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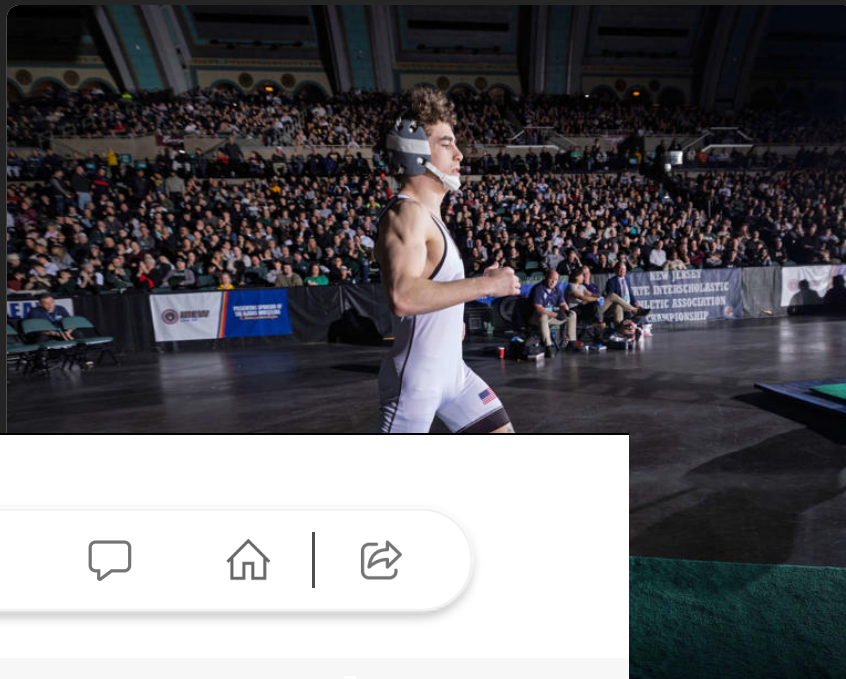


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NJSIAA stands by decision to DQ star wrestler, says 'grave concern' caused by judge ruling

Story by Jake Aferiat, nj.com • 1d



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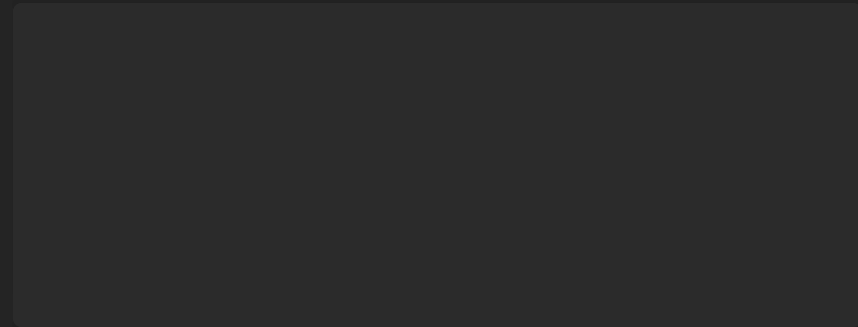
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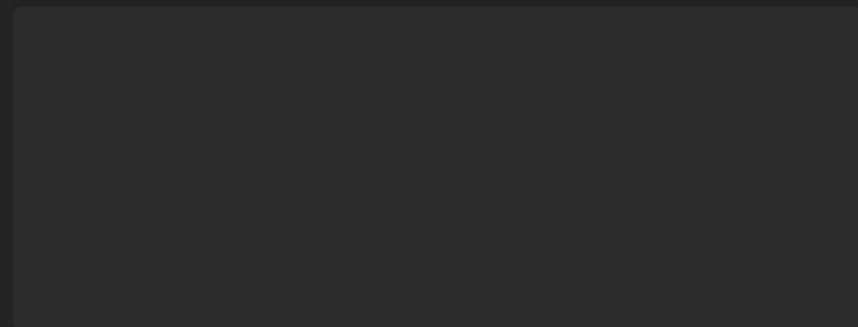
Anthony Knox of St. John Vianney runs out to the mat to face Nathan Braun of Bergen Catholic in the 126-pound final at the NJSIAA State Wrestling Championships at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, N.J., Saturday, March 8, 2025. Knox won, becoming only the 5th, 4-time New Jersey state champion.

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In the organization's first public comments since the Anthony Knox Jr. wrestling saga, New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association Executive Director Colleen Maguire said Wednesday that other governing bodies across the country expressed "grave concern" over judge Patrick J. Bartels' stunning ruling in the case.



The NJSIAA disqualified Knox Jr. from the postseason for his role in an [ugly brawl](#) in the bleachers at Collingswood High School at the District 25 Tournament on Feb. 22. Video shows his father, Anthony Knox Sr., leaving his seat and re-entering the bleachers where a brawl ensued moments later. The decision appeared to end the St. John Vianney star's chances at a historic fourth state championship.



What ensued, however, was a weeks-long legal battle that saw Knox Jr. emerge victorious, earning a temporary restraining order that allowed him to wrestle at the state championships in Atlantic City, where he crushed his opponents to win a historic fourth state title.

"The decision by the judge to grant temporary restraint in this situation caused grave concern among state associations around the country," Maguire said, speaking before the association's Executive Committee. "We all know what's going on in each other's states, so everyone always reaches out with support. But many were very concerned that one judge could step in and overturn decisions by the executive director who's only upholding member approved rules."

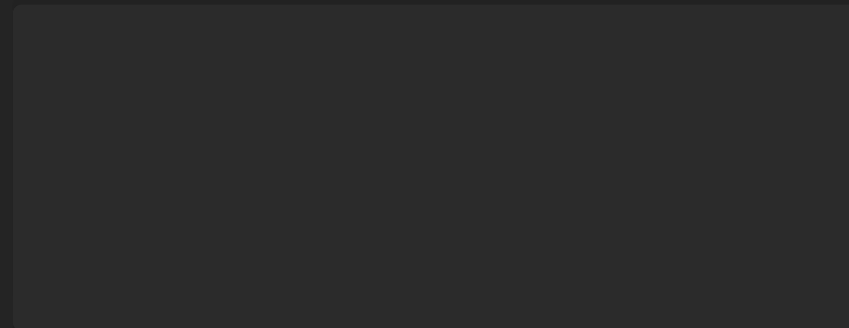


└ Anthony Knox of St. John Vianney celebrates after defeating Nathan Braun of Bergen Catholic to win the 126 pound final and his fourth state title during the 2025 NJSIAA Boys Wrestling Championships at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, NJ on 3/8/25.

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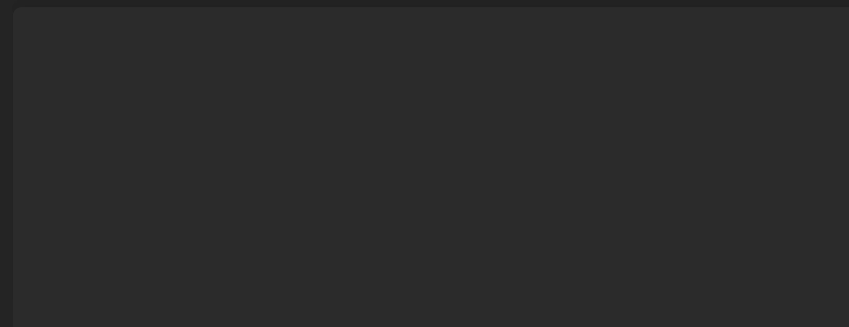
Both Knoxes were later charged by the Collingswood Police Department with simple assault and

purposely/knowingly causing bodily injury following the brawl, court documents show.



In his ruling granting the TRO, Bartels wrote in part: "Given the prominent role high school athletics play in society, this Court acknowledges irreparable harm to someone at the pinnacle of his high school career."

The NJSIAA and attorney Robert Levy, meanwhile, argued at the time that "any harm he (Knox Jr.) is alleged to have received is of his own conduct." Levy also said the facts of the case were not disputed.



The incident and Bartels' ruling made national headlines and caught the attention of state interscholastic governing bodies from around the country, Maguire said. Many offered support to the NJSIAA and Maguire, but were also worried about

the precedent set by the court's decision.

The NJSIAA will present about the case at this month's NFHS legal meeting.

Maguire and the NJSIAA received an outpouring of support for the [Directors of Athletics Association of New Jersey \(DAANJ\)](#), as well as the NJSIAA's executive committee and top lawmaker and executive committee member [state Sen. Paul Sarlo \(D-Wood-Ridge\)](#).

"It really meant a lot to have that outpouring of support from these high profile people who were very supportive because they all witnessed the deterioration of sports and sportsmanship at all levels of sports, and this was a real egregious incident," Maguire said. "Allowing it to go without consequence sets a dangerous precedent and sends a dangerous message to all other levels of youth sports."

The legal battle isn't over, according to Steve Goodell, the NJSIAA's legal counsel.

"We filed a counterclaim seeking a declaration from the judge that the NJSIAA applied its rules properly, and we're awaiting an answer from the family to that counterclaim," Goodell said. "Ultimately, what we would argue is that we applied the rules appropriately, that the rules were valid rules, and if the judge then agrees with us, we can see what our options are up to and including vacating the title. But that's a ways down the road."

There are no dates or timeline yet as to when the case may be settled.

Goodell also said if the Knox family does not respond to the counterclaim, the organization "will see what our options are."

And while [many sounded the alarm](#) about what precedent this incident could create, Maguire said she doesn't feel as though the judge's ruling represents an existential threat to the NJSIAA's rules and policies going forward. Not yet, at least.

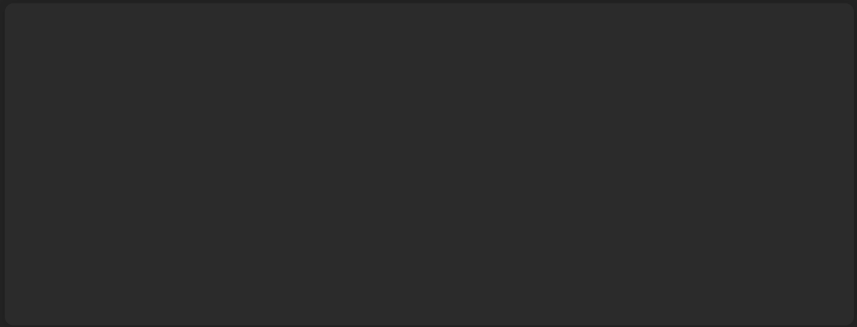
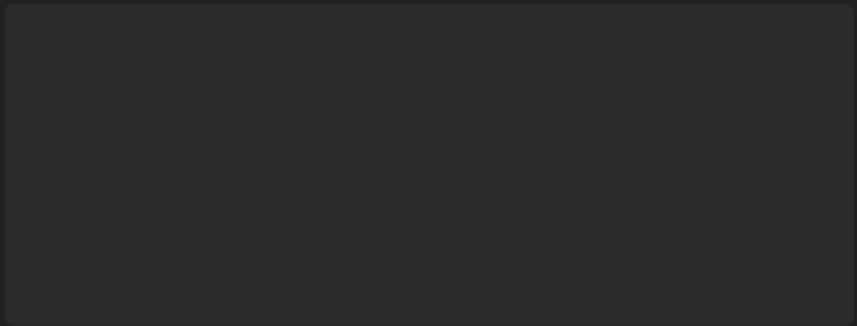
"I don't know if we're there yet. This was a very unique situation. Time will tell," Maguire said. "He hasn't really ruled on our rules or the application of our rules, right? He only granted temporary restraints, so we're not there yet to have that concern."

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