

Lynchburg City Schools mum on LCA's entrance into the VHSL

Ben Cates | Posted: Saturday, May 23, 2015 8:00 pm

After Liberty Christian Academy sued the Virginia High School League last June, Lynchburg City Schools instructed its athletics directors and coaches not to speak to media outlets on the record concerning the pending lawsuit.

That ban is still in effect, despite the VHSL reaching a settlement with LCA on Wednesday.

It has kept the most qualified professionals — coaches and athletics directors — from answering sports-specific questions on how LCA's entrance to the VHSL will affect high school sports in Lynchburg.

Lynchburg City Schools has also declined to state its official position on the VHSL's decision to allow LCA into the league, which breaks a 101-year-old tradition of the organization serving only public schools.

In an email, Lynchburg City Schools Public Information Officer Cindy Babb referred The News & Advance to a press release issued Wednesday by the VHSL announcing its joint settlement with the Lynchburg-based school, which is eligible to begin competing in the VHSL in August.

“What I sent you right now is our only comment,” Babb said when reached by phone, adding that Lynchburg City Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand plans to meet with the VHSL this week.

LCA will leave the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association to join the VHSL. The school will reside in the Seminole District along with seven other local teams and become part of Conference 23 (along with local schools Amherst, E.C. Glass and Jefferson Forest) and Region 4A West.

While LCA can begin competing in all VHSL-related activities this fall, its football schedule, like those of public schools, has already been set for 2015. That means the school will play mostly other private schools in football this season and begin a full VHSL slate in 2016.

For '15, however, the VHSL has amended its rules to “make competitions with non-member private schools count the same as those against member public schools in its football ratings system that determines seeding for football playoffs,” according to Wednesday's release. That provision gives LCA entrance to the 2015 playoffs.

An email forwarded to The News & Advance last June stated to coaches that all media inquiries about the lawsuit should be referred to Babb. While E.C. Glass athletics director Chip Berry and

Heritage AD Mark Storm said last week that they could not answer questions about the development, both did confirm they had been asked to defer all questions to Lynchburg school system officials.

“Most, if not all, should abide, because they’re being asked by the superintendent [not to speak], until we get more answers on things,” Storm said.

Meanwhile, plenty of questions remain. LCA agreed to pull its athletes from both Lynchburg City attendance zones, E.C. Glass and Heritage. Will the VHSL make sure that happens? How does sharing those zones affect Lynchburg City Schools differently than any other high schools in Virginia, since LCA is, for now, the only private school in the league?

“I’m sure they have some individual comments that they’d like to make,” Glass AD Chip Berry said of the coaches he oversees, “because they’ve addressed their concerns to me.”