

Can Blowout Football Game Qualify as Illegal Bullying?

By [Donald Scarinci](#)

New Jersey has some of the toughest bullying laws in the country, but could annihilating your opponent in a high school football game really constitute a violation?

In Texas, school officials were forced to consider such an allegation. Like [New Jersey's bullying law](#), Texas requires school districts to investigate all complaints of bullying. Under the applicable law, bullying is defined as "engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity ... and that has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student ... or is sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student."

The allegations stemmed from Aledo High School's 91-0 over Fort Worth Western Hills. The team, which now plays in a weaker district, has repeatedly blown teams out on the way to its undefeated record. However, one parent of a Fort Worth Western Hills player took exception to the way Aledo's coaches handled the game once the score got out of hand.

"Picking up my son from the fieldhouse after the game and taking him home was tough," the complaint stated "I did not know what to say to my son on the ride home to explain the behavior of the Aledo (sic) coaches for not easing up when the game was in hand."

In his defense, coach Tim Buchanan stated that he did take steps to avoid scoring additional touchdowns. He put his third-string players into the game and asked the referees to run the game clock continuously to end the game more quickly. "I've sat and gone over and over and over it on what we could have done differently. The score could have very easily been 150 to nothing," Buchanan stated.

Ultimately, the school district concluded the complaint was unfounded. "Basically, there were no grounds for bullying during the game, prior to the game or after the game," Buchanan told the [Star-Telegram](#).

Bullying is a legitimate concern in schools across the country, and this complaint only served to trivialize the real emotional and physical pain some children must endure. Instead of relying on an ill-suited bullying claim, maybe the aggrieved parent should focus his attention on getting the Texas high school football league to institute a "mercy" rule.

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