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# Football: State champion Pahokee must vacate state title, FHSAA says







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Jodie Wagner and Adam Lichtenstein

Updated January 12, 2017 | Filed in Adam Lichtenstein, Football, Jodie Wagner.

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Pahokee will be forced to give up the state football championship it won just last month, the School District of Palm Beach County confirmed Thursday.



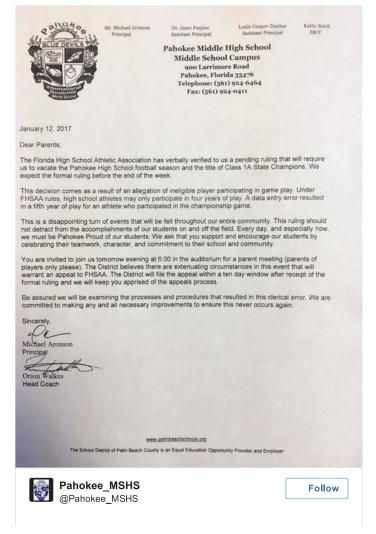
Pahokee won the Class 1A state football championship last month, but will be forced to vacate the title because of an ineligible player. (Photo by Allen Eyestone)

The Florida High School Athletic Association told the district that Pahokee must vacate the Class 1A state championship it won in December due to its use of an ineligible player.

#### [Photos from Pahokee's appearance in the state title game]

The school district said it will appeal the FHSAA's decision once a formal ruling has come down, which is expected by the end of the week.

"This is a disappointing turn of events that will be felt throughout our entire community," Pahokee principal Michael Aronson said in a letter to parents that was posted on Twitter. "This ruling should not detract from the accomplishments of our students on and off the field."



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Aronson said a data entry error resulted in the fifth year of play for the ineligible player, who competed in the state championship game.

Under FHSAA rules, high school athletes may only compete in four years of play.

Pahokee is coming off its best season in recent history, beating **Baker 34-21** in the Class 1A state championship game on Dec. 8.

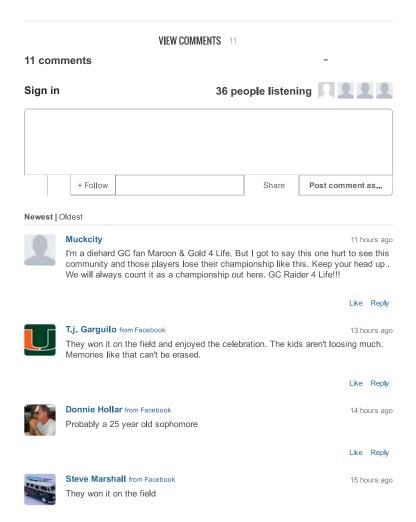
It was the seventh state title for the storied program and first since 2008. **The Blue Devils also beat Glades Central in the Muck Bowl** for the first time since 2008.

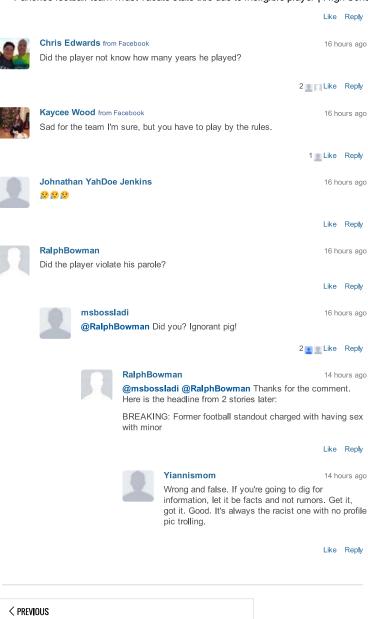
"I can be at peace now," first-year head coach Orson Walkes said after the title game.

Walkes is Pahokee's third coach in as many seasons. Blaze Thompson, who won a pair of state championships in 2007 and 2008, **stepped down after the 2014 season.** 

Pahokee alumnus and former Wake Forest and NFL cornerback Alphonso Smith replaced Thompson, but after leading the Blue Devils to a 8-2 record in the regular season, Smith was **removed** and **ultimately fired** following a Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Investigation.

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