

Sports

USD 501 to challenge KSHSAA on forfeiture of Topeka High's 2017 football wins, league title

By Rick Peterson

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Dustin Dick, director of activities for Topeka USD 501, confirmed Friday afternoon that the district will appeal Wednesday's _____ by the Kansas State High School Activities Association executive board ordering Topeka High's football team to forfeit its eight victories from the 2017 season because of the use of an ineligible player in all 10 games during High's 8-2 season.

"We are planning to appeal that decision to strip the eight wins from the THS football team," Dick said in an email to The Topeka Capital-Journal.

Dick said that details of USD 501's appeal plan have not been finalized, but that the district plans to take its appeal to the KSHSAA appeals board.

The player in question, Jacqez Barksdale, transferred to Topeka High from Highland Park prior to the start of the 2017-18 school year.

USD 501 and Topeka High officials later suspected that Barksdale, an All-City running back this past season as a junior, did not make a bona fide move to the Topeka High attendance area. The school and district reported the possible violation to the KSHSAA and immediately removed Barksdale from athletic competition.

The executive board made the final decision on Barksdale's eligibility at Wednesday's special meeting, voting 7-0 that Barksdale played while he was ineligible and that High should forfeit its wins and its share of the Centennial League championship.

Tony Barksdale, Jacqez's father, testified at Wednesday's hearing that he did make a bona fide move to Topeka High's district, with a rental agreement, receipts and utility bills being entered into evidence. However, the executive board didn't feel there was enough evidence to prove Jacqez Barksdale made a move into High's attendance area to live with his father, according to KSHSAA attorney Randy Forbes.

The board ruled Barksdale ineligible to participate in activities at Topeka High for the first 18 weeks of the 2017-18 school year.

Executive board member Annette Gonzales, who read the board's decision to those in attendance at the hearing, said the executive board ruled Barksdale must be withheld from one varsity competition, after becoming eligible, for each of the 10 football games he played while being ineligible.

The board required Jacquez to be withheld from at least the first two varsity football games in the 2018 season. The other eight games that Barksdale would be forced to miss must be varsity basketball games or other varsity spring sports. If Barksdale doesn't sit out eight varsity contests in other sports, he would be forced to miss the first 10 football games of the 2018 season.

Topeka High administration was instructed to notify all eight schools that it defeated this past season in writing to advise them of the forfeiture. Any and all Centennial League and KSHSAA postseason football team awards must be forfeited and returned.

Because of the appeal, those penalties apparently are on hold.

Multiple sources told The Capital-Journal on Friday that Topeka High principal Rebecca Morrissey met with the Topeka High football team Friday to inform them that USD 501 would appeal the KSHSAA decision.



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