programs of Woodlakes ISD are committed to the district's mission of providing an educational environment that will enable students to attain skills for a lifetime of learning and to prepare them to be contributing citizens in a diverse and changing world. As such, we are committed to providing opportunities and support for student-athletes to achieve academically and to compete athletically at the highest level, and to providing programming and resources that help prepare them with skills for life. We are also committed to operating with quality and integrity in our role as a focal point for school identity and spirit, while complementing the academic and social facets of school life for the general student body, faculty, staff and surrounding community.

TO FULFIL THIS MISSION, WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE FOLLOWING GOALS:

1. To provide support, programming and resources that promote personal development and responsibility.
2. To provide adequate funding for programs such that all students, regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status, have an opportunity to participate.
3. To provide quality strength and conditioning, training, and sports medicine programs that emphasise the health and safety of student-athletes.
4. To communicate specific behavioural expectations to each student-athlete.
5. To attract and retain the finest coach-educators, who are committed to excellence in both the classroom and on the athletic field.
6. To continue to encourage and support enthusiastic attendance by the general student-body and the surrounding community at athletics events.

Woodlakes Independent School District Athletic Department**Budget Request Template**

Sport: _____

Coach: _____

Record 2000–2001: _____

Playoffs: _____

State tournament: _____

Number of participants (total from every level): _____

Record 2001–2002: _____

Playoffs: _____

State tournament: _____

Number of participants (total from every level): _____

Line item	Amount requested
Officials	
Team meals	
Supplies	
Coaching supplies	
Coaching travel	
Student travel	
Awards	
Uniforms	
Equipment	
TOTAL BUDGET	
