

Court document details LCA-VHSL settlement agreement

Ben Cates | Posted: Tuesday, June 2, 2015 3:24 pm

Documents from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia shed details on the settlement between the Virginia High School League and Liberty Christian Academy.

The settlement agreement reached last month outlines the specifics of several new VHSL rules, which have been expanded to accommodate the first private school allowed into the league in its 101-year history, including transfer and semester rules.

While LCA's entrance into the VHSL has state-wide ramifications, it has a direct impact on Lynchburg, since LCA now shares the same attendance zones with E.C. Glass and Heritage High.

The agreement also lists the 2017-18 school year as the year LCA will have full benefits of a VHSL membership. That date was agreed upon because VHSL is in the midst of a two-year scheduling cycle. LCA athletics director Frank Rocco said Tuesday since ADs throughout the state already have committed dates on their schedules, some of LCA's sports may not be fully merged into the VHSL until that school year. For some sports, he added, LCA may face a mix of private schools and public schools in the near future.

Questions still remain, a fact Rocco pointed out Tuesday.

"There are going to be some gray areas to some of these subject matters until we actually start experiencing them first-hand," Rocco said.

The settlement agreement acts as a blueprint for LCA's entrance and clears a few important details, though.

It outlines the transfer rule, which states any student from outside of Lynchburg who transfers into LCA must either move into the city or sit out one year. A student transferring to LCA from E.C.



LCA VHSL

LCA's Brian Ogle runs the ball following a reception during the first half of a benefit game against Amherst High School last August at a preseason game at Williams Stadium. The VHSL announced that the private school will now be eligible to compete against public schools. The Bulldogs will be competing in the Seminole District against teams from E.C. Glass, Heritage, Brookville and Amherst County, among others.

Glass or Heritage is eligible to play immediately.

The agreement also addresses the reclassification of high school athletes. Any student at LCA who already has reclassified or who played varsity sports as an eighth-grader will be grandfathered into the VHSL and is free to play out the remainder of his or hers varsity career.

As a private school, LCA allowed eight-graders to participate in varsity sports and allowed students to reclassify as well. That no longer is an option in the VHSL.

“The day we were accepted in, that practice stopped all together,” Rocco said.

VHSL Executive Director Ken Tilley confirmed Tuesday students who already have gone through that process are exempt from the rule, but added LCA “must provide us with a list of students who are in a repeat situation.”

In the agreement, the VHSL spells out its plans to have the Virginia Independent Schools Athletics Association, of which LCA formerly was a member, come under its banner as a private school division. Tilley confirmed the VHSL has had conversations with VISAA Executive Director Dick Kemper, adding the two sides will discuss the possibility more in the future.

That private school division would operate autonomously, with its own “rules, governance, finances and management, but will have VHSL member status,” according to the agreement.

If the VISAA did come under the umbrella of the VHSL, LCA would have the right to join the public school division of the VHSL.

In another development, Lynchburg City Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand, who presented the school board with a proposal on VHSL-LCA developments Tuesday evening, told The News & Advance coaches and athletics directors will be allowed to comment on the subject. Previously, Lynchburg City Schools had asked coaches and ADs to direct all questions to Lynchburg City Schools Public Information Officer Cindy Babb.

Brabrand’s presentation to the board included the impact the agreement has on the city school system.

He also recommended the creation of a state advisory group that “will review and assess the impact of this agreement on Virginia public education.”

Toward the end of the 40-minute discussion, Brabrand added: “We’re changing a hundred years of tradition in this agreement, public school tradition,” he said. “We need to make sure it’s honoring the ideals of our public school system in Virginia.”

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