

AHSAA changes amateurism rule after Maori Davenport controversy

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Call it the Maori Davenport rule.

The AHSAA Central Board and Legislative Council ratified a change to the AHSAA's Amateur Rule on Wednesday, allowing leeway in punishment for players who run afoul of the rule. An AHSAA news release about today's Central Board meeting did not include the revised rule's wording, but is said "the Amateur Rule's restrictions remain the same."

The AHSAA's amateurism rule was central to the ruling against Davenport, a Charles Henderson senior and Rutgers who was [ruled ineligible for receiving a stipend from USA Basketball after playing in an international tournament last summer](#).

Davenport and her family said they did not know the payment was against AHSAA rules, and USA Basketball admitted it should have sent the money. She paid back the money after learning it was impermissible.

But the AHSAA's Amateur Rule mandated a one-season suspension for anyone breaking the rule, leading to the governing body ruling Davenport ineligible.

Davenport's unique circumstances prompted several NBA players and

ESPN analyst Jay Bilas to send the case into the national spotlight.

Davenport's family sued the AHSAA and Executive Director Steve Savarese, and [a Pike County judge issue a temporary restraining order to allow her to play](#).

The case never got inside a courtroom, thanks to several postponements, and [the judge dismissed the lawsuit](#) -- at the family's request -- just hours after Charles Henderson lost in the Southeast Regional final.

To change the rule, a proposal was made the AHSAA's Legislative Council, which met today and approved the measure. The AHSAA said the proposed change was submitted by eight schools -- Opelika, Piedmont, Spanish Fort, Decatur, Helena, Saint James, Hamilton and Hartselle. Then, the Central Board ratified the change.

"The AHSAA's member schools and Central Board are constantly reviewing and improving the AHSAA by-laws, rules and regulations through this tried-and-true democratic process," Savarese said in the AHSAA news release. "We have full confidence in our member schools' ability to govern themselves as they have shown so aptly since the AHSAA's formation in 1921."

Two other proposals were also ratified today -- allowing high school junior varsity and freshman football teams to begin regular season play on the Monday after the opening week of games, which is Aug. 26, this year; and changed the AHSAA Divorce Rule by adding a section dealing with parents who never married.