



Kentucky High School Athletic Association

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

May 3, 2017

Principal Bryne Jacobs
Lafayette High School
401 Reed Lane
Lexington, KY 40503

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

This correspondence is in regards to the violations of KHSAA Bylaw 15 by representatives of Lafayette High School near the conclusion of the Class 6A football playoff championship game vs. Trinity. Hopefully, this correspondence brings to a close this chapter and allows for you and your administration to put this incident behind you and move forward.

As we have discussed, the video accounts of the end of this game show very clearly that a player for Lafayette acted in an unsportsmanlike manner by actually knocking the hat off of one of the game officials while expressing his dissatisfaction with the decisions made in that game by the officials.

Final action on this matter has been purposely delayed while the athletic program at the school could be monitored for recurrence of this type of incident as well as allowing for the formulation of appropriate remedies at the school and district level prior to the issuance of a final ruling from my office. Thankfully, no further sportsmanship issues have occurred.

This situation unfortunately represented the culmination of a series of incidents within the football program during the 2016 season that did not shed the most positive light on the school. In addition, while this incident represented the last and potentially most egregious of the unfortunate unsportsmanlike situations involving the program, it was not alone. Earlier in the year, the school was penalized for an issue related to sportsmanship in the regular season game with Paul Dunbar; there was another during the team's playoff game with Butler (of which a comprehensive video review was not available to appropriately place additional responsibility); and then this final culminating incident. I know you are committed to putting these situations behind you and your school, but also moving on with a standard of conduct more representative of one of the KHSAA's longest standing members.

The situation in the football finals was particularly unfortunate. At a time when the Association staff and its member schools find the recruitment of officials to be more challenging than ever before, a student representative of Lafayette took it upon himself to exceed the bounds of anything even remotely deemed appropriate. In addition, this student-athlete was a senior who played no other sport, which results in the Association having little option but to address the situation from an institutional perspective rather than an individual perspective. Taken on their sum, the incidents referenced in the paragraph above reflect a lack of institutional control within the football program that potentially threatens the health and safety of competitors, coaches, officials and all involved. For this reason, institutional penalties are clearly the most appropriate remedy.

BYLAWS AND REGULATIONS AT ISSUE

The complete text of the relevant bylaws are located on the KHSAA website. These include:
Bylaw 1 (Responsibility for Eligibility) states that the Principal is ultimately responsible in 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 are 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

Lafayette High School and representatives of the Fayette County Public Schools were extremely cooperative with this review following the incident. In this case, video was available that clearly indicates the actions of the student. That same video also displays a professional level of conduct by the effected game officials that has probably never been exceeded. Frankly, the restraint and professionalism shown by the game officials at the time was exemplary and should serve as a model for all who study their actions.

It would be nice if I were able to state that the coaching staff at Lafayette displayed the same level of involvement, action and professionalism when this situation occurred. Unfortunately, such was not the case. In fact, the staff did nothing to address the actions of this young man, choosing only to stand back and watch the unfolding situation. The staff did take steps to prevent any other individuals from coming on to the field and therefore potentially escalating the situation further, but the lack of action by the staff in dealing with the young man that participated in the incident was nearly as appalling as the action of the student himself.

It is my conclusion from this situation, particularly when considered in addition to the other situations within the program, that the football program has failed to perform the required levels of institutional control as it relates to the conduct by the students. The success on the field by the program in recent years is admirable, and should be a source of pride. However, interscholastic athletics is about using the field as a classroom, and that classroom must include instilling the proper conduct expectations into each participant. In this area, there were obvious shortcomings.

It is not possible to discern motive or intent from this video. One could conclude that there was frustration; one could assert that there was disappointment. It is even possible to conclude from review of the entire game, that some aspects of the conduct were provoked by members of the opposing team. But even if those situations occurred, they do not forgive the actions of the student and lack of action by the adults involved with the team.

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, all adults within the football program involved did not handle this situation in the best manner.

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 proposed by the school and school system are accepted –

1. All coaches on the football staff at Lafayette High School will be required to complete continuous improvement activities utilizing trained professionals regarding the conduct expectations within the interscholastic program. The school and district are to be commended for proposing that this be extended district-wide;
2. Penalties proposed against members of the coaching staff related to scrimmage or game involvement for the 2017 season;
3. Continued review among and between the members of the coaching staff to ensure the appropriate conduct standards are displayed by all involved in all contests;
4. The student-athlete involved in the incident at the conclusion of the Class 6A Football Finals will be permanently ineligible for interscholastic athletics; and
5. The student-athlete involved in the incident at the conclusion of the Class 6A Football Finals as well as the administration of the school have issued written apologies to the lead official in that championship game.

In addition, after reviewing the situation, the following penalties are imposed by the KHSAA –

1. A \$2,000 fine is assessed against the football program at Lafayette High School for violations of Bylaws 1 and 15 and hereby imposed. This fine is the result not only of this singular action by the player, and lack of action by the coaching staff, but recognizes that this was not the first incident related to conduct during the 2016 season.
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 Lafayette for participation in sanctioned KHSAA state championship play during 2016-2017 and no additional payment is necessary. The balance due Lafayette will be sent to the school;
2. The designated spring practice period for 2017 was reduced by the final three days, one without contact and two with contact;
3. The football program at Lafayette High School is placed on probation for the 2017 playing season. Any violations of KHSAA bylaws, particularly those related to conduct or demonstrating a lack of institutional control could result in additional penalties contained in Bylaw 27; and
4. The Principal or Designated Representative at Lafayette shall conduct a comprehensive review of sportsmanship expectations within the athletic program and shall report to the Association on the completion of this task.

Each of 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. Representatives of Lafayette High School 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 realize that this has been a very difficult situation for all school personnel involved with Lafayette and its football program. As administrators, you and your athletic administrators 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 have instituted policies and best practices for the future to ensure that this does not happen again.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Association through its normal news media contact channels and through its website (including social media feeds) will make the findings of this investigation public. 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 Principal, and to the Athletic Director and Superintendent of the Fayette Schools.

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Lafayette 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 shall be filed within thirty (30) days of the issuance of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Julian Tackett
Commissioner

xc: KHSAA Executive Staff
Superintendent Emmanuel Caulk, Fayette County Schools
Fayette County Public Schools Athletic Director Rob Sayre
Athletic Director Michael Kinney, Lafayette High School
KHSAA Board of Control
Game Officials, 6A Finals, 2016