

10/25/12 – Commissioner’s Statement on the Passing of Former Commissioner Billy V. Wise, updated with arrangements

<http://khsaa.org/102512-commissioners-statement-on-the-passing-of-former-commissioner-billy-v-wise/>

November 5, 2012

October 26, 2012 2012–2013 News Releases

COMMISSIONER’S STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF BILLY V. WISE

Billy V. Wise, who served as the fourth Commissioner of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association from 1991–1994 and spent twenty-five years with the KHSAA, passed away early Thursday afternoon.

“Billy Wise was one of the finest gentlemen to ever cross the paths of the member school representatives and administrators, coaches, game officials, Board of Control members and our staff. His value at a pioneering time of sports expansion at the KHSAA was of tremendous benefit to all the students in the Commonwealth,” said KHSAA Commissioner Julian Tackett. “His leadership during his 25 years of service to the KHSAA was instrumental in guiding the officials through the adoption of the 1971 Federal Court order and was vital in steadying the association during the financial trials surrounding his time as Commissioner as the Association moved into a new headquarters. ‘Coach’ as he was known throughout the state, had the unique ability to forge relationships even among people who didn’t agree about a topic. I had the pleasure of working with him for 10 years and today, I can truly say that all licensed officials lost an icon and a leader, and the Commonwealth has lost one of its finest gentlemen.”

Wise began his career with the KHSAA as Assistant Commissioner in 1969 after serving as athletic director for the Lexington Parks Department for twelve years. His original primary duty at the KHSAA was to guide the registration and licensing of officials for the KHSAA, and as a former high school and collegiate official, he was as Commissioner Sanford noted at the time “eminently qualified for that role.” He was on the officiating staff of the Southeastern Conference, Ohio Valley Conference and the Kentucky Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, was an eighteen-year high school official, and officiated professional football in the Continental league. A graduate of Stamping Ground High School, Wise earned an Associates Degree from Campbellsville College before serving a two-year stint in the U.S. Army. When he returned from the Army, he completed his Bachelors degree at Transylvania College.

In 1979, he was promoted to Executive Assistant Commissioner in 1979, and to Commissioner in 1991. For twenty-two years, Wise conducted rules meetings throughout the state for football and basketball officials and coaches, ensuring the accurate teaching of the rules and mechanics. At the national level, he was a two-term member of the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee, a four-year member of the NFHS Football Editorial Committee, and a member of the Competition Committee. During his

term on sports rules committees, he was instrumental in getting the rules changed to many of today's provisions, including standardization of football blocking techniques and the adoption of the three point shot at the high school level. Wise handled day-to-day management of the sports of basketball, football, golf and many other sports during his tenure. Wise retired as commissioner on June 30, 1994. He was inducted into the Transylvania Barr Society, Transylvania Athletic Hall of Fame, Campbellsville University Athletic Hall of Fame and the Dawahares/KHSAA Hall of Fame.

"Billy was here at the KHSAA throughout a transitional time." Tackett commented. "Not only was he here for the initial implementation of the Federal Court order regarding officials, he helped lead the Association through the implementation of Title IX, and was at the helm when we took that next step in growth by moving into our current headquarters. Our thoughts remain with his wife Bonnie, and his three children, Steve, Gary and Missy along with his grandchildren. We certainly mourn with the family as it is a tough loss."

In addition to his wife of 56 years, he is survived by his children, Stephen V. Wise, Lexington, Gary L. (Anita) Wise, Louisville and Melissa Wise (William) Renner, Union, KY; sister, Mary Jane Marshall, Georgetown; grandchildren, William Chase Renner, Taryn Wise, Spencer L. Wise and Chelsea Wise Renner; sister-in-law, Betty Wise, Georgetown; and numerous nieces and nephews, including a special niece, Kim Wise West. He was preceded in death by his sister, Yvonne Wise and brother, George H. "Jack" Wise, Jr.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to Parkinson's Research.

Please send expressions of condolence to Bonnie Wise, 240 St. Ann Drive, Lexington, KY 40502.

Visitation will be Sunday, October 28 at Milward Funeral Home, 391 Southland Drive, Lexington from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Funeral services will be Monday October 29 at 1 p.m. at the Funeral Home, followed by burial in Lexington Cemetery.

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