

ST. FRANCIS SCHOOL

THE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Julian Tackett
Commissioner
Kentucky High School Athletic Association
2280 Executive Drive
Lexington, KY 40505

March 18, 2013

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RE: Request for exemption from Bylaw 13 for St. Francis Class of 2017 Merit Scholar, Matthew Siciliano

Dear Commissioner Tackett,

As you know, St. Francis has had a merit scholarship program for over two decades, the details of which I have presented in writing and in person to the KHSAA administration and Board of Control. To briefly refresh your memory: originally, the "St. Francis Merit Scholar", or overall winner, received a 100% tuition scholarship to St. Francis; it was changed to a 50% tuition scholarship about ten years ago, as our Board felt a 100% scholarship was too generous. As mentioned, the scholarship program began in the early '90's and therefore pre-dates Bylaw 13 by nearly two decades. Given our extremely high tuition (which is nearly \$20,000 and therefore almost double all other private schools in the state, with the exception of the five independent high schools), even our merit scholars are still paying nearly \$10,000, which is almost as much as all the other parochial and non-public schools.

The first two merit scholars since Bylaw 13 took effect were not actually affected by the Bylaw because the only sport they participated in was Bowling, which was not a KHSAA sport when they started it; so the KHSAA decided to grandfather their bowling participation and allow them to continue participating. Our merit scholar last year does not play any sports at all, so he is not affected by Bylaw 13. However, our winner this year, Matthew Siciliano, who will be entering 9th grade in the fall of the 2013-14 school year, does play soccer and basketball, and he would like to continue participating. Therefore, we are asking for the KHSAA to exempt him from the restrictions of Bylaw 13 and allow him to participate in these sports for his entire high school career, or any other sport he may choose to play. I would also like to mention that Matthew is currently an 8th grader at our own school, so there is absolutely no "recruiting" involved in his coming here; he is already a St. Francis student.

I sincerely hope that you will grant this exemption, as I think it would severely impair Matthew's high school experience if he could not play sports. In fact, I think he may choose not to attend St. Francis if he could not play, because while Matthew is not a stellar athlete, athletics are very important to him. As with all our merit scholars, Matthew was chosen anonymously by a committee that evaluated all our finalists based on their standardized test scores, GPA, results in our science competition and essay competition, the strength of their teacher recommendations, and the strength of their application essays. Matthew had excellent recommendations, application, and a 4.0 GPA. His test scores were 99.9% in math (1st place), 97% in verbal (2nd place); his essay scores were A- average; he ranked 3rd overall in Science (out of 20+). Samples from his teacher recommendations include: "Matthew grasps difficult concepts easily, and is able to apply understanding to problem solving situations. His assignments are always carefully prepared and he answers questions in great detail, adding information that goes beyond the scope of the assignment, and displays thinking in the abstract." Another teacher says "Matthew is an advanced, precocious thinker who reads heavy-duty adult history books on a regular basis out of pure curiosity...he can produce writing of considerable sophistication and insight. He needs serious challenges and stiff competition." In summary, Matthew is an extraordinary student who also happens to play some sports.

Please let me know if there is any further information that you need, or if you have any questions. I respectfully ask that you give serious consideration to this exemption request as not granting it would have an extremely negative impact on this student's high school experience and/or cause him not to attend the school that he and his parents feel is the best choice for him.

Sincerely,



Alexandra S. Thurstone '84
Head of School