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Why Memphis East , a national power coached by Penny Hardaway, has 2 ineligible players

John Varlas, USA TODAY NETWORK – Tennessee Published 1:07 p.m. CT Nov. 16, 2017 | Updated 2:58 p.m. CT Nov. 16, 2017



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(Photo: Mark Weber / The Commercial Appeal)

On Wednesday, two boys basketball players from national power Memphis East were ruled ineligible by the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association. Here is how we got here and what we know: [Fullscreen](#)

Who is the coach at Memphis East? PHOTOS: Memphis East vs Oak Ridge in Boys State Tournament

Penny Hardaway, a former NBA and Memphis State star, (https://www.commercialappeal.com/picture-gallery/sports/nba/2017/01/31/penny-hardaway-through-the-years/97281996/) is now the East boys basketball coach after serving as an assistant under Robert Jackson the past two years. Hardaway, who is a member of the National Federation of State High School Associations' hall of fame, is a non-faculty coach at East. Hardaway also spent time as the Lester Middle School coach from 2012-2015.

More: Penny Hardaway: 'We're breeding an NBA mindset here' at East
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During that time, he was on the way to completing a TSSAA rule that stated non-faculty coaches in baseball, basketball, softball and track and field had to spend five years as an assistant before they were eligible to become a head coach. However, the TSSAA's Legislative Council dropped that rule earlier this year.



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Memphis East's assistant Coach Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway former NBA player coaches on the sidelines during the State Tournament Quarterfinal game against Hillsboro , on Wednesday at MTSU. (Photo: Helen Comer / Gannett Tennessee)

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Hardaway is also connected to Team Penny, a Memphis-based grassroots AAU organization (<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/sports/college/memphis-tigers/basketball/2017/07/31/penny-hardaway-aa-u-basketball-memphis-jayden-dandridge-lomax-jeffries/526820001/>) that he began sponsoring in 2012.

Who are the players involved?

The players were not specifically named in the release from the TSSAA, but there are two who have transferred to the school who would appear to have had a prior link with Hardaway: 6-foot-5 wing Ryan Boyce and 6-11 post player James Wiseman.

In the offseason, Boyce transferred from Houston while Wiseman played last season at Ensworth.

(<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/sports/2017/08/21/james-wiseman-basketball-recruit-transfers-east-high-school-eligibility/586105001/>)

Boyce, a senior who signed with UAB on Monday (<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/sports/high-school/2017/11/13/east-highs-ryan-boyce-signs-uab/857404001/>), and Wiseman, a junior, played this summer for Team Penny. Wiseman is considered the No. 1-rated player in Tennessee for the class of 2019 and fourth in the country, according to 247Sports.

What is the rule the TSSAA is citing?

In Section 13 (ineligible transfer students), subsection e, the rule states: If a student with an athletic record transfers to a new school where an "athletic coaching link" existed

in the past 12 months, that student is ineligible for 12 months at all levels in the specific sports where a linkage was present.

More: Two Memphis East basketball players ruled ineligible by TSSAA (<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/sports/high-school/2017/11/15/memphis-east-basketball-players-penny-hardaway-ruled-ineligible-tssaa-ryan-boyce-james-wiseman/868536001/>)

Links may include (1) attendance at an individual camp (and then transferring); (2) playing on non-school (independent) teams (and then transferring to that coach's school); (3) transferring into a school where a former coach has been hired; and (4) transferring to a school where a former or current personal trainer or strength and conditioning coach is employed.



Team Penny guard Ryan Boyce dunks over the Boo Williams defense during second-half action at the 2017 EYBL Peach Jam in North Augusta, S.C. (Photo: Mark Weber / The Commercial Appeal)

What are both sides' arguments?

The wording "links may include" is the apparent stumbling block for East. Hardaway is a coach for the Mustangs. However, Hardaway is not the direct coach for Boyce and Wiseman on Team Penny's U17 team.

Former Arkansas and NBA player Todd Day was their AAU coach this past year.

That may not matter. The TSSAA bylaws only give four examples of what "may" be considered a coaching link. The bylaws do not specifically stipulate those are the lone examples of a coaching link.

What's next?


East submitted an appeal to be heard Thursday on the TSSAA's Board of Control agenda and was slated to be heard at 3:30 p.m. by the 12-member board. All appeals regarding hardships are heard behind a closed-door executive session, which media are not allowed to attend.

The TSSAA will notify East of its decision afterward, likely on Friday.

The appeal is the second time this year that East and TSSAA have disagreed over a ruling that affected the basketball season. In March, the Mustangs were invited to New York to play in the Dick's Sporting Goods national tournament but were denied by a rule (<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/sports/high-school/2017/03/14/east-high-loses-tssaa-appeal-go-national-tournament/99177698/>), prohibiting Tennessee teams from playing in tournaments after the school season. East made the trip anyway as spectators

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