



**ROCKFORD/MUSKEGON FOOTBALL GAME AT FIFTH THIRD BALLPARK.  
WHY?**

On Friday, October 1, the Rockford Rams football team will play the Muskegon Big Reds at the Fifth Third Ballpark rather than at The Ted Carlson Memorial Stadium. Since the announcement regarding the venue change was made, I have received mixed reactions regarding this decision, with the most common question being “why?”

If this was a perfect world and it was my decision, all of our football games would be played at “The Ted.” Arguably, it is one of the finest high school athletic and marching band facilities in the State. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world.

As Michigan residents know, our state is experiencing a financial crisis. Because public school districts receive most of their funding from the State, this results in major reductions to school programs and staff.

Like every school district in Michigan, Rockford is receiving less revenue per student today than in 2008-09. Therefore, it is inevitable that districts will see changes. Because of decreased revenues and increased expenses, we were forced to cut \$9.6 million from our 2010-11 operating budget. So, I can either sit on the sidelines and complain *OR* work to develop creative approaches to bring in new revenue and work with others to find solutions. I choose the latter!

Last winter, officials from Fifth Third Ballpark approached me with a proposed business plan that would move the Rockford/Muskegon game from “The Ted” to Fifth Third. With 10,000 fans attending, our revenue, after

expenses, would be more than four times what we typically earn during our home games. If more than 10,000 attend the game, our profit will go up.

Given this information, the decision to move the game location was not difficult. Rockford's share of the profits will be allocated to all grades 7-12 boys' and girls' athletic programs. This will allow us to maintain current co-curricular opportunities for our middle and high school students.

Now that you have the facts, you may still disagree with the decision to move the game. But, at least you are aware that the decision was based on economics, with the best interest of all of our students in mind. I hope you will join me in supporting our students.

If you have any questions, ideas, or would like to discuss this or any other issue, feel free to call me at 863-6557.

Go Rams!

Michael S. Shibler, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools