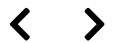






New details emerge in ongoing KHSAA investigation amid athletic recruiting violation allegations

Dylan Payne
Oct 31, 2024

1 of 6



 Hiwassee High School, 1000 Hiwassee Road, Hiwassee, TN 37075.  Hiwassee High School, 1000 Hiwassee Road, Hiwassee, TN 37075.  

enrolled in PHS. Grace says the video was sent to his brother who is connected to NCAA Division 1 baseball.



PTHS, MCHS under investigation

Kentucky High School Athletic Association

▶ **KHSAA confirms ongoing investigation into PTHS**

Confirms ongoing investigation into MCHS

Moore denies messages, claims MCHS hacked FB

Texts we "need to see" from MCHS parent



PADUCAH — In August and September, The Sun and WPSD-TV filed open records requests with McCracken County Schools and Paducah Public Schools as part of an inquiry into recruiting efforts surrounding each school's baseball program.

Records confirm that each school filed complaints with the Kentucky High School Athletic Association against the other.

The McCracken County complaint was filed against Paducah Tilghman on Jan. 4. Paducah Tilghman filed the complaint against McCracken County seven months later on August 13. That's the same day WPSD and The Sun first reported KHSAA confirmation that Paducah Tilghman was under investigation for alleged athletic recruiting violations.

Both complaints center on the activities of parents at each school in connection to an area traveling baseball team — Paducah Storm 26 — featuring student athletes from a number of different high schools.

Matthew T. Houser

Elaine Keys, Assistant Principal
Kevin Jackson, Assistant Principal
Terry Chapman, Assistant Principal
Matt O'Leary, Assistant Principal
Angie Woods, Assistant Principal



McCracken County High School
6530 New Highway 60 West – Paducah, KY 42001

Geno Miller

Wendy Watts, Guidance
Rachel Goffley, Guidance
Janelle Hunter, Guidance
Holly Miller, Guidance
Jeremy Wilcox, Guidance

Geno Miller
McCracken County High School
6530 New Highway 60 West
Paducah, KY 42001
Geno.miller@mccracken.kyschools.us

January 4, 2024

Julian Tackett
Commissioner
KHSAA
2280 Executive Drive
Lexington, KY 4050

Dear Commissioner Tackett,
I am writing this letter today regarding a clear violation of KHSAA Bylaw 16: Recruitment/Undue Influence that is occurring at Paducah Tilghman High School.

As the Athletic Director for McCracken County High School, I was contacted by a current McCracken County Student Athletes' parent. The parent was contacted by Matt Moore, Paducah Tilghman Parent and Booster Club Member, via Facebook Messenger regarding her son transferring to Paducah Tilghman for football and baseball.

As you can see from the conversation attachment, this is a blatant act of recruiting and clear violation of Bylaw 16 (section a and e).

BYLAW 16. RECRUITMENT/UNDUE INFLUENCE SEC. 1) PROVISIONS ON RECRUITING/UNDUE INFLUENCE

- a) *A pupil (domestic or foreign) at any grade level shall not be recruited to a member school of the KHSAA to participate in athletics. Recruiting is defined as an act, on behalf of, or for the benefit of, a school, including impermissible contact, which attempts to influence a student to transfer to a member school to participate in athletics, including the offer of improper benefits not available to all members of the student body*
- e) *A school official utilizing an intermediary including a peer, another school employee, a student, a parent or a citizen, to recruit a student-athlete shall be in noncompliance*

It is my responsibility as the Athletic Director to bring this to your attention. My objective is to provide enough information to assure you if Paducah Tilghman High School is looked into, there will be violations found.

I have provided documentation to support my complaint but would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,
Geno Miller
McCracken County High School

McCracken County High School filed a complaint against Matt Moore at Paducah Tilghman in January of 2024.

August 13th, 2024

Commissioner Tackett, Mr. Cope, and Mr. Bilberry,

Paducah Tilghman High School office of Athletics would like to formally notify you of communication that we have received from the families of students that have enrolled in PTHS. In the following documents that are text messages to the parents of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], you will find evidence of a parent recruiting them as student-athletes to McCracken County High School. In addition, the text messages make the implication that the parent is being directed to make contact on behalf of their high school baseball coach and athletic director.

I have enclosed a written statement from [REDACTED] the father of [REDACTED] connecting the enclosed text communication to a parent of McCracken County. I also have received verbal correspondence from [REDACTED] the father of [REDACTED], that the enclosed text messages are with the same parent as with Mr. [REDACTED]. Mr. [REDACTED] has had a death in his immediate family in the past few days, and we expect to receive a written statement from Mr. [REDACTED] this week that we will forward to the KHSAA when it is received. We have been told that both sets of text message correspondence are from a McCracken County parent, who Mr. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] have identified as Luke Grace. The text message specifically to Mr. [REDACTED] implies that the parent is being asked to reach out him by stating "But the AD and baseball coach cornered me and asked if you would come this Sunday or next Saturday. Baseball coach has a baby shower next Sunday." In addition, there are multiple disparaging remarks about Tilghman, direct derogatory remarks about PTHS coaching staff, and negative comments to the parents of the students regarding their enrollment at Paducah Tilghman.

Paperwork regarding the transfer of both of the student-athletes that enrolled this summer should be forthcoming in the following weeks. Dr. Shively and Mr. Kinney have spoken to the parents of both students regarding their enrollment at Paducah Tilghman High School. Both families have provided evidence of residence in Paducah Public School District through our enrollment process and through direct communication with our superintendent.

Please accept this letter as a formal complaint. Both Mr. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] have had multiple phone calls from the specific parent identified in this letter as well as other parents that students attend McCracken County School. Both Mr. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] have shared they are willing to speak with representatives of the KHSAA in regard to the text messages and phone calls. If you have any questions regarding this statement and information provided please contact me. Thank you for your time and attention to the matter.

Sincerely,


Jay Burgett

A complaint was filed with the KHSAA by Paducah Tilghman about a parent, Luke Grace, at McCracken County High School



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The complaint filed by McCracken County alleged that Matt Moore — a Paducah Tilghman parent — sent Facebook messages to the parent of a student athlete at McCracken County High School.

In the message, Moore tells a baseball parent how to transfer to Paducah Tilghman without having to move into the district, and how they could avoid the one-year waiting period imposed by the KHSAA.

Moore initially denied sending the messages, saying his Facebook was hacked twice, “probably by someone from McCracken.”

After denying he sent the messages, Moore admitted three days later in a phone call that he did send the messages a year and a half ago.

“That text message that was sent to Miss [redacted] was about a year and a half ago, that was old news,” Moore said. “I know she wasn’t very financially sound. I wanted [her son] to go to college and, we weren’t really offering anything to her. I was just, you know, shouldn’t have put it down. You know, I shouldn’t have put anything down, really at all. But anyway.”

The complaint filed by Paducah Tilghman High School alleged that Luke Grace — a McCracken County parent and summer baseball coach — was attempting to recruit a player from another state who ended up transferring to Paducah Tilghman. He was also accused of saying derogatory things about Paducah Tilghman baseball coach Tremayne Donald.


The letter from the player's parent attached to the complaint was dated Aug. 12, the day WPSD first reached out to Paducah Schools about the investigation.

The complaint showed a series of text messages between a now Paducah Tilghman parent and Grace.

KHSAA Bylaws that regulate recruiting and transfers


Both high schools allege conduct that would violate KHSAA Bylaw 16 related to recruitment and undue influence.

The KHSAA defines recruiting as an act that attempts to influence a student to transfer to a member school to participate in athletics. Bylaw 16 says recruiting violations can exist no matter if the recruiting was on behalf of a school or simply for its benefit.



KHSAA Bylaw 16 restricts recruiting efforts by member districts.

Bylaw 6 also plays a role in recruiting regulations, because it regulates transfers into member districts and applies to all students who participated in varsity sports at another school before transferring.



KHSAA Bylaw 6 regulates student athlete eligibility. It requires student athletes to sit out for one year following a move, unless they qualify for an exemption.

The KHSAA requires students who move into the district to sit out for one year before participating in sports at their new school unless they qualify for an exemption.

The KHSAA has 11 reasons that students would qualify for an exemption to the rule, including changes in custody, military service, and family moves.

Unless a transfer student qualifies for one of the exceptions, they must sit out one year from the last time they played varsity sports.

Bylaw 6 also says that if evidence exists to show that a transfer was motivated, in whole or part by athletic participation, a waiver may not be granted.

When a student transfers schools and played varsity sports at their old school, a DP06 form has to be filled out by the receiving school certifying the reason for the transfer and requesting a waiver of the required 12-month waiting period.

Two years of waiver requests by the numbers: Paducah asks for 20, McCracken 11

As part of our records request, DP06 forms were requested from Paducah Tilghman for the last two school years, and the most recent school year at McCracken County.

McCracken provided six DP06 forms for incoming students in the 24-25 school year, and reported an additional five incoming transfers the year before.

Of the documents we reviewed, two of the six incoming McCracken County transfers were challenged — where the sending school challenges the reason for a waiver — one involving a question about a change of custody, and another addressing an apparent concern over educational standards at the school from which the student transferred.

There are no allegations of recruiting associated with the two challenged transfers that have been reported to WPSD or The Sun.

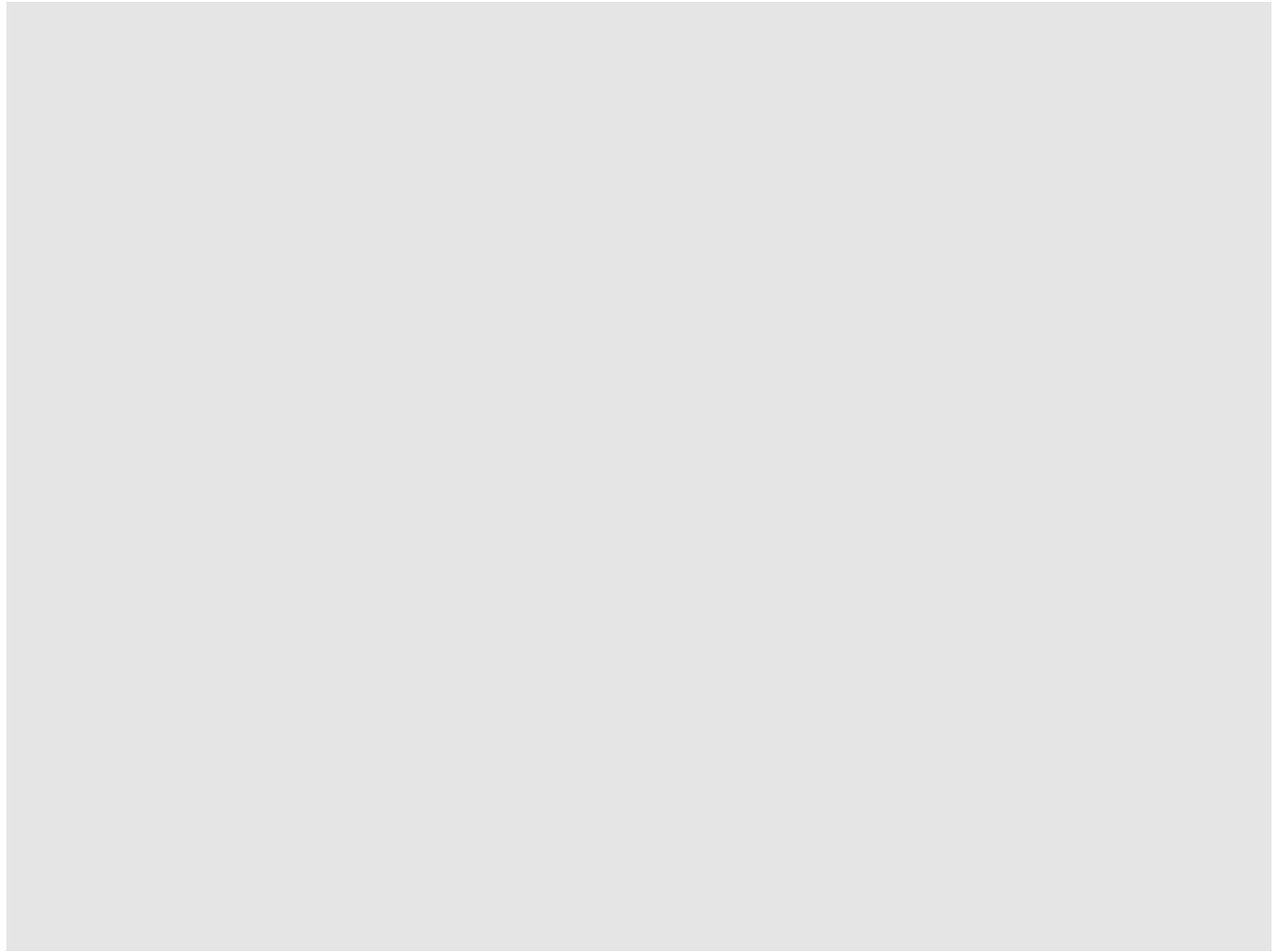
Paducah Schools initially denied our request for DP06 forms, claiming the forms are a federally protected academic record.

When the attorney representing Paducah Schools was informed McCracken fully complied with our request, they agreed to turn over the documents with appropriate redactions.

The DP06 forms were received on Oct. 10, six weeks after our initial document request. The law typically requires documents to be turned over within five business days.

The documents were heavily redacted.

The sports the students played, the year that they enrolled, the last day at their old school, and the year at the end of dates on the documents, are all things provided by McCracken that were withheld by Paducah Schools.



Donald Shively is the superintendent of Paducah Schools and discussed the open records request and allegations with WPSD and the Sun on Oct. 25.

We asked Shively about the redactions and the initial decision not to provide the DP06 forms.

“I talked to six different attorneys, one of them being my board attorney, and all advised me not to send the DP06 forms,” Shively said. “Our attorney felt like they were federally protected, multiple attorneys I talked to — not in his firm but across the state and who represent the Kentucky High School Athletic Association — felt the same way.”

Shively explained the reason that there are so many transfers into Paducah Tilghman is because of a trend over the last decade that has seen students moving into the Paducah School district, and sometimes they play sports.

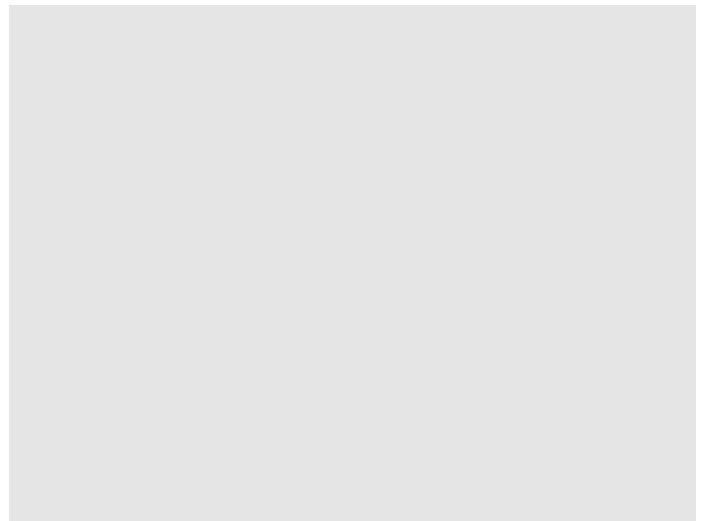
Shively was asked how many of the 20 kids transferred this year. He said he does not know because those are not documents with which he deals.

Paducah Schools Athletic Director Jay Burgett confirmed that PTHS filled out 16 DP06 forms for the 24-25 school year.

Out-of-district students toured PTHS

A review of documents from McCracken County Schools found the school athletic director, Geno Miller was working with parent Luke Grace in January — seven months before Paducah Tilghman filed a complaint against Grace — to try to compile a list of students who toured Paducah Tilghman during December 2023.

Miller asked Grace for a roster from the summer team Grace coached — Paducah Storm 26.



This message was sent from McCracken County Athletic Director Geno Miller to Luke Grace, attempting to get a list of kids who toured PTHS in December of 2024.

Grace said players from his summer team, who did not attend Tilghman, toured the high school and athletic facilities. Shively and Moore was there.

Moore confirmed in August the tours happened, and that he was there for the tours.

“I’m friends of the people who came, and what got me involved in it was...they asked me if I wouldn’t mind coming to the school whenever they came to do their tour,” Moore said. “In all honesty, they just wanted to see the school and meet the coaches and blah, blah, blah...”

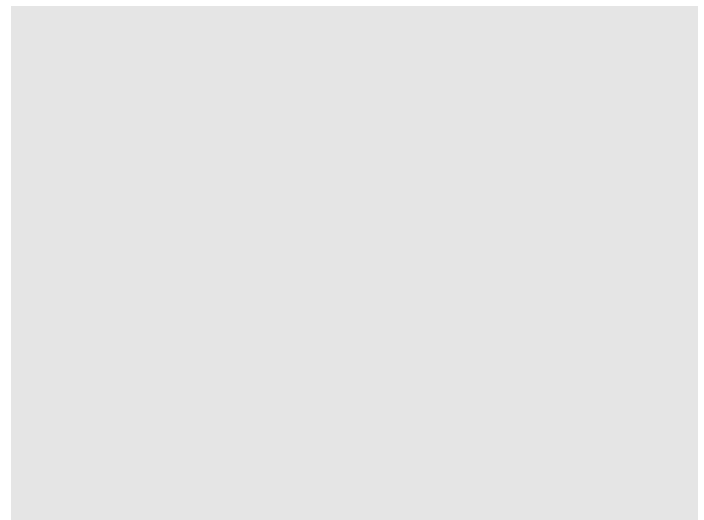
Shively said the tours he gives are to families that are interested in transferring to Tilghman, or any other Paducah Schools.

“That’s not uncommon for me to do as superintendent and to start building our relationship with the family,” Shively said. “Very specifically [Moore]... said that the families asked him to be there, so I think that’s probably... I didn’t ask him to be there, I didn’t ask him to set that up... I guess families asked him to be there and say hi.”

Shively claims Moore is not affiliated, but talked with him three times about bylaw violations

Shively maintains that Moore is not connected to Paducah Tilghman Baseball, and that the actions he has taken have not been as an agent of the baseball team.

“Mr. Matt Moore is a parent of a high school student... but doesn’t have a child playing high school baseball nor is he any part of our coaching staff, or our booster club,” Shively said. “He’s the parent of a Tilghman high school child.”



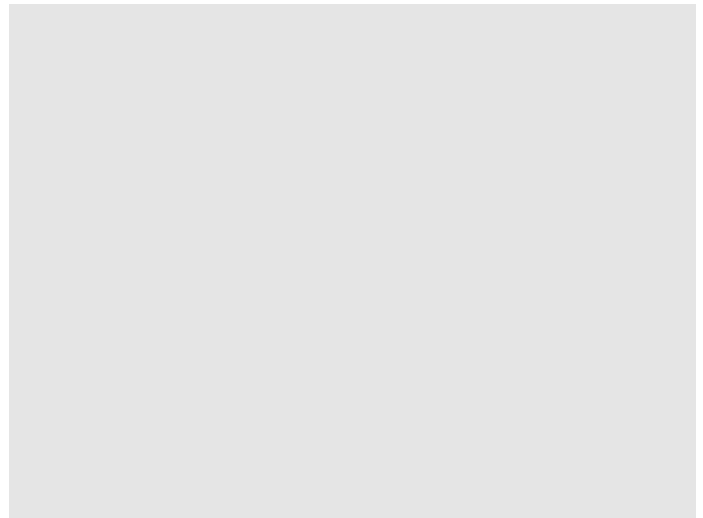
A message was sent that shows a message from Moore's account. Moore denied sending this message, saying his Facebook was hacked.

Moore has two children, including a son in middle school who plays baseball.

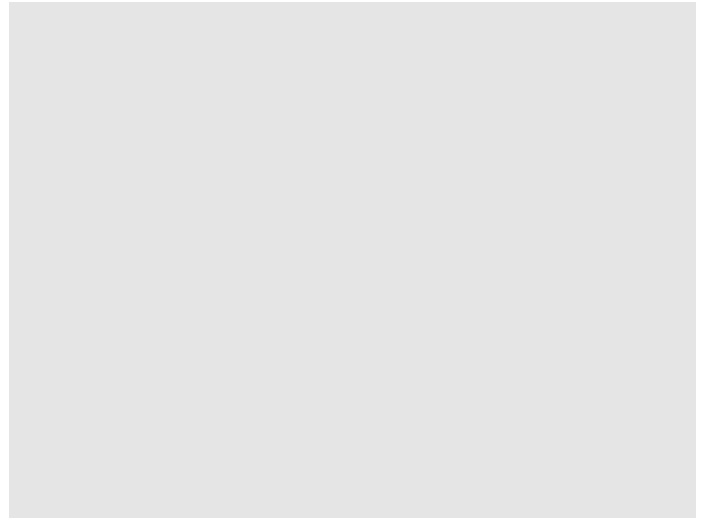
Although Shively says Moore has no official connection to Paducah Tilghman Baseball, photos and videos we reviewed suggest Moore is at least unofficially connected to the program.

Moore sent The Sun and WPSD copies of the complaint filed by Paducah Tilghman High School before we received confirmation PTHS had filed a complaint against McCracken. Moore was not a party to the complaint. It is unclear how he received a copy of the complaint.

Additionally, we've obtained photos and videos showing Moore with Paducah Tilghman hitting coach Tim Weber at the Colt World Series, a youth summer baseball tournament held in Marion, Illinois. The tournament was held July 26 to 31.



A now PTHS student who is alleged to have been recruited talks with Moore (left) and PTHS Hitting Coach Tim Weber (right) at the Colt World Series in Marion, Illinois. The tournament was held July 26-31.



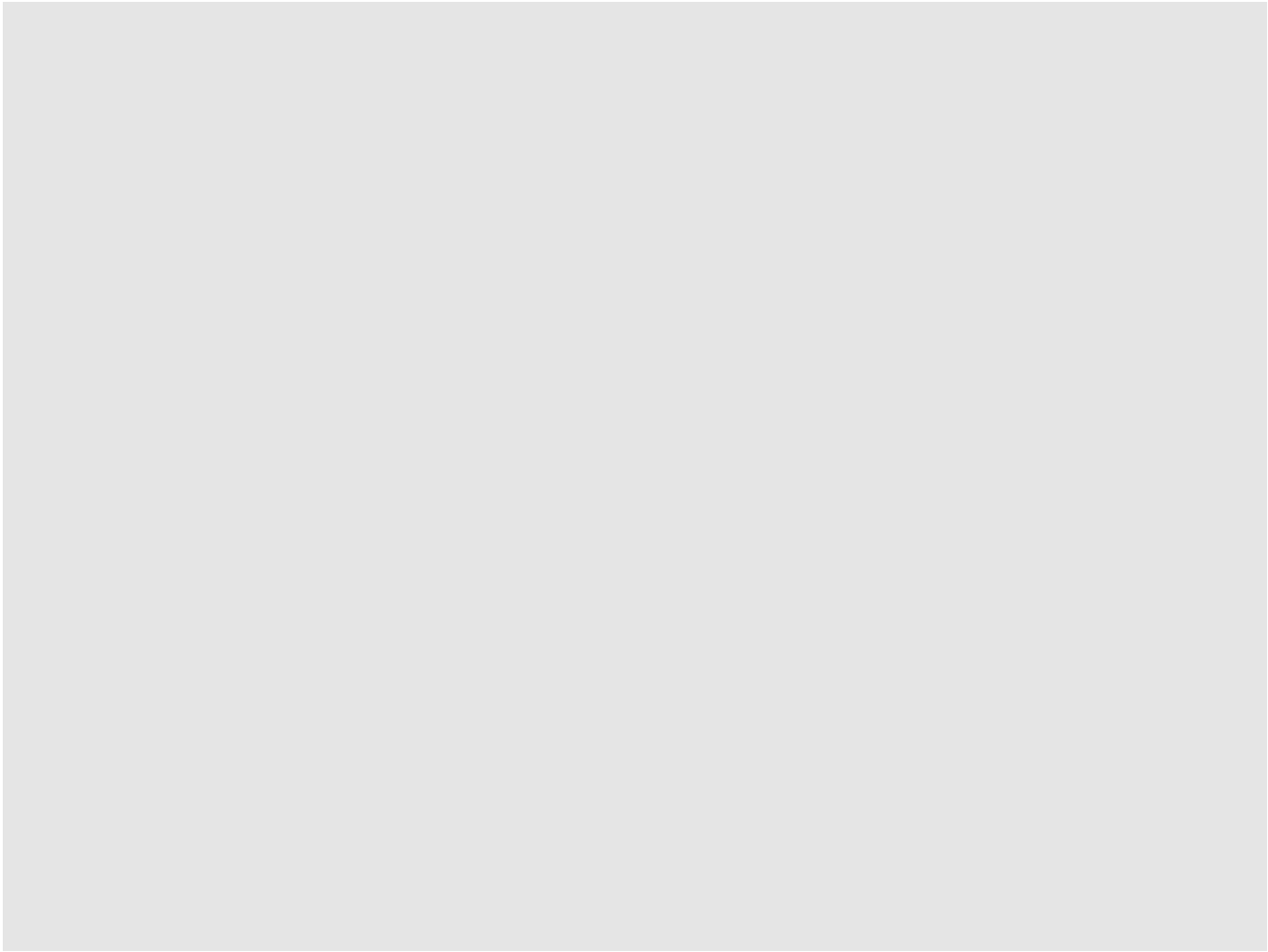
Videos after one of the games show Moore and Weber separately talking with parents in the stands.

Photos of Moore and Weber taken the same day show the pair alone with one of the students who transferred to Tilghman.

Time-stamped screenshots have also been shared that show Weber requesting access to an out-of-district baseball player's profile on the popular baseball stat app "GameChanger" on July 11.

The app is used at all levels of baseball.

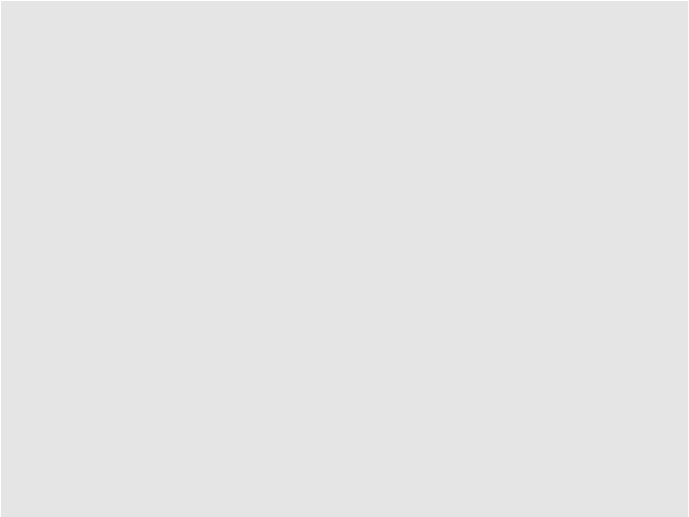
More recently, in September, photos of Moore at his home with a student who is alleged to have been recruited to Tilghman were posted on Instagram.



PTHS Baseball Coach Tremayne Donald at the home of Matt Moore poses with one player who is alleged to have been recruited. This photo has since been deleted from Instagram.

There were also photos of Paducah Tilghman Baseball Coach Tremayne Donald — also at Moore’s home — posing with the same student at the same event.

Even though Shively maintained Moore is just a parent with no official connection to the baseball team, records we reviewed from Paducah



Schools show Shively sent a letter to Moore about illegal recruiting over the summer.

Matt Moore poses outside his home with one of the students who is alleged to have been recruited to play baseball at PTHS. This photo has since been deleted from Instagram.

“Please accept this letter as documentation of our conversation on June 24, 2024, with Jay Burgett, Paducah Tilghman High School athletic director, as a witness,” read the letter dated Aug. 6, 2024. “As I stressed in our conversation, the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) Bylaw 16 — Recruitment/Undue Influence forbids the recruitment of student-athletes.”

Shively said the letter was sent as a precaution.

“[I] wanted to make sure in writing that we knew that we should not be doing anything that was — even though he’s a parent, he’s not connected to us — make sure we’re not doing anything we shouldn’t be doing as parents that would misrepresent the district,” Shively said. “There was a lot of noise across the community, a lot of buzz — I know that from you all... you’re receiving the calls and comments, and it just made sense that we had it in writing that we weren’t supposed to do this.”

The letter indicates they had a conversation about the issue on June 24, with the follow-up letter sent on Aug. 5, but these were not the first conversations Shively had with Moore about recruiting.

Shively said the first time he spoke with Moore about this issue was in January — a month after Shively gave those tours alongside Moore.

Moore told the Sun that he spoke with Shively about Facebook messages from his account sent to help a parent circumvent the one-year waiting requirement imposed by the KHSAA.

These are the same messages we first reported in August, and that Moore initially denied sending.

“The KHSAA brought that to the attention of Tilghman and Mr. Shively, and he talked to me about it and we haven’t had any other conversations with anybody since then,” Moore said. “[Shively] said, ‘Let’s just, let’s just let it rest.’ I said, ‘Okay, good enough.’”

Moore insisted nothing was offered to the student.

“There wasn’t anything offered to her (the mother) at all,” Moore said. “I just said if you have interest, let me know and there wasn’t any. So it’s kind of — no one ever heard from anybody again from then on.”

Shively recalled the conversation.

“I talked to him back in January, or early February, relative to I believe it was a Facebook post that’s out there that you reference in a minute — and again he’s not our employee, he’s not our coach, he’s not our booster — I picked up the phone and the way I generally handle adults is the first time I ask you, ‘You can’t do this, here’s the reasons why,’” Shively said he explained to Moore. “This is wrong, to say that you could get around a bona fide move requirement that’s in Bylaw 6 of the KHSAA’s Bylaws.”

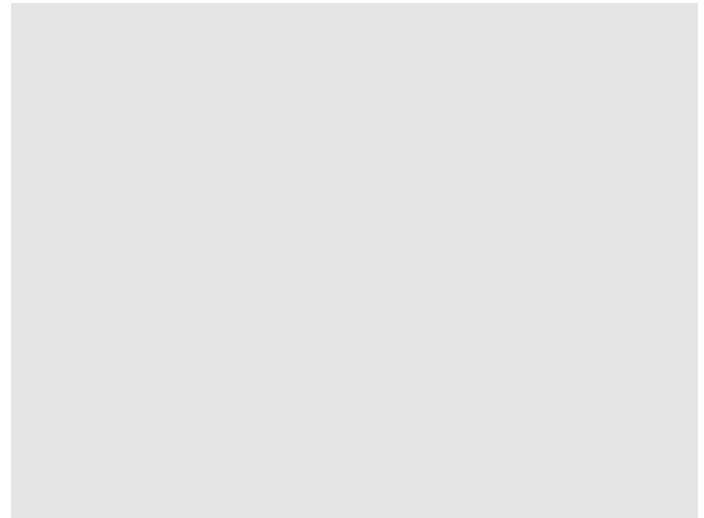
Shively said he accepted Moore’s word that it wouldn’t happen again, and no action was taken in January, June, or August.

Allegations against McCracken County Parent Luke Grace

A review of messages first sent to us by Moore and then by Paducah Schools as part of our open records request, shows an exchange between Luke Grace and the parent of a child who is now at Paducah Tilghman High School.

Grace and the parent were coaching each other's children when several of the messages were sent.

Most of the messages show Grace trying to get this parent to come coach baseball at McCracken County High School.



This message was sent by Grace to the parent who's kid is now at PTHS, trying to get the parent to coach at MCHS.

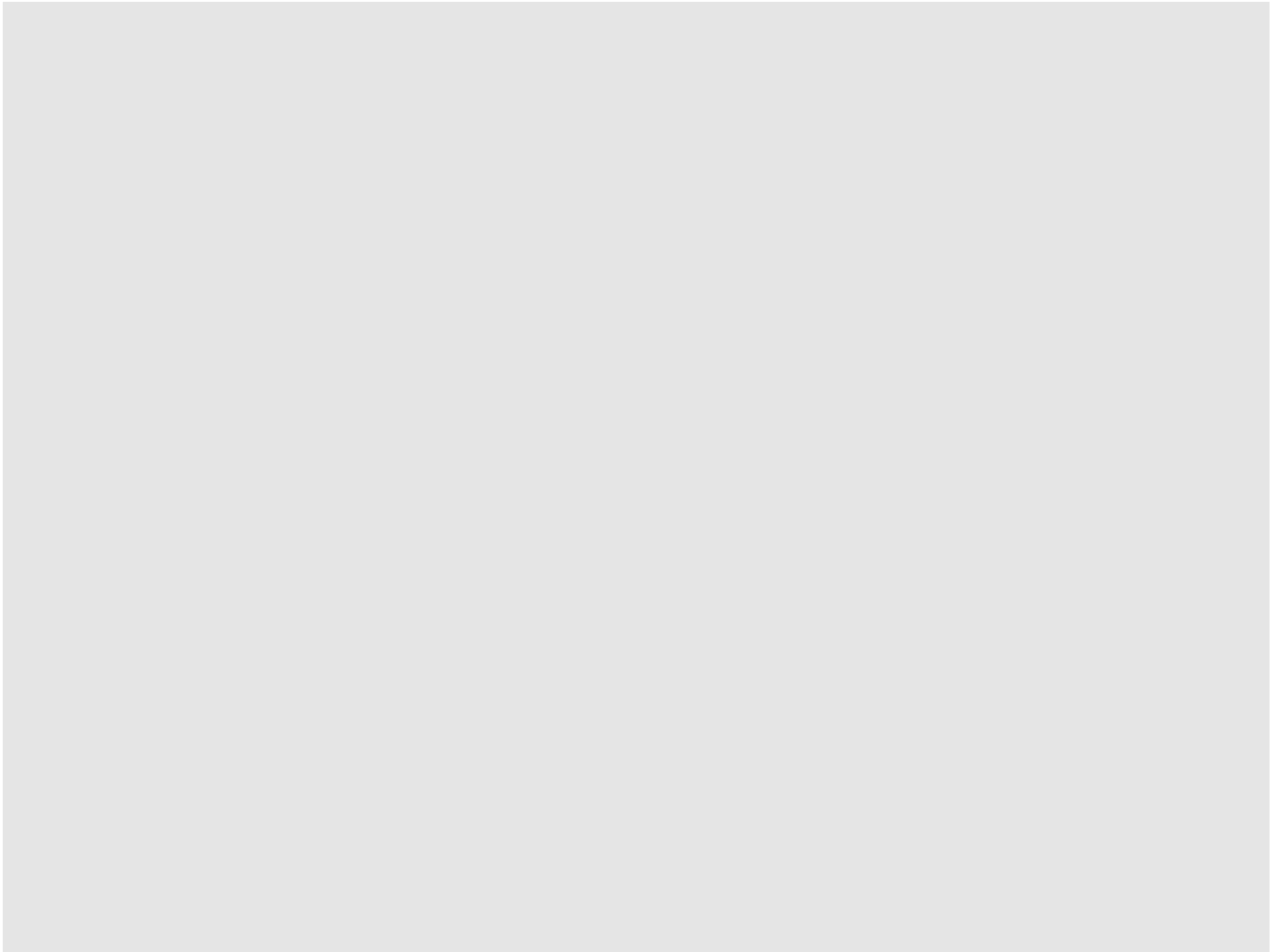
One of the messages shows Grace telling the parent of an open School Resource Officer position — a position this parent currently has in another state.

We were able to verify that McCracken County Baseball had been interested in hiring the parent as a coach and explored the parents qualifications as a police officer.

Of the messages we reviewed, two stood out.

In one message, Grace said he asked the baseball coach if they wanted stats or videos of the parent's student, acknowledging the coach declined the information.

Another message, sent on April 3, shows Grace asking for a video of the parent's son hitting.



This message was sent by Grace to a parent who's kid is now enrolled at PTHS. When the message was sent, the student went to school in Illinois.

“Send me a video of [redacted] sticking one. I’m at the bar with some dads and I’ve been put on the recruiting trail again,” the message read.

The parent sent a video of their son hitting.

Grace said he shared the video with his brother who is close with an NCAA Division 1 head coach and was getting together a list of players to be on the lookout for.

Grace coached this parents child for several years and described the parent as a brilliant baseball mind and close friend.

Grace is the coach of Paducah Storm 26 summer baseball team, and is a McCracken County baseball booster.

KHSAA Investigations Continue

The KHSAA confirmed that their investigation into both McCracken County and Paducah Tilghman High School is ongoing. However, the KHSSA could not provide a timeline for concluding either investigation.

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