



Kentucky High School Athletic Association

2280 Executive Drive ° Lexington, KY 40505 ° www.khsaa.org ° (859)299-5472 (859)293-5999 (fax)

October 27, 2014

Principal Curtis Higgins
Hopkinsville High School
430 Koffman Drive
Hopkinsville, KY 42240

Re: Practice and Play of Ineligible Student-Athlete

Dear Mr. Higgins:

On Thursday, September 25, you contacted the KHSAA with concerns about the eligibility of a student athlete based on the required credits the first day of school and the fact that this student was listed as a repeating 11th grade student at the school, violations of both Bylaw 5 (Academics) and Bylaw 4 (Enrollment). This information was confirmed by your Interim Athletic Director Betsy Glover at the Annual Meeting of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association ("KHSAA") on Monday, September 29 and she was directed to seek an official ruling on the student prior to any further action. The ruling was sent by the KHSAA on October 16, confirming that in fact, the student was ineligible. Throughout the discussion with your staff (very thorough and courteous staff I might add), I reminded them of the ramifications of the participation by an ineligible student-athlete including, but not limited to, the automatic forfeiture of all contests in which the ineligible student-athlete participated.

Under Bylaw 1, the Principal is ultimately responsible in all matters at the school that concern interscholastic athletic eligibility. Bylaw 14, Section 1 requires the Principal, or Designated Representative, of the school to certify the eligibility of all contestants. If a school improperly certifies the eligibility of a player and that player participates in contests while ineligible, penalties are required under the KHSAA Bylaws.

KHSAA BYLAWS AT ISSUE

The following bylaws that are relevant or at issue in this matter. The complete text of these bylaws are on the KHSAA website at <http://khsaa.org/general/regulations-and-policies/handbook/>.

These include:

- Bylaw 1 (Responsibility of Eligibility);
- Bylaw 4 (Enrollment);
- Bylaw 5 (Minimum Academic Requirement);
- Bylaw 17 (Certification of Eligibility); and
- Bylaw 27 (Penalties); with particular emphasis on Bylaw 17 and Bylaw 27 as follows:

Bylaw 17, Section 4 provides that "If any school plays an ineligible player when the facts were available and could have been known to a principal or Designated Representative, that school shall be penalized in accordance with the provisions of Bylaw 27."

KHSAA Bylaw 27, Section 4 (b) provides that "In addition, if a student is declared ineligible, all contests in which he or she has played while ineligible shall be forfeited to the opposing team."

FINDINGS

Based on your report, the student in question participated in your first five (5) contests, which were as follows.

Aug 22, 14	Warren Central	(L)	16-54
Aug 30, 14	West Creek, TN	(W)	42-7
Sep 5, 14	Calloway County	(W)	75-14
Sep 12, 14	Madisonville-North Hopkins	(L)	42-60
Sep 19, 14	Warren East	(W)	61-21

You have also confirmed that the student has not played or practiced on or after the discovery of this violation, and has not played in any contest after September 19, 2014. It is also recognized that this lack of detection occurred during a time of administrative turnover, particularly at a troubling time at the start of a new school year and with the loss of athletic administrator(s). It is also noted that the school quickly and efficiently researched the matter, and of its own volition, reported the violation.

Participation by an ineligible student-athlete is a very serious violation. Other member schools and their student-athletes have had to compete in football games against Hopkinsville while it used a player not in compliance with the rules all the member schools have agreed to follow. This ineligible student may have affected the outcome of those games. Further, the KHSAA constantly reminds all schools of the responsibility to monitor compliance and timely process the domestic student eligibility transfer paperwork. Moreover, participation by an ineligible student-athlete jeopardizes coverage under the KHSAA's catastrophic insurance policy for all student-athletes.

CONCLUSION AND RULING

Accordingly, the member schools, including Hopkinsville, have agreed to abide Bylaws which impose stern penalties due to the play of ineligible students. Due to the Bylaws of the Association, the following penalties will be imposed:

- Hopkinsville will forfeit its first five football games of 2014, including games previously recorded as wins.
- The final score for the games originally won by Hopkinsville will be recorded as 2-0 in favor of the opponents, and the original losses will have the score remain as it was the night of the contest.
- All statistics from the contests, including aggregate points scored and allowed, will remain as those marks were on the night of the contests.
- By copy of this correspondence, the teams involved in the forfeiture will be notified in writing.
- Hopkinsville will be assessed an administrative fine of \$200 for failure to properly monitor eligibility and allowing the ineligible student to participate. While the fine schedule calls for a much greater amount (including per game and practice amounts), it is apparent that the violation was isolated and noted how quickly and promptly the school reported the problem.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. We will record this incident on the scoreboard in the coming days, and will be issuing a brief statement at the first of the week with our regular information release. Upon completion of all penalties, you may consider this matter closed, and until that point, the matter remains an open inquiry.

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Hopkinsville High School may appeal the Commissioner's ruling in accordance with the KHSAA Due Process Procedure. Please note that, under the KHSAA Due Process Procedure, this is considered a "Board Matter", and as such, any appeal would go directly to the KHSAA Board of Control. Such appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of the issuance of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Julian Tackett
Commissioner

JT:mm

xc: Superintendent Mary Ann Gimmell, Christian County Schools
Interim Athletic Director Betsy Glover, Hopkinsville High School
KHSAA Executive Staff
KHSAA Board of Control