

'I guess that's how my parents raised me.' Penn runner stops to help competitor at finish line of state finals



Penn High School runner Ben Boardley did not realize his sportsmanship could have resulted in disqualification. Not that it would have mattered.

In Saturday's state cross-country meet at Terre Haute, he saw Brebeuf Jesuit's Faizan Khan fall as both approached the finish. Boardley stopped to help, pulling on Khan's left arm to raise him to his feet, before both continued running.

"I just kind of saw it and did it," Boardley said Monday. "I guess that's

how my parents raised me. They taught me to treat others how I'd want to be treated, and to be helpful when I can."

The moment was captured on video and posted on Twitter. Some of Boardley's friends saw the incident on a livestream and immediately texted. Others told him it was "pretty cool," he said.

Khan connected with Boardley via Instagram on Sunday to thank him.

By rule, a runner can be disqualified for assisting another. But an Indiana High School Athletic Association official reviewed the incident and decided no violation occurred.

According to the IHSAA, the official applied NFHS Rule 4-6-5:

"A competitor who provides assistance to an injured or ill competitor should not be disqualified if neither the individual competitor providing the assistance nor his/her team gains an advantage as a result of providing the assistance."

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Out of 207 finishers, Boardley was 189th. Khan was 193rd, or eight seconds behind the Penn runner. Neither was in his team's scoring five, so a DQ would have been irrelevant.

Neither runner wanted to be that far back in the race. Khan said he has been affected by seasonal allergies. Boardley said he, too, wasn't in the best place but wanted to help the other runner.

"Because I knew if that was me," Boardley said, "I wanted to make sure I'd finish at state."

Boardley, an 18-year-old senior, ranks No. 6 in his class and has not yet picked a college. Penn coach Tom Miller described him as hard-working and well-mannered.

Khan began to have trouble breathing at the 4-kilometer mark of the 5,000-meter race, and later felt shooting pain through his thighs and lower back. He said he fell about five times.

"Then Ben came and helped me," Khan said. "I told him, 'Go finish. I can't.'"

After finishing, Khan received medical attention in a building that is part of the Wabash Valley Family Sports Center. He said he could not stand until an hour afterward.

"At the end of the race, that's when your true priorities show," Khan said. "I know what Ben's priorities are. And what his true character is like."

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