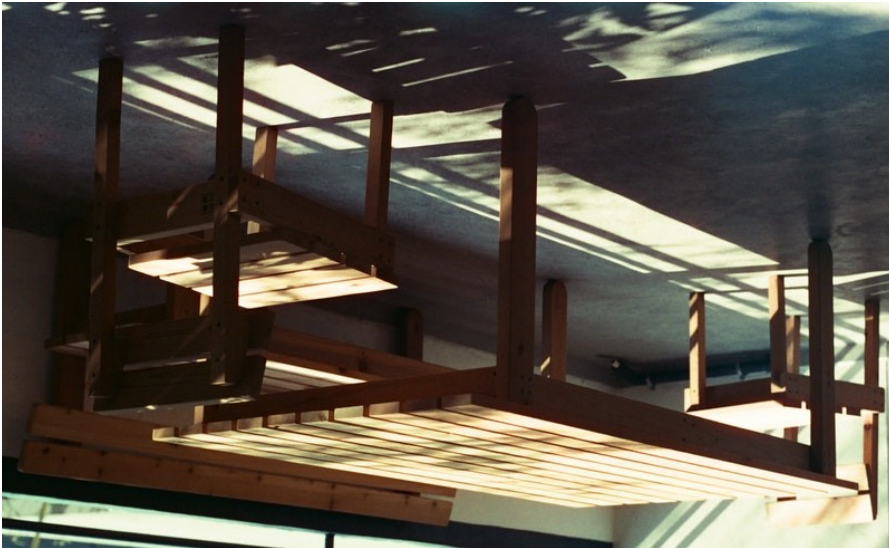


Local Politics Matter

When the Tables Turn

They Change the Rules



St Frances is the oldest catholic school in the archdiocese of Baltimore. The school is predominantly black with the majority of the student's families living at or below the poverty line. In 2013, 2014, and 2015 the school's football program was 3-3, 4-2, and 0-6 in the Maryland Scholastic Association's A conference (top conference). During these times people who were close followers of local sports in Maryland considered these teams some of the worst in Maryland high school football history. Having played football through high school and two years at the college level I would imagine that they were the laughing stock of the league. A team that the opposing teams loved to play. A team that was everyone's homecoming opponent. Then a funny thing happened. A gentleman by the name of Biff Poggi who had previously coached at Gilman high school went down to east Baltimore to run the St Francis football program. Poggi had a very strong record at Gilman and had sent a number of players to Division 1 college programs. During his tenure at Gilman Poggi's programs were hailed as being

the best in the City. In his 19 years as head coach at Gilman Poggi led the program to 13 MAS A Conference titles and a 135 – 43 record. Again, Gilman was hailed as the best of the best among local sports programs.

In 2016 Poggi took his magic to St Francis. In his first year the team had a 10 – 2 record and began its march towards national prominence. In 2017 St Francis was even better. They went undefeated and won their second straight league title. It was at this point that the fallout began. Letters began to come in from competing programs saying that they would no longer keep St Francis on their schedule. Schools like Mt St Joseph, Calvert Hall, Loyola, and McDonogh all raised concerns about the safety and competitive nature of the games as their reason for removing St Francis from their schedules. The schools and the parents were concerned that their children risked being seriously injured because the St Francis players were so much larger, stronger and more athletic. They also said that St Francis had an unfair advantage be-

cause they recruited players from out of state. Let me start by saying that having been a competitive athlete from the age of 10 to the age of 20 it is unfathomable to me that any of the players in these programs would go along with this position. First, when you decide to play football you quickly learn that the chance of injury is always there. You also learn that the key to success is aggressiveness and a competitive spirit regardless of size. Yes size and athleticism play a large role in an athlete's success but aggressiveness and that competitive spirit will always keep you in the game. By the way, let's not discount intelligence. I have never seen a championship team at any level that didn't have intelligent players. I find it interesting that the intelligence factor is never discussed when it comes to African American athletes. This situation is not surprising because it mirrors our society. Remember when Lew Alcindor, now Kareem Abdul Jabbar was a freshman at UCLA and for some strange reason the NCAA decided to outlaw the dunk. I wonder why. Remember how the

Quarterback and Middle Linebacker positions in the NFL were reserved for Caucasian athletes. I wonder why. Is it a surprise that in the current NFL all of the money has been put into the Quarterback position and the rules have been changed to totally favor the Quarterback. I wonder why. Then there is the case of the Somali kids who were banned from participating in the youth soccer leagues. I wonder why. As a parent who sent his son to one of the aforementioned schools that took St Frances off of its schedule I know exactly what is going on here. Yes I saw firsthand what happens when the tables turn. During his senior year in high school my son was leading the MSA in rushing and his team was 4 – 0. He started to get a lot of recognition including several nice articles in the local papers. Then it all changed. For some reason the coach decided not to give him the football or if he did he ran him straight up the middle giving him very little chance to highlight his talents. The team started losing and what could have been a championship level year turned into a disaster. This coach made a conscious decision to lose rather than have a young black man be the star of his team. This is what always happens when a certain group of people are no longer the dominant players. This is exactly what is going on with the ostracizing of St Francis. By the way, isn't this what is going on in the United States of America. Now I give you Donald J. Trump.

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