

Blythewood football coach in trouble over recruiting violations

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File video: 2018 Blythewood high school football preview

Blythewood coach Jason Seidel discusses expectations and challenges from a year ago as he joined the Bengals By Lou Bezjak

Blythewood High School's football coach is being punished for what Richland School District Two called "violations of the district's position on recruiting."

On Friday night, Richland Two released a statement to The State about recruiting violations reported against Blythewood head coach Jason Seidel. The [violations were first reported by WIS TV](#).

Richland Two has taken "appropriate personnel action with the coach for violations of the district's position on recruiting." Seidel attempted to convince students from other schools in the district to transfer to

Blythewood and play football for the Bengals, the investigation showed. The practice of recruiting “for athletic purposes is a serious ethical violation” and against the rules, according to Richland 2’s athletics manual.

The district has not specified what punishment is being levied against Seidel, but sources told The State it could involve a one- or two-game suspension or be either a reduction of spring practices or the coach not being involved in spring practice.

“Richland School District Two takes recruitment violations seriously and believes that everyone must abide by the spirit of the rule in order to remain fair, consistent and honorable throughout all of our schools’ athletic programs,” Richland Two said in the statement.

In January, according to Richland Two, Ridge View High School principal Brenda Mack-Foxworth reported the possible recruitment of three current Ridge View football players by Seidel and a parent. None of the three players ended up transferring to Blythewood.

A Richland Two district administrator conducted an investigation and met with officials from Blythewood and Ridge View on the matter before the district took the “appropriate personnel action.”

According to the district statement, the South Carolina High School League also was notified more than once about the violations, which also go against league policy on recruiting. District administrators met with the SCHSL on April 12, 2019, “to share written evidence of the situation.”

At that meeting, the SCHSL didn’t hand out any punishment because it

said the students who were contacted didn't transfer. The league said any discipline would be handled by the school district.

Richland 2's athletics manual says this about recruiting: "Recruiting of prospective students for athletic purposes is a serious ethical violation of the philosophy and ideals of interscholastic athletics and will be treated as such. For purposes of this section, recruiting is defined as an attempt by an individual(s) or group associated with a school to entice a student to attend or to transfer to a school for athletic purposes through the exertion of undue influence or any special treatment."

Seidel is in his second year coaching the Bengals. Attempts to reach him for comment have been unsuccessful. Blythewood Athletics Director Barry Mizzell declined to comment Friday, referring all questions to the district.

The State has requested from Richland 2 a copy of Siedel's personnel file and any and all disciplinary records, formal reprimands and investigations into him.

The State talked this summer with Seidel and other Midlands coaches about the practice of player transfers and high school recruiting. Seidel compared the local environment to that of Charlotte, where athletic transfers are commonplace. Seidel coached at Hickory Ridge in Harrisburg, North Carolina, and spent several years coaching in the Tar Heel State before coming to Blythewood last year.

"It is like Charlotte. You see dudes going left and right. I don't like the mentality of kid isn't happy or what you are doing that you go somewhere else," Seidel said. "We tell coaches: You can't talk to kids.

I've been walking in the mall and kids are like, 'We are coming.' Well, you got to go talk to my AD if it comes to that. It is rampant. It isn't just here."

Blythewood and Ridge View both won their respective jamboree games Friday. The Bengals defeated Olympic (NC) and Blazers beat Airport, 14-3.

The two teams open the season against each other this Friday at District 2 Stadium.