

# Thomson: Top female athletes hurt by new transfer rule



Josh Thomson, [jthomson@lohud.com](mailto:jthomson@lohud.com) 5:10 p.m. EDT May 5, 2016



(Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

Though the fall of 2017 may seem like an eternity from now, a deadline is fast approaching for young athletes interested in playing for Section 1's three non-public members.

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association adopted an amendment to its transfer rule last summer that will go into effect starting with the 2017-18 school year. Rule 30e of the NYSPHSAA's Bylaws and Eligibility Standards declares that seventh- and eighth-graders who participate in a high school-level sport and then enroll in a new school as a freshman will be ineligible to participate in that sport for a year.

NYSPHSAA executive director Robert Zayas said the change was adopted to address concerns of schools who felt they were showcasing top young athletes to the opposition.

"Our membership expressed concern of having, say, an eighth-grader playing up to the high school level and having the ability to go to any high school," Zayas said. "A school could decide to recruit or attract that young lady or young man by having seen them play at the high school level."

[NYSPHSAA transfer rule \(pages 18 and 19\) \(http://www.nysphsaa.org/Portals/0/PDF/Handbook/2015-16%20School%20Year/December%202015/ByLaws%20and%20Eligibility%20Standards%20-%20Handbook%2012-21-15.pdf\)](http://www.nysphsaa.org/Portals/0/PDF/Handbook/2015-16%20School%20Year/December%202015/ByLaws%20and%20Eligibility%20Standards%20-%20Handbook%2012-21-15.pdf)

While the adjustment no doubt has good intentions, its impact will be felt most by middle school-aged students — and especially by girls. According to a handful of local athletic directors, girls are moved up to compete at the high school level on a 2-to-1 or 3-to-1 ratio compared with boys.

"There are so many girls who are fully grown in eighth grade," said Pat Buckley, the Albertus Magnus girls basketball coach. "They don't change much over the next four years physically."

Albertus, a Catholic school in Rockland County, has certainly benefited from the influx of young stars from other districts, and is an annual Section 1 contender in girls basketball. One of the team's best players, sophomore Danielle LaRochelle, started for Albertus the last two seasons after playing varsity at Nyack High School as an eighth-grader.

LaRochelle's father, Steve, said the family had not decided whether Danielle would stay in Nyack or enroll at Albertus prior to her eighth grade year. Had the new rule been in place then, they would've faced tough decisions.

"I think had we known about it at the time, we would've had to consider what to do," Steve LaRochelle said.

The options for elite athletes like LaRochelle aren't great: Compete at an appropriate level and sit out freshman year if you enroll in a Catholic school or dominate overmatched competition on the modified. And who would that help?

"I question the intent of this and whose interest they are looking out for," LaRochelle said. "It doesn't sound like they're looking out for the kid's best interest."

While the athletes may bear the brunt, the schools targeted by the amended rule are clear. In Section 1, the only non-public members are Albertus, Lourdes and Ursuline. They would be the only schools affected, since the transfer rule allows athletes whose families move into new districts to play immediately.

Ursuline girls basketball coach Beth Wooters doesn't expect the rule to have a great impact on her school, which includes sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students and also draws students from local Catholic grammar schools. The impact will be felt more significantly at Albertus and Lourdes, which don't.

Those schools naturally draw students from public grammar schools in their vicinity in order to keep their doors open. Interim athletic director Tom Collins — a Hall of Fame coach and administrator in Rockland — believes the new rule could threaten Albertus' future.

"I told my principal, I think they should get a lawyer and there should be a lawsuit," Collins said. "I think it's totally wrong."

It's also set to further weaken the already frayed relationship between the state association and its non-public members. And it certainly won't help the athletes stuck in the middle.

**Twitter:** [@lohudinsider](https://twitter.com/lohudinsider) (<https://twitter.com/lohudinsider>)

Read or Share this story: <http://lohud.us/1T183HU>



**Shufflebean**  
COFFEE  
Costa Rican Coffee  
LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED

**DON'T TALK DERBY TO ME... UNTIL I'VE HAD MY COFFEE!**

AVAILABLE AT CENTRAL KY KROGER LOCATIONS, LIQUOR BARN,  
WHOLE FOODS, GOOD FOODS CO-OP AND THE NEW LUCKY'S MARKET

FOR ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS  
VISIT [SHUFFLEBEAN.US](http://SHUFFLEBEAN.US)

AdChoices