



Kentucky High School Athletic Association

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May 3, 2017

Designated Representative Mike Crawley
Butler High School
2222 Crums Lane
Louisville, KY 40216

Dear Mr. Crawley,

This correspondence is in relation to violations of KHSAA Bylaw 15 by representatives of Butler High School during the football playoff game with Lafayette on November 5. As we have discussed, the video accounts of this game show very clearly that a significant number of team members left the Butler sideline during an incident involving players from both teams. Action on this matter has been purposely delayed so that the athletic program at Butler could be monitored for recurrence of this type of incident. Thankfully, such has not occurred.

Though video accounts are not available to allow for a complete player-by-player (and nonplayer by nonplayer) incident reconstruction, it is clear that more players (and nonplayers) were involved than allowed by rule were on the field for Butler regardless of game situation. Surprisingly, the incident led to no player ejections for either team, a fact that has been reviewed with the crew of officials assigned to the game and the incident referred to that local association for the training of officials. Due to the number of individuals involved, the situation was reviewed by the KHSAA under the video review policy.

BYLAWS AND REGULATIONS AT ISSUE

The complete text of the relevant bylaws is located on the KHSAA website. These include: Bylaw 1 (Responsibility for Eligibility) states that the Principal is ultimately responsible for all matters at the school that concern interscholastic athletic eligibility; Bylaw 15 (Practice of Sportsmanship) sets out membership expectations for the conduct of all players, coaches, and others involved in the conduct of interscholastic athletics; Bylaw 27 (Penalties) specifies the range of penalties when such are imposed for violations; and KHSAA Video Review Policy – states that upon request of a member school or contest official, a member of the Commission will review selected play situations and provide interpretations as to the proper application of the playing rules.

- a) If requested, the results of such a review will be shared with the member school or requesting official and the appropriate Assigning Secretary. The video may also be retained for future training purposes, not to indict any school or official, but to ensure consistent rules application and serve as a resource for training material;
- b) Video SHALL NOT BE USED (per KHSAA Bylaw 21) to appeal/protest the judgment call of an official, and will not be used to revise or adjust that judgment, or the subsequent penalties that may have arisen or shall arise from that judgment;
- c) Video SHALL NOT BE USED during any contest for the purpose of assisting officials with making a game decision;
- d) Video MAY be used at the discretion of the Commission to appropriately and properly identify the offenders in a situation where it is possible that misidentification (officials unable to get number, transposition of number, etc.) has occurred, and where either the member school or game official has requested such review or the Commission has been made aware of the possibility from another source. Video may also be used, at the

discretion of the Commission, to review the possible misadministration / misapplication of the consequences of a rule or in the case of ejection, the ejection party has been numerically misidentified.

- e) Video MAY be used at the discretion of the Commission and in compliance with NFHS playing rules, in a situation involving a fight, physical confrontation or ejection (where the circumstances are potentially unable to be accurately observed and reported by the game officials) and where either the member school or game official has requested such review or the Commission has been made aware of the possibility from another source. This could include identifying individuals that were not previously identified, correcting the numbers/names of incorrectly identified individuals, identifying individuals, including nonplayers or substitutes, who enter the playing area during an altercation or assessing different levels of involvement in the incident for the purpose of administrative action.

KHSAA Fine Schedule - Each school is subject to a fine up to \$1,000 for each occurrence where “Team members leaving bench, sideline or dugout and coming into playing area during an altercation/fight or for any other reason related to unsporting conduct that is not specifically allowable by playing rule;” or “d) Team involved in an altercation/fight before, during or after scrimmage or contest (from time of arrival to time of departure).”

CONCLUSIONS

Both schools cooperated with this review although a comprehensive and wide-angle review was not available. A video was available that verified many nonplayers (uniformed and non-uniformed who were not in the game at the time) left the bench. The video does not show the entire area of the bench of either team. There was no panoramic or comprehensive view of the two sidelines.

Regardless of the undocumented provocation, there is no acceptable reason for the team to leave the sideline. There has been continual caution to coaching staffs and administrators of all schools about the risks that this involves and the need for the adults in the situation to remain in control of the actions of the students. Clearly, this did not occur in this situation. This warning was again repeated in the 2016 football rules clinics (along with likely sanctions if violated), an online presentation where all ten affiliated coaches in the Butler program are recorded as having completed.

It is not possible to discern motive or intent (of either team) from available video. Though the degree of involvement of each nonplayer (and remaining players on the field) varied, each of the players who left the bench violated NFHS playing rules by leaving the bench during the fight. It is incontrovertible that several players violated this provision.

As few as twelve and as many as thirteen nonplayers (students who were not in the game at the time), left the Butler bench during this incident and proceeded to the sideline near the end zone on the side of the field as the bench for Lafayette, in addition to players who had been in the game the previous play. The video has been shared with you add the representatives of the school and school system for review and further action against any identified individuals.

The game of football is a game fraught with potential for physical confrontation, but this can be managed if the adults involved, including the officials managing the twenty-two players in the game and the coaches managing all of the nonplayers on the sideline, aggressively perform their responsibilities. Clearly, this situation was not handled in the best manner by all adults involved.

It is apparent that Butler's coaches fell short in their efforts to instill into their students that there are absolutely no circumstances under which it is permissible to leave the sideline during a confrontation.

PENALTIES

Penalizing our membership is never a pleasant thing, and hopefully, lessons have been learned so that incidents like this will not occur in the future. It is everyone's responsibility, administrators, coaches, officials, fans, and participants, to ensure that a safe environment for athletic competition exists. The actions of the involved team members placed the health and safety of all in attendance at risk of injury, not only by the lack of self-control and discipline but also by the continued involvement when the situation occurred. Thankfully, this situation did not escalate to involve fans and all other team members. Those that did remain uninvolved showed the desired level of restraint.

After reviewing this situation, the following findings and penalties are hereby levied –

1. All coaches on the staff at Butler High School will be required to complete the NFHSLearn.com course entitled "Teaching and Modeling Behavior" prior to the start of the 2017 season, to reinforce the requirements for managing student-athlete groups. Failure to complete the course and have completion documented to the KHSAA will result in immediate suspension from contests until such completion has been verified. It is recognized that Butler will incur costs for the completion of this course, and such has been factored into the final penalties.
2. The Principal or Designated Representative at Butler shall conduct a comprehensive review of sportsmanship expectations within the athletic program and shall report to the Association on the completion of this task.
3. A maximum fine of \$12,000 to \$13,000 (depending upon the number of identified nonplayers who left the bench) at \$1,000 per incident could have been imposed. However, it is critical that the KHSAA recognize the steps taken by you on behalf of Butler High School. In this case, you were quick and decisive in your review and willingness to administer proper sanction and allow the program to move forward. This certainly mitigates and lessens the need for extensive penalty. In that light, a \$1300 fine is assessed against the football program at Butler High School for violations of Bylaw 15 for the nonplayers (uniformed players who were not in the game at the time) who left the bench area during the altercation. An invoice is included with the distributed copy of these findings for use in complying with this penalty, however, the amount of the fine has been deducted from amounts owed to Butler for participation in sanctioned KHSAA state championship play during 2016-2017 and no additional payment is necessary.

You are reminded that KHSAA Bylaw 1 addresses the responsibility of the Principal of the school in maintaining institutional control to ensure that KHSAA rules and regulations are adhered to within the athletic program. While such may be delegated to the Designated Representative per that bylaw, the ultimate accountability remains with the Principal.

You are reminded that further violations within the athletic program of any KHSAA Bylaw, regulation or policy of a school on probation, could result in the maximum sanction allowable under Bylaw 27, which includes the possible suspension of the entire school athletic program. I know this has been a very difficult situation for all school personnel involved. As administrators, you and your school are to be commended for diligence in researching and supplying requested information in order to determine what happened in this unfortunate situation. From your

cooperation in this investigation, it appears that school personnel have addressed any necessary corrective action and put policies in place for the future to ensure that this does not happen again.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The findings of this investigation will be made public by the Association through its normal news media contact channels and through its website (including social media feeds). Commentary from the Association (if contacted by media representatives) will focus solely on the original incident, the school response, and this final ruling, and additional inquiries will be directed to you as Designated Representative and your Principal.

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Butler 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

xc: Principal William Allen, Butler High School
Jerry Wyman, Director of Academics, Activities and Athletics, Jefferson County Public Schools
Head Football Gary Wheeler, Jr, Butler High School
Kevin Dalton, Assigning Secretary, Lake Cumberland Football Officials
KHSAA Board of Control
KHSAA Executive Staff