

**BEFORE THE INDIANA
CASE REVIEW PANEL**

In The Matter of J.W.,)	
Petitioner,)	
)	
and)	
)	CAUSE NO. 131105-106
The Indiana High School Athletic Association,)	
Respondent.)	
)	
Review Conducted Pursuant to Ind. Code)	
§ 20-26-14 <i>et seq.</i>)	

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On or about August 1, 2013, J.W.'s ("Petitioner") mother completed the student portion of an Indiana High School Athletic Association ("IHSAA") Athletic Transfer Report ("Transfer Report"). The Transfer Report requested that the IHSAA make an athletic eligibility determination for the 2013-2014 school-year relating to the Petitioner's transfer from Winchester High School ("Winchester") to Randolph Southern High School ("Randolph Southern"). On August 2, 2013, Winchester, as the sending school, completed its portion of the Transfer Report. According to the Transfer Report received as part of the record, Randolph Southern, as the receiving school, completed its portion on July 24, 2013.

On August 5, 2013, the IHSAA Assistant Commissioner determined that Petitioner would receive limited eligibility under Rule 19-6.2 since Petitioner's transfer was without a change of residence and because Winchester did not sign the Rule 17-8.5 *Verification* affirming transfer was in the best interests of Petitioner. The Assistant Commissioner further determined that the Petitioner would be ineligible to participate in athletics at Randolph Southern for 365 days from the date Petitioner last participated in interscholastic athletics at Winchester, which was on May 17, 2013. The Petitioner appealed the Assistant Commissioner's determination to the IHSAA Executive Committee ("Executive Committee").

The IHSAA sent a letter to Petitioner acknowledging receipt of Petitioner's request for appeal and set the matter for a hearing before the Executive Committee for October 3, 2013. Following the evidence presented at the October 3, 2013 hearing, the Executive Committee issued its ruling on October 16, 2013, upholding the decision of the Assistant Commissioner declaring Petitioner have limited or junior varsity eligibility at Randolph Southern until May 17,

2014.

On November 5, 2013, the Petitioner appealed the Executive Committee's decision to the Indiana Case Review Panel ("Panel"),¹ and the Panel notified the parties that it would review the decision during a Panel meeting. The Panel requested and received the record from the IHSAA. On December 2, 2013, the Panel held a meeting,² and based on a review of the record and applicable rules and laws, the Panel made the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Panel finds the following facts to be true and relevant to its decision.

1. Petitioner lives with his mother in Lynn, Indiana. Petitioner attended Randolph Southern his freshman (2011-2012) year, and transferred to Winchester his sophomore (2012-2013) year.

2. While at Randolph Southern, Petitioner testified to have participated in tennis, basketball, and baseball.

3. Petitioner withdrew from Winchester on August 1, 2013, to return to Randolph Southern for the upcoming 2013-2014 academic school year.

4. Petitioner testified that his transfer to Winchester his sophomore year was a result of being bullied by upperclassmen at Randolph Southern, and that the administration failed to address the issue.

5. Petitioner was granted limited eligibility at Winchester, but seeks full eligibility at Randolph Southern.

6. On August 1, 2013, Petitioner's mother completed the *IHSAA Transfer Report* (Transfer Report). On the *Transfer Report*, Petitioner indicated that his transfer back to Randolph Southern was due to transportation costs traveling to Winchester. Petitioner had transportation with a friend his sophomore year to Winchester.

7. Petitioner indicated that he now could drive himself to Winchester, having acquired his license and a vehicle. Petitioner mother testified that the reason for Petitioner's return to Randolph Southern was to be with friends, and because Petitioner promised his grandmother he

¹ According to Ind. Code § 20-26-14-6(c)(3), the Panel is a nine-member panel whose members are appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and his or her designee serves as the Chairperson.

² The following members participated in the meeting: Dr. George Frampton (Chairperson), Ms. Dana Cristee, MR. Bret Daghe, Mr. Michael Golembeski, Ms. Cathy Klink, Mr. Keith Pempek, and Mr. Scott Reske. Ms. Katie Williams-Briles was also present as legal counsel to the Panel.

would return to Randolph Southern. Additionally, Petitioner's mother testified that the school administration has changed at Randolph Southern, and the upperclassmen who bullied her son have now graduated, alleviating former problems at Randolph Southern.

8. On his Transfer Report, Petitioner acknowledged that it was a Rule 19-6.2 Limited Eligibility transfer, but sought a waiver under Rule 17-8.5, allowing full eligibility. Under this waiver, IHSAA had the authority to set aside the effect of the Transfer Rule and grant the Petitioner full eligibility if certain conditions were shown. One condition requires the principals of both Winchester and Randolph Southern to each affirm in writing that the transfer was in the best interest of the Petitioner and that there were no athletic related motives surrounding the transfer.

9. Randolph Southern, the receiving school, signed the Rule 17-8.5 *Verification* portion of the Transfer Report and recommended that the Petitioner receive full eligibility per Rule 17-8.5.

10. Winchester, as sending school, did not sign the Rule 17-8.5 *Verification*, but instead recommended limited eligibility under rule 19-6.2.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Any Finding of Fact that may be considered a Conclusion of Law shall be so considered. Any Conclusion of Law that may be considered a Finding of Fact may be considered as such.

2. Although the IHSAA is a voluntary not-for-profit corporation and is not a public entity, its decisions with respect to student eligibility to participate in interscholastic athletic competition are considered a "state action" making the IHSAA analogous to a quasi-governmental entity. IHSAA v. Carlberg, 694 N.E.2d 222 (Ind. 1997), *reh. den.* (Ind. 1998).

3. The Panel has jurisdiction in this matter. The Panel was established to review final student eligibility decisions with respect to interscholastic athletic competition. Ind. Code § 20-26-14. The Panel has jurisdiction when a student's parent or guardian refers the case to the Panel not later than thirty days after the date of the IHSAA decision. Ind. Code § 20-26-14-6(b). In this matter, the Executive Committee rendered a final determination of student-eligibility adverse to the Petitioner on October 16, 2013, and Petitioner sought timely review on November 5, 2013.

4. The Panel may uphold, modify, or nullify the IHSAA Executive Committee's decision. (Ind. Code § 20-26-14-6(c)(3)). The Panel is not required to review the IHSAA determination *de novo*. The Panel review is similar to an appellate-level administrative review. A full hearing to recreate the record is not required.

5. The Panel reviews the IHSAA determination for arbitrariness or capriciousness. See Carlberg, 694 N.E.2d at 233. A rule or decision will be found to be arbitrary and capricious

“only when it is willful and unreasonable, without consideration and in disregard of the facts or circumstances in the case, or without some basis which would lead a reasonable and honest person to the same conclusion.” Id. (citing Dep’t of Natural Resources v. Indiana Coal Council, Inc.), 542 N.E.2d 1000, 1007 (Ind. 1989).

6. According to Rule 19-4, a student is athletically ineligible if his or her transfer was for primarily athletic reasons or the result of undue influence. The Panel agrees with the Executive Committee’s determination that no claim has been made that Petitioner’s transfer to Randolph Southern was primarily for athletic reasons or the result of undue influence. Thus, Petitioner is not athletically ineligible pursuant to Rule 19-4.

7. The Executive Committee determined that because Petitioner’s transfer to Randolph Southern was without a corresponding change of residence by his parent or guardian, he qualified for limited athletic eligibility pursuant to Rule 19-6.2. Rule 19-6.2 provides that transfers which are not motivated primarily by athletics and do not correspond to a change in residence qualify a student for limited athletic eligibility.

8. There are two waivers available to students under the IHSAA Rules: a Limited Eligibility Waiver pursuant to Rule 17-8.5 and a General Waiver of an IHSAA Rule pursuant to 17-8.1. Winchester did not sign the *verification* on the Transfer Report, so Petitioner did not qualify for a Limited Eligibility Waiver pursuant to Rule 17-8.5.

9. Generally, a student seeking a Rule 17-8.1 waiver must prove by clear and convincing evidence that: the primary purpose of the Rule will still be accomplished if the Rule is not strictly enforced (Rule 17-8.1(a)); a waiver will not harm or diminish the Rule’s purpose or spirit (Rule 17-8.1(b)); the student will suffer or be harmed if a waiver of the Rule is not granted (Rule 17-8.1(c)); and a hardship condition exists as defined in Rule 17-8.3 (Rule 17-8.1(d)).

10. Petitioner failed to establish that the primary and secondary purposes of the rule would still be accomplished if the Rule is not strictly enforced. The rule’s principle purpose is to deter athletically motivated transfers. The secondary purpose of strict application of the transfer rule is to protect the opportunities of *bona fide* student-athletes, which would also be satisfied.

11. Despite Petitioner’s contention that Randolph Southern would better satisfy his social and transportation needs; he did not establish through clear and convincing evidence that the transfer rule would not be offended or compromised by a waiver. The Transfer Rule is a prophylactic rule that limits the eligibility of all students without satisfaction of an exception listed in Rule 19-6.1. Petitioner’s reasons for transfer are not significant, non-athletic events or conditions which, objectively, would compel a transfer.

12. The Transfer Rule allows for a waiver if the student will suffer or be harmed if a waiver of the Rule is not granted, but Petitioner offered no evidence or proof in support of such a claim.

13. The last element for a general waiver is the existence of "hardship condition" that motivated the transfer. Petitioner's non-athletic motivations for transferring do not establish the existence of a hardship condition, because they did not satisfy the definition for a hardship condition provided by Rule 17-8.3.

ORDER

The Case Review Panel finds by a vote of 5-2 that the Panel has the authority to set aside the effect of any Rule and grant a general waiver when the affected party establishes, by clear and convincing evidence, and to the reasonable satisfaction of the Panel, that all of the following conditions of Rule 17-8.1 are met. However, the conditions for general waiver under Rule 17-8.1 were not met and the ruling of the Executive Committee denying a Limited Eligibility Waiver and a general waiver is UPHELD. Petitioner has limited eligibility at Randolph Southern until May 17, 2014, and will be fully eligible to participate in athletics at Randolph Southern beginning May 18, 2014.

DATE: 12-16-13



George Frampton, Ed.D., Chairperson
Case Review Panel

APPEAL RIGHT

Any party aggrieved by the decision of the Case Review Panel has forty-five days from receipt of this written decision to seek judicial review in a civil court with jurisdiction, as provided by Ind. Code § 20-26-14-7.