

# New AIA Executive Director talks transfers, year-round practice and growth of club sports

[Richard Obert](#), azcentral sports Published 8:20 a.m. MT July 21, 2017 | Updated 9:24 a.m. MT July 21, 2017

## Dynasties in Arizona high school sports

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David Kadlubowski/azcentral sports

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(Photo: Loren Townsley/ The Republic)

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*David Hines moved into the role of [executive director of the Arizona Interscholastic Association](#) on July 1. Hines' roots run deep in the Valley: He graduated from Tempe High in 1973, played football at Mesa Community College and got his bachelor of arts degree in education from Arizona State in 1977. He was a teacher and assistant football coach and head track and field and cross country coach in the Mesa district. He was athletic director at Mesa Mountain View from 1996-2008, before working for the AIA. Hines sat down with azcentral sports this week to talk about various issues that the state's largest high school sports association faces.*

**What are your feelings on destination schools and parents sending their children to schools where they believe more college coaches will be attracted, maybe because of that high school coach's college connections?**

“There are programs that are well-run and are very competitive. I think the key is the coaches, longevity. The challenge for schools is limiting turnover, whether it is administration or coaches. Parents are a little more mobile than they used to be. I still favor the home school, that you go to the school you grew up near. I think parents really need to understand that colleges find the kids that they want and they're going to know where they're at, whether you're in a big school or a small school, whether you're on a

really good team or not a good team. If you're what they're looking for, that's what they get paid to do, to find those kids. But people are always looking for college to be paid. The challenge is there aren't that many scholarships for college."

**Is there a concern that the influx of club programs are taking over the high school landscape?**

"I think it's affected the high school landscape. We have lost a few of our really good players to other places. I would like to see those kids play with their high school teammates, because they make their teammates better. I think kids need to enjoy their high school experience, because when it gets to the next level, it becomes more of a business. Enjoy yourself, especially your classmates. In club, the people who come watch you play are maybe your parents and maybe some scouts. Your classmates come watch high school. It means something at this level. I'm doing it for myself, as a club. I'm doing it for my school, as a school. We're still an education-based program."




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The new AIA executive director addresses biggest needs, challenges in Arizona high school sports.

**How do you feel about a national all-star, sports program like IMG Academy in Florida coming to Chandler to play a football game?**

“I’d like to know which four kids are going to block the big kid. ... It’s an opportunity for Chandler to compete. Is it apples and apples? That’s a training ground for kids who are probably going to be your college, five-star kids, or (future) NFL (players). I’d like to see our high school kids compete in the true sense of the form in high school.”

**Is [year-round practice for high school teams](#) the death of the multi-sport athlete?**

“I hope not. I think where we’re struggling at our bigger schools, it becomes very competitive. Obviously, a kid who is a very good athlete, regardless of the size of the school, they can play whenever and whatever they like. I think it is a challenge for kids and their parents, if they’re in a very competitive school. ... We have 43 schools above 2,500 (in enrollment). It makes it a little more of a challenge for kids to make a team.”

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**Will the AIA membership go back to placing schools in conferences on a sport by sport basis, instead of based just on enrollment?**

“I think the membership feels like we’re in pretty good shape right now. We may have a few tweaks. They’re really not in favor of appealing down (a conference).”

**Can football be an exception, placing schools just in that sport based on competitiveness?**

“Some states, like California, if you win, they promote you. Their philosophy with that is, ‘let’s take it back to the classroom. If you’re an accelerated math student, they’re not going to put you in regular math. We’re going to put you in calculus or trig.’ They look at it the same way with athletics. Now they have so many schools, it varies a little. It’s a different scenario. I don’t think anybody has found a perfect solution. They try to tweak it here and there. I think we’ve had some major changes in the past few years. We can always improve or make a change here and there. But we can’t throw everything out and start all over again. I think we’ve kind of settled down and were able to think proactively ahead. Football is probably the one sport that size of the school makes a difference. It’s a challenge. Sometimes you get a lot of kids.”

**Even though the size of the Phoenix Union district schools puts most of them in the highest conference, most have trouble competing in football because of various issues, mainly socioeconomics. How do you satisfy them?**

“I think what’s helped is that they’ve played against each other. If we can make the regular season more competitive for them, then we’re going to help them feel good about themselves, competing for a region championship and a chance to advance to state. ... Football is a numbers game.”

**What is the biggest misconception people have of the AIA?**

“The AIA staff doesn’t make rules. We manage the association. Our job is to be servant leaders to the membership. When they have some ideas, some direction they would like to go, our job as a staff is to make sure we can produce what they are asking for within reason. We all have to work together. I think [1, 2 and 3 \(A conferences\) all work together](#), and then we have 4, 5 and 6 working, because they’re two different entities. It’s the same

association, but the challenges that some have are different from what others have. The more they work together, that's going to be helpful.”



*(Photo: Pat Shannahan/azcentral sports)*

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**What are the biggest issues the association faces when scheduling state tournaments and find suitable sites?**

“We are venue-challenged. We have great people, and good venues. They’re professional sports, they’re Division I collegiate sports. We don’t expect them to just drop their stuff. That’s money. But it is a challenge for us. If we could have a 12,000-seat stadium, we could do indoor stuff, fantastic. We don’t have very many colleges. And some schools are under construction. ASU has been under construction. UA is about to go under construction. Texas has high school stadiums that are as big as colleges. We had a chance to go to Allen, Texas. They have more opportunities. They have more things to work with.”

**Do you feel high school coaches in Arizona are underpaid?**

“I’m a former coach. It’s a profession that’s harder to find quality teachers and coaches. It all comes down to economics, the money that’s available. I really believe that the people

who really hang in there to coach, they're a unique individual who loves teaching kids. Yes, they'd like to be paid more, but that's their calling. I think that our really good teachers and coaches, that is their calling. When you get teachers and coaches who don't have that mentality, it may come in like, 'I'm here, I'm the savior.' Then sportsmanship, bending the rules, that starts to become a challenge. That's where educational athletics comes in. We want you to win and do well, as long as it's done the right way. There's a difference between being competitive and doing it the right way and holding people accountable."

**Transfers, if not granted a hardship, have to sit out the first half of the season. If they transfer a second time, they are ineligible the full season. How do you feel the new transfer rule has held up after a year?**

"I really like how the board, the conferences, how they're evaluating whether it's a choice versus a hardship, and I think they've identified that better. We're stilling going to have transfers. They're not going to go away. But there is education going on and parents are understanding there is a consequence. And if you move again, the consequences are greater. ... I'm not going to say there has been a drastic drop-off (of transfers). But I think they're being a little more cautious and understanding the rule a little better. We're always trying to let the parents know, that there is a consequence, make a good choice."

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