



Request on Behalf of the Former Evarts High School And KHSAA Records Surround Coach Billy Hicks

1 message

Tackett, Julian <jtackett@khsaa.org>

Tue, Apr 16, 2024 at 4:32 PM

To: "Parker, Billy" <billy.parker@scott.kyschools.us>, "Roark, Brent" <brent.roark@harlan.kyschools.us>

Bcc: execstaff@khsaa.org, Julian Tackett <jtackett@khsaa.org>

This is in response to a dual inquiry from the two of you received in late January. For a variety of reasons, most likely simply Coach Hicks' longevity and tradition of excellence, his coaching record is likely the most reviewed and discussed record in the annals of Kentucky High School basketball. Obviously, this state has an unparalleled passion for basketball, particularly at the interscholastic level, and that makes the scrutiny continual.

Back in 2014, KHSAA staff worked with Scott County High School, members of Coach Hicks family and coaching staff, and others on the compilation of Coach Hicks' record as he neared milestones on the all-time list of Kentucky coaches. The KHSAA has also worked with author Jeff Bridgeman during his work, Kentucky High School Basketball Encyclopedia, 100th Anniversary Edition, and considers (absent documentation and irrefutable evidence to the contrary) his work to be authoritative for the years prior to 1997-98 when the KHSAA adopted an electronic scoreboard record in conjunction with Rihards.com.

In the review of these records, now published at <https://khsaa.org/04-09-2024-billy-hicks-all-time-coaching-record/>, there were occasional disagreements about win-loss records, but most discrepancies were able to be reconciled through newspaper articles and Mr. Bridgeman's work. The primary issue of this review, however, were the events of the 1978-79 season and actions by the Association and both Evarts High School and the Harlan County Board of Education. The records around those years and actions, while not comprehensive, contain more than sufficient information to reach a conclusion on this matter with the 1978-79 season record. In summary, the following actions occurred:

- In the early fall of 1979, accusations were made by member schools of the KHSAA that the Evarts football program used two ineligible players in the team's football game against Glasgow. These accusations were later confirmed.
- The situation involving the football team led Evarts and the KHSAA to work on a review of all programs in the school. From the correspondence file, this review lasted several weeks and multiple meetings.
- At the September 1979 meeting of the Board of Control, the entire athletic program (all sports) at Evarts High School was suspended from membership in the KHSAA by the Board of Control. At the time of that decision, the Commissioner was directed to meet with representatives of Evarts regarding other violations that were not involving the football team that may have occurred during the 1978-79 season.
- At its October meeting, the Board of Control affirmed on appeal the suspension of boys' basketball and baseball based on the statements made of possible additional violations (other than football) in those other programs.
- It is apparent that a meeting was held where the administration and the then-basketball coach at Evarts (Coach Hicks) were directed to come to Lexington to meet with the Commissioner regarding findings of the use of an ineligible player being used during the 1978-79 season. There are no official records or notes from that meeting. It is apparent, however, that contemporaneously with the suspension from membership and this meeting, several news articles from throughout the state reported that all sports would remain suspended.
- According to the records of the Harlan Daily Enterprise, the Evarts team had compiled a record of 10 wins and 16 losses on the court during the 1978-79 season.
- Even prior to the current wording of the KHSAA Bylaw 1 related to Principal accountability and institutional control, it is apparent that the KHSAA gave the representatives of Evarts High School the initial opportunity to address any violations found in their investigative review and identify subsequent actions. Part of the action committed to by the high school and school system dealt with the resignation of the then-football coach, other personnel matters not subject to public disclosure, and the forfeiture of all wins in boys' basketball (now termed vacating of all wins) for the 1978-79 season. Therefore since that time, the Association records have listed 0-26 as the boys' basketball record at Evarts..
- It is also important to note that it is likely that there are no remaining living members of the groups that held meetings or had discussions on this matter, and therefore any conclusion has to come from the minimal remaining written record. These actions were prior to the mid-1990s adoption of the KHSAA Records Retention Policy (which lists a current year plus four records retention time frame), and therefore, the totality of the available written information on this matter (limited as it is) remains in the KHSAA Archives at EKV.
- At its December 15, 1979 meeting, following the report by Principal Ledger Howard of all actions taken by the school including the resignation of all coaches identified by the school as "responsible for the violations", the KHSAA Board of Control voted to reinstate the membership of Evarts High School, and specified resumption of play date at January 2, 1980.
- Moving forward to January 2024, this office received joint communication from both Superintendents requesting a further review of the 1978-1979 record based on information that they felt might be compelling.
- It is worthy of note that the actions of the KHSAA in this matter were not specific to games played, coach's actions or other specifics surrounding the situation and official association action at that time would now be permanently mooted. The KHSAA

Board of Control action, later implemented by the Commissioner, deferred to local control on the resolution of the issue and allowed for the resumption of the athletic program.

In reviewing the matter, representatives of Coach Hicks' most recent school (Scott County) have been professional, thorough, and responsive, as have the representatives of Harlan County. However, Mr. Roark's letter opened a door for review that was not previously discussed at great length:

- As confirmed by the long-time Sports Editor and Managing Editor of the Harlan Daily Enterprise, John Henson, Hicks' on-court record that year was 10 wins and 16 losses as documented by news records. This will be considered the official pre-school system action record unless additional written, verifiable, and authentic documentation ever surfaces as Mr. Henson's research is believed to be authentic.
- Based on Mr. Roark's information as verified in the Harlan County area, the situation with the ineligible player in basketball was a student who played two games prior to being ruled eligible by the KHSAA, which even today, represents an automatic forfeiture of on-court/field/pitch/track action. But there were only two games in question.
- It is not possible, likely for anyone who remains living, to know the exact reasons why the Principal of the school represented to the Board of Control at their December 1979 meeting, that the entire 1978-79 season should be forfeited. This professional judgment was in the hands of the Principal of Evarts and the Superintendent of Harlan County and both were likely doing what they felt were the next steps to return the student body at Evarts High School to interscholastic competition following suspension. I do not, nor should any of us, stand in judgment of their actions, except to the extent that it pertains to this specific matter of the win-loss record.
- I also do not feel compelled in any way to allow this specific matter to open the floodgates or doors for all other institutionally implemented penalties to be re-adjudicated. This is specific to this situation, this record, this season, and nothing more or less.
- Given all of these facts, the official written record of the late Coach Billy Hicks will be altered on the part of the KHSAA to show that the team won eight games in 1978-79 while losing 18 games that season. This would be due to the original 10-16 record, less the forfeiture of two games for the use of an ineligible player. We will also communicate with Mr. Bridgeman and ask that if there are future revisions to his Encyclopedia, this action be reflected. We will also report updated information on this win-loss record to the National Federation of High Schools for use in their statistical records book as well.

The complete and final record for Coach Hicks is posted on the KHSAA website at <https://khsaa.org/04-09-2024-billy-hicks-all-time-coaching-record/>. No further revisions will be made unless additional written, verifiable and authentic documentation surfaces and is able to be verified as accurate by multiple authorities.

--
Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Today's Challenge - Be a Leader in Today's Tough Times!

"We need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity. Leaders who can subject their particular egos to the pressing urgencies of the great cause of freedom.....a time like this demands great leaders." —Dr. Martin Luther King

Julian Tackett, Commissioner

Primary Sports Event Contact- Boys and Girls State Basketball, Football

Playing Rules Interpreter – Basketball, Football

jtackett@khsaa.org

859-299-5472 (phone)

@jtackettkhsaa



January 18, 2024

Julian Tackett
Commissioner
Kentucky High School Athletic Association
2800 Executive Drive
Lexington, KY 40505

Dear Commissioner Tackett,

Enclosed please find a copy of a letter that we received from the superintendent of Harlan County Public Schools, Brent Roark. It is my understanding that Harlan County Public Schools vacated every win of the 1978-1979 Evarts High School boys basketball season due to the involvement of an ineligible student-athlete. All information we have found supports that the ineligible student-athlete did not participate all season. As we understand it, the student-athlete in question anticipated starting school at Evarts High School after winter break and only played in two games that resulted in wins over the course of winter break. Following winter break, plans changed and the student-athlete did not enroll with Evarts High School.

It has been suggested by some that Harlan County Public Schools was the entity that originally determined that all the wins from the 1978-1979 season be vacated and that information was shared with the KHSAA. To be honest, I cannot speak with certainty as to who made the original determination. However, assuming the determination was made from a credible source such as the school, it has been suggested that this situation has been resolved making further discussion unnecessary. It is my stance that it would be incredibly short-sighted to simply accept that fact in isolation. I am of the opinion that the historical context of the situation as well as the actual games the ineligible student-athlete played should be considered when investigating this matter.

Why does the historical context matter? It has been suggested that around the time the Evarts High School basketball situation took place, a school in the area was fresh off a situation in which multiple players for a local high school football team were, in fact, simultaneously enrolled as collegiate student-athletes and, therefore, ineligible. Given the intense scrutiny that came with that high school football situation, it was far easier for Evarts High School to simply vacate all wins of a high school program that had a losing season that year with a greenhorn coach than to take the time to evaluate the specifics of the situation which may result in more scrutiny while making an accurate determination. In fairness to everyone that was a part of the original decision regarding the vacated wins, who was to know that those wins would factor into the grand total of the winningest basketball coach in the history of our beloved state?

Most certainly, everyone is in agreement that the two wins that came with an ineligible player on the roster should be vacated. That is not being questioned. However, for the 10 legitimate wins that took place that season, it is those wins of which we would respectfully request that the KHSAA take a closer look.

Coach Hicks was adamant. He refused to be nominated for the KHSAA Hall of Fame until every legitimate win was acknowledged. Coach Hicks' principled approach supports this case. What person would fight so adamantly for a handful of wins from a losing season, a losing season that deserves to have some of those wins vacated due to an ineligible player? A season where the resulting win total, if awarded, would not place him any further up the all-time wins list. Coach Hicks was truthful about the situation, of this I have no doubt.

It is my belief that Coach Hicks felt those wins, while from a losing season, were just as meaningful and as challenging to attain as any other, perhaps moreso. Vacating the entire season also could be seen as not demonstrating the level of respect that was deserved for the student athletes who were a part of those legitimate wins.

It is easy to understand how the KHSAA has stood where they have on this issue up to this point. Those wins were vacated all those years ago. It would appear that KHSAA has simply enforced a decision based on the information that was provided to them when this determination was originally made years ago.

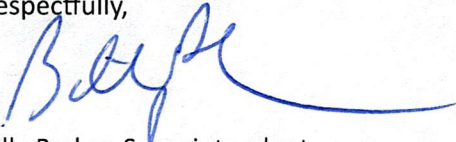
We are at a point where information that was never before considered has been provided by a legitimate source. To be clear, this is not a request for special treatment. We are simply asking that an application of the rules be consistent with what the KHSAA would do for a case like this if it happened today. A very recent example that comes to mind is the case of the Western Hills High School football team. They were not made to vacate the entire season. They were simply made to vacate the wins in which the ineligible student-athlete participated.

Why does all this matter? Why now? Should KHSAA be agreeable to adjusting the win total to support what was believed by Coach Hicks to be true and accurate, it is my full intention to nominate Coach Billy Hicks at the next available opportunity for the KHSAA Hall of Fame because I know, should the legitimate wins be officially recognized, he would support this decision.

Like the leadership of Harlan County Public Schools expressed in their letter, the leadership of Scott County Schools welcome any request for assistance we might provide regarding this request. In addition, I am led to believe that the Kentucky Association of Basketball Coaches already recognize these 10 wins, so it would stand to reason that they might also hold information regarding this situation that might be of assistance.

Coach Hicks was a part of many communities in Kentucky over his lifetime. From my conversations with people from those communities, I know he made a positive impact in each community of which he was a part. That is why we are taking the time to make this request; because we owe the level of concern and care for him that he demonstrated for the student-athletes whose lives he became a part of over his lifetime. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

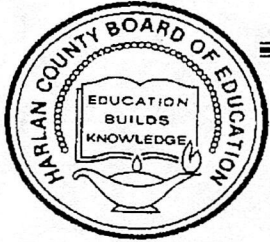
Respectfully,



Billy Parker, Superintendent
Scott County Schools

JAN 25 2024

Brent Roark, Superintendent



251 Ball Park Road
Harlan, Kentucky 40831-1753
Phone (606) 573-4330
Fax (606) 573-5767

January 10, 2024

Re: Coach Billy Hicks and the 1978/79 win/loss record at Evarts High School

To whom it may concern:

I was recently contacted in regard to issues that arose during the 1978/79 basketball season with Billy Hicks who was, at that time, the head coach of the Evarts High School men's basketball team. It is my understanding that there is an effort to correct the number of wins and losses attributed to Coach Hicks, with the 1978/79 season being of particular concern. From everything I can gather and from checking the Harlan Daily Enterprise records, Coach Hicks' record for the 1978/79 was actually 10-16 but was later changed to 0-26 due to playing an ineligible player.

I have spoken directly to the former player in question and he explained to me that he only played in two games for Evarts during a Christmas tournament. The former player stated that he was in the process of transferring away from James A. Cawood High School during the Christmas break and was considering Evarts High School as an option. He began practicing with Coach Hicks under the pretense that he was transferring to Evarts over the Christmas break; however, he never completed the transfer and ended up back at James A. Cawood. To the best of our knowledge, this is an accurate account of events which led to the forfeiture of games for Coach Hicks and the Evarts High School men's basketball team during the 1978/79 season.

Based on the knowledge we have at this point, we feel it would be fair and reasonable to forfeit the two games in which the ineligible player participated but not have Coach Hicks and the team forfeit every game that season. We have no idea why, or if, an agreement was made to forfeit all of the wins the team accumulated that season. To the best of our knowledge, the 10-16 record includes the two forfeited games.

Coach Hicks had an incredible coaching career at Evarts, Corbin, Harlan Independent and then in Scott County. We would like to ensure that his overall win/loss record actually reflects the legitimate wins he accumulated throughout his coaching career.

If I can be of further assistance please feel free to contact me via e-mail at Brent.roark@harlan.kyschools.us or via phone at 606-573-4330 X 2022.

Sincerely,

Brent Roark, Superintendent



RE: Request on Behalf of the Former Evarts High School And KHSAA Records Surround Coach Billy Hicks

1 message

Parker, Billy <billy.parker@scott.kyschools.us>

Tue, Apr 16, 2024 at 5:19 PM

To: "Tackett, Julian" <jtackett@khsaa.org>

Cc: "Wells, Daniel T (District Athletic Director)" <daniel.wells@scott.kyschools.us>, "Roark, Brent" <brent.roark@harlan.kyschools.us>

Commissioner Tackett,

I cannot express how much appreciation I have for the fact that the KHSAA took this matter into consideration. The care that was taken, as evidenced by the detail provided, to consider this matter fully and completely is clear. Absent additional information, this would appear to be a most fair and just decision. Coach Hicks was a competitor. It is clear you can understand our desire to honor his competitive spirit and simply ensure that the record for the winningest coach in state history was as accurate as possible.

With the utmost appreciation,

Billy Parker

Superintendent | Scott County Schools

2168 Frankfort Pike | Georgetown, KY 40324

Phone: 502.863.3663 | Fax: 502.863.2115

Email: Billy.Parker@scott.kyschools.us

From: Tackett, Julian <jtackett@khsaa.org>

Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2024 4:33 PM

To: Parker, Billy <billy.parker@scott.kyschools.us>; Roark, Brent <brent.roark@harlan.kyschools.us>

Subject: Request on Behalf of the Former Evarts High School And KHSAA Records Surround Coach Billy Hicks

Caution: This is an external email and may be malicious. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

This is in response to a dual inquiry from the two of you received in late January. For a variety of reasons, most likely simply Coach Hicks' longevity and tradition of excellence, his coaching record is likely the most reviewed and discussed record in the annals of Kentucky High School basketball. Obviously, this state has an unparalleled passion for basketball, particularly at the interscholastic level, and that makes the scrutiny continual.

Back in 2014, KHSAA staff worked with Scott County High School, members of Coach Hicks family and coaching staff, and others on the compilation of Coach Hicks' record as he neared milestones on the all-time list of Kentucky coaches. The KHSAA has also worked with author Jeff Bridgeman during his work, Kentucky High School Basketball Encyclopedia, 100th Anniversary Edition, and considers (absent documentation and irrefutable evidence to the contrary) his work to be authoritative for the years prior to 1997-98 when the KHSAA adopted an electronic scoreboard record in conjunction with Rihards.com.

In the review of these records, now published at <https://khsaa.org/04-09-2024-billy-hicks-all-time-coaching-record/>, there were occasional disagreements about win-loss records, but most discrepancies were able to be reconciled through newspaper articles and

Mr. Bridgeman's work. The primary issue of this review, however, were the events of the 1978-79 season and actions by the Association and both Evarts High School and the Harlan County Board of Education. The records around those years and actions, while not comprehensive, contain more than sufficient information to reach a conclusion on this matter with the 1978-79 season record. In summary, the following actions occurred:

- In the early fall of 1979, accusations were made by member schools of the KHSAA that the Evarts football program used two ineligible players in the team's football game against Glasgow. These accusations were later confirmed.
- The situation involving the football team led Evarts and the KHSAA to work on a review of all programs in the school. From the correspondence file, this review lasted several weeks and multiple meetings.
- At the September 1979 meeting of the Board of Control, the entire athletic program (all sports) at Evarts High School was suspended from membership in the KHSAA by the Board of Control. At the time of that decision, the Commissioner was directed to meet with representatives of Evarts regarding other violations that were not involving the football team that may have occurred during the 1978-79 season.
- At its October meeting, the Board of Control affirmed on appeal the suspension of boys' basketball and baseball based on the statements made of possible additional violations (other than football) in those other programs.
- It is apparent that a meeting was held where the administration and the then-basketball coach at Evarts (Coach Hicks) were directed to come to Lexington to meet with the Commissioner regarding findings of the use of an ineligible player being used during the 1978-79 season. There are no official records or notes from that meeting. It is apparent, however, that contemporaneously with the suspension from membership and this meeting, several news articles from throughout the state reported that all sports would remain suspended.
- According to the records of the Harlan Daily Enterprise, the Evarts team had compiled a record of 10 wins and 16 losses on the court during the 1978-79 season.
- Even prior to the current wording of the KHSAA Bylaw 1 related to Principal accountability and institutional control, it is apparent that the KHSAA gave the representatives of Evarts High School the initial opportunity to address any violations found in their investigative review and identify subsequent actions. Part of the action committed to by the high school and school system dealt with the resignation of the then-football coach, other personnel matters not subject to public disclosure, and the forfeiture of all wins in boys' basketball (now termed vacating of all wins) for the 1978-79 season. Therefore since that time, the Association records have listed 0-26 as the boys' basketball record at Evarts..
- It is also important to note that it is likely that there are no remaining living members of the groups that held meetings or had discussions on this matter, and therefore any conclusion has to come from the minimal remaining written record. These actions were prior to the mid-1990s adoption of the KHSAA Records Retention Policy (which lists a current year plus four records retention time frame), and therefore, the totality of the available written information on this matter (limited as it is) remains in the KHSAA Archives at EKV.
- At its December 15, 1979 meeting, following the report by Principal Ledger Howard of all actions taken by the school including the resignation of all coaches identified by the school as "responsible for the violations", the KHSAA Board of Control voted to reinstate the membership of Evarts High School, and specified resumption of play date at January 2, 1980.
- Moving forward to January 2024, this office received joint communication from both Superintendents requesting a further review of the 1978-1979 record based on information that they felt might be compelling.
- It is worthy of note that the actions of the KHSAA in this matter were not specific to games played, coach's actions or other specifics surrounding the situation and official association action at that time would now be permanently mooted. The KHSAA Board of Control action, later implemented by the Commissioner, deferred to local control on the resolution of the issue and allowed for the resumption of the athletic program.

In reviewing the matter, representatives of Coach Hicks' most recent school (Scott County) have been professional, thorough, and responsive, as have the representatives of Harlan County. However, Mr. Roark's letter opened a door for review that was not previously discussed at great length:

- As confirmed by the long-time Sports Editor and Managing Editor of the Harlan Daily Enterprise, John Henson, Hicks' on-court record that year was 10 wins and 16 losses as documented by news records. This will be considered the official pre-school system action record unless additional written, verifiable, and authentic documentation ever surfaces as Mr. Henson's research is believed to be authentic.
- Based on Mr. Roark's information as verified in the Harlan County area, the situation with the ineligible player in basketball was a student who played two games prior to being ruled eligible by the KHSAA, which even today, represents an automatic forfeiture of on-court/field/pitch/track action. But there were only two games in question.
- It is not possible, likely for anyone who remains living, to know the exact reasons why the Principal of the school represented to the Board of Control at their December 1979 meeting, that the entire 1978-79 season should be forfeited. This professional judgment was in the hands of the Principal of Evarts and the Superintendent of Harlan County and both were likely doing what they felt were the next steps to return the student body at Evarts High School to interscholastic competition following suspension. I do not, nor should any of us, stand in judgment of their actions, except to the extent that it pertains to this specific matter of the win-loss record.
- I also do not feel compelled in any way to allow this specific matter to open the floodgates or doors for all other institutionally implemented penalties to be re-adjudicated. This is specific to this situation, this record, this season, and nothing more or less.
- Given all of these facts, the official written record of the late Coach Billy Hicks will be altered on the part of the KHSAA to show that the team won eight games in 1978-79 while losing 18 games that season. This would be due to the original 10-16 record, less the forfeiture of two games for the use of an ineligible player. We will also communicate with Mr. Bridgeman and ask that if there are future revisions to his Encyclopedia, this action be reflected. We will also report updated information on this win-loss record to the National Federation of High Schools for use in their statistical records book as well.

The complete and final record for Coach Hicks is posted on the KHSAA website at <https://khsaa.org/04-09-2024-billy-hicks-all-time-coaching-record/>. No further revisions will be made unless additional written, verifiable and authentic documentation surfaces and is able to be verified as accurate by multiple authorities.

--

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Today's Challenge - Be a Leader in Today's Tough Times!

"We need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity. Leaders who can subject their particular egos to the pressing urgencies of the great cause of freedom.....a time like this demands great leaders." —Dr. Martin Luther King

Julian Tackett, Commissioner

Primary Sports Event Contact- Boys and Girls State Basketball, Football

Playing Rules Interpreter – Basketball, Football

jtackett@khsaa.org

859-299-5472 (phone)

@jtackettkhsaa

| |