

Supporters defend Linn-Mar football program

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 21 February 2016 17:48 - Last Updated Monday, 22 February 2016 05:53



Members of the Linn-Mar football community have rallied in defense of the program.

The Metro Sports Report posted a story Thursday night regarding allegations that have been made by unhappy Linn-Mar families against the football program and against members of the coaching staff, specifically assistant coach Matt Casebolt and head coach Bob Forsyth.

The article brought forth a considerable amount of comment in the community, including responses from former players who say they had a favorable experience with the football team.

The unhappy families claim their sons have suffered verbal, mental, emotional and physical abuse while participating in the football program and weight training program at Linn-Mar High School. Five families filed complaints with the school district, but at least 20 families share common grievances and have banded together as a group in an effort to remedy their concerns.

The Linn-Mar school district has dismissed the formal complaints filed by families following an in-house investigation, but those families are in the process of filing a formal complaint with the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners about Casebolt, Forsyth and Linn-Mar administrators.

Much of the feedback to the original story has been in support of the football program and coaches, but there also has been feedback from people who say they also have suffered from abusive tactics in the programs.

The Metro Sports Report has not investigated all the posts on social media and all of the e-mails that have been sent to the MSR, but we believe all of the posts and e-mails to be honest and authentic.

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We have all of the names, social media accounts and e-mail addresses of the people who have responded to the story, but we are withholding their names in case somebody does not want to be identified.

Here is a sampling of the comments in favor of the Linn-Mar football program and coaches:

+ "That coaching staff helped me grow into a much more well-rounded person than I would've been without them."

+ "Interview the team and get some real stories. We will tell you that the Linn-Mar football staff teaches us more than football."

+ "I wish the Metro Sports Report would interview me so I could tell them how they (the coaches) molded me into the person I am today and how appreciative I am of it."

+ "I don't think I respect anybody more than these coaches, and I would gladly go through football again with them."

+ "People accusing our coaches of this don't realize what they do for us overall and how much they want us to be our best."

+ "Those coaches helped make me who I am today. I'm forever grateful for what they've taught me."

+ "Complete falacy. Such poor, one-sided journalism."

+ "There is so much wrong with this article. These coaches taught me so much. I'm extremely thankful for all of them."

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+ "These coaches didn't just make me a better football player but a better person. Loved every single second with them."

+ "Such a shame. I don't know where I'd be today without their guidance and coaching, on and off the field."

+ "The football staff truly taught me what true dedication and hard work is. I'm proud to have been coached by them."

+ "This article of the Linn-Mar football program is not how most remember it to be. It taught young men to overcome adversity."

+ "I loved my time playing for these coaches! They create great people and memories that I wouldn't trade for anything."

+ "He (Casebolt) is a big reason I chose my major. Someday I want to be as good a strength and conditioning coach as he is. He makes kids good athletes."

+ "This coaching staff was hired my junior year when we were on a 24-game losing streak and instilled structure, toughness and the ability to compete at a high level. They completely turned our program around, but what I'm more proud about is the values I learned from this staff that will last a lifetime."

+ "This is a joke and shows how soft our society is. These parents are a joke. And the kids are soft. Yeah, it was tough. Yeah, it tested you mentally and physically. But this made you not only strong for sports, but also life."

As stated before, some of the feedback to the article was directed against the football program

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and echoed complaints filed by the families. Here is a sampling of those remarks:

+ "The amount of abuse I sustained from the coaching staff and the neglect from the football program in regards to sustaining two concussions in the span of three minutes messed me up really bad, to the point I still haven't recovered five years later. From being called a 'queer' daily, doing extra conditioning for being a 'queer,' being suspended a game for being in show choir, to being told after the blow to my head that 'I'm pretty tough for being a show queer.' I'm glad progress is finally being made. I hope this opens people's eyes and the proper disciplinary actions are taken."

+ "It's an institutional problem at Linn-Mar, one of the reasons I decided to transfer my son starting his junior year."

+ "My daughter was a freshman there in 2010 and missed a test in Casebolt's health class, for which he gave her an F. He proceeded to make fun of her to the sophomore football team and told the young man she was 'dating' - in front of the football team in the locker room - that 'his girlfriend is stupid and failed health.' Subsequently, the entire football team and students harassed her for weeks. (She) was so humiliated by then that she ended up transferring to Washington."

+ "I am completely baffled that people are saying that these allegations are dramatic and made up. You know this happened."

+ "My son played for him (Casebolt) at Iowa City High back in 2007 and everything you wrote about him is true. I complained to City High at the time, but didn't get anywhere. I know of a couple of my son's friends that stopped playing football after that year because of him and they were good football players. It's amazing that this hasn't come to a head sooner. "