

When I started at The Derrick back in the '70s, Oil City and Venango (then) Christian were pretty good in basketball, not so much football. But, I thought back then, given all that, either school would sooner produce a pro football player before a pro basketball player.

And, to take it a step further, I thought that was true of any school in the state – except for those in Philadelphia. Fast forward to now: I still think that.

There was a lot of chatter on social media, at least on Twitter, after the final horn honked Saturday night in the 6A boys state championship, about how basketball in western Pennsylvania is so far behind the caliber of hoops of, no, not eastern Pennsylvania, but in PHILADELPHIA.

To that I say, Who. Cares?

I enjoy watching high school basketball “even” around here. Back in the '80s, I was at Clarion's Tippin Gym covering the District 9 boys tournament. I thought: *what's nice about all this is nobody is ever going to play in the NBA*. These are just fairly normal sized people playing the game; doesn't mean they can't play it well.

What brought on all the post-tourney chatter Saturday was the way District 12 (aka Philadelphia) dominated pretty much everyone. Did you see Neumann-Goretti absolutely have its way with that unbeaten Quaker Valley team by 25 points in 4A boys?

D-12 won four boys titles (6A through 3A) and three girls championships. The only Philly team that didn't win was D-12 champ Constitution in 2A boys. And, I'll tell you, the Generals were pretty impressive in losing by 21 to Our Lady of Sacred Heart, which not only repeated as champion, but tied West Philadelphia's state record of 68 consecutive victories set from 1976-78.

What's more, “OLSH,” located in Coraopolis, became the first boys team since Darby-Colwyn in 1962-63 to register back-to-back undefeated seasons.

But I'm digressing, sort of.

There was a time when Philadelphia schools were not members of the PIAA. They had their own city playoffs and were satisfied with that. Meanwhile, I used to tell anyone who would listen that they would win the state championship every year if they were in the PIAA.

Philly public schools finally joined in 2003; Catholic schools followed in 2008. I'm not saying Philly schools – “public” or private have won every year – but they've made their presence felt.

And the rest of the PIAA member schools have been in pain, including District 1 – the Philly 'burbs, which have also been left in the dust by those neighboring city schools. When was the last time you heard from the Chester Clippers? Huh?

People are sounding off not just because Philly wins a lot, but because of the old “Catholic/private schools recruit” debate, which not only affects Philly but our area (Cathedral Prep/Villa/Kennedy) to Pittsburgh to Harrisburg to Scranton. That’s another subject.

Now, from what I’m hearing, these Philly schools – which never begged to join anyway – don’t care if they are in the PIAA. They’d just as soon play for their city titles and pack it in for another year – although I doubt if they ever put the basketballs away in Philadelphia.

I say, let them leave. We’ll enjoy our humble hoops; they can draw thousands to the Palestra to cheer the ankle-breaking moves and dunkfests. And to what end? The NBA awaits.

Yeah, sayonara; we’ll just have to suffer around here.