

NEWS

**** Special Eligibility Edition ****



December 6, 2001

From the Executive Director Dick Neal

This special edition is part of an on-going attempt to help school and athletic leaders eliminate the need to forfeit athletic competitions after discovering an error in eligibility certification.

Barely does a week pass that this office does not receive notification of forfeited contests from member school leaders who have discovered a rule violation. At one level, this is a source of organizational pride, because these 100's of violations over the years have been discovered at the school site and self-reported. But, the fewer such situations, the better for all. So, here goes!

A Sample Protocol to help avoid forfeitures:

- ❖ Consider each athlete to be ineligible until you have certified him/her to be eligible.
- ❖ Require each coach to submit a roster of team members for your eligibility certification.
- ❖ Emphasize with each coach that a student may not participate in any interschool competition until the certifying administrator signs off on that student.
- ❖ Coaches must be certain late arrivals do not slip through the cracks.
- ❖ Once a student is certified as eligible, he/she still must be monitored with regard to such things as dropped classes, change in academic status, etc.
- ❖ It is important that your guidance staff is aware of potential eligibility implications with a change in academic status.

Coaches have been asked to help:

The most recent edition of the MIAA "Coaches' News" is posted on the web. Coaches were urged

to support your eligibility certification efforts, and were given some tools to do so.

Review of Key Rules:

Before your initial Winter athletic competition, carefully review application of the rules discussed below for each student who will represent your school this Winter. Do not hesitate to call me if you have any question about the application or interpretation of any eligibility standard.

(For ready reference the Blue Book rule number is designated.)

26. *There is no value in designating a team to be a "club". Every team that competes in one of the 34 MIAA recognized sports is bound by all Association standards, including those of individual student eligibility. (Club teams may not operate outside Association rules - Rule 32.2.)*
- 32.1 *Only the Board of Directors (or the executive staff) may interpret or apply rules. If you have any question about the application or interpretation of a rule, be safe and call the MIAA office.*
- 32.2 *All MIAA rules apply to all high school teams and individual team members regardless of the level of competition.*
- 32.6 *No special privileges are permitted to student athletes that are not as a matter of previous policy granted to all students within that school.*
- 32.7 *MIAA member schools may only compete against teams representing schools. Competition with schools that are not members of MIAA, must be governed (and agreed to in writing by that school head) by all MIAA standards.*

- 32.8 No private agreements may be made that would permit a student or team to compete outside of MIAA standards.
- 32.10 Neither member schools nor school committees may make rules that are in any way less restrictive than those of the MIAA. More stringent rules may be adopted. Care must be taken to ensure that any such adoption does not create a scenario that would render that local standard less restrictive. For example, a local academic standard that requires a student to meet a first semester grade requirement is less restrictive when a student does not satisfy the Association standard regarding second quarter grades.
45. An athlete may not miss a high school practice or competition in order to practice or compete in a non-school athletic activity/event in any sport recognized by the MIAA. (Because violation of this rule only occurs away from school, it will help for your students and parents to have knowledge of this standard.)
46. A student athlete may participate in only one MIAA interscholastic sport during each of the Fall, Winter, and Spring athletic seasons.
51. No individual may practice or compete with a high school team who is not a member of that school's student body. To represent a school on its athletic team, a student must be a candidate for that school's diploma, that school principal must have the authority to suspend the student from classes, and the principal must have control and knowledge of the student's daily attendance and academic achievement.
52. Any student in an alternative, collaborative, detached, or other "non-traditional" educational program will require extra care in the certification of eligibility. These students must satisfy the full criteria of Rule 52 before they can be certified as eligible.
53. Middle level grade students are not eligible to practice or participate on high school teams unless they are under the direct supervision and jurisdiction of the MIAA high school principal. Jurisdiction and supervision are defined in Rule 51.
54. Home-educated students are ineligible unless all the criteria of this rule was addressed as a matter of school committee policy prior to the start of the academic year.
55. A student may not represent a school on its athletic team(s) if he or she has not been a continuous member of the secondary school for at least two months preceding the contest, and has been issued a report card.
- 56.1 Every student athlete must have successfully passed a physical examination within 365 days of each practice or competition. (Realize that a student's one-year physical may expire mid-season!)
57. Consider every transfer student into your school to be ineligible until certified otherwise by your certifying administrator.
- 57.5 Foreign athletes are ineligible unless certified otherwise by your certifying administrator.
58. A student athlete's academic eligibility for the second marking period of the academic year is based upon academic success during the first marking period. Academic eligibility for the third marking period is determined on the basis of academic success during the **second** marking period (and **not** semester grades). A student must be always taking and most recently be passing at least the equivalent of four major subjects.

59. Special care must be taken to ensure that no student participates beyond four consecutive years after the first successful completion of grade 8. Even if a student did not participate during a given season, he/she is eligible only for four consecutive years after first successfully completing grade 8. Therefore, if parents decide to have a student repeat the eighth grade, the eligibility clock begins with that repeated eighth grade year, thereby rendering the student ineligible four years later (usually at the end of the junior year).
60. A student who is 19 years of age prior to September 1 is not eligible for high school athletic participation.
61. A student who has graduated from a secondary school anywhere in the world or who has achieved sufficient credits to graduate should be considered as ineligible. The rule itself does include exceptions.
62. Student athletes and coaches are precluded from using tobacco, alcohol, or drugs during the practice or competition seasons.

Additional Thoughts:

Integrity, honor, and ethics should always guide leaders responsible for the education and growth of young people. The "spirit" as well as the "letter" of standards and rules should guide rules decisions.

Rules 40 & 41:

The spirit of MIAA out-of-season rules is probably more important than the letter. These standards exist to ensure fairness. It is unfair to student athletes in competing schools to have the opposition prepare, outside of the rules, prior to the start of the defined high school season. It also is unfair to influence or require your own student athletes to participate in an out-of-season preparation program.

Rule 44:

The prohibition against the recruitment of athletes is universal among every state high school association in the Nation. These rules also are driven by the value of fairness. It is unfair to the opposition, to the student athlete who is displaced, and to the young person recruited, to create a situation which is contradictory to the mission, philosophy, and goals of interscholastic athletics. The athletic program of each school is established to provide additional educational and growth opportunities for the students who have elected to enroll (without the influence of athletic recruitment) in that high school.

Rule 42:

Our "amateur rule" is quite similar to such standards in every state association. The amateur rule precludes an athlete from accepting any item of **intrinsic** value, resulting in any way from his or her athletic success. Because such violations will generally occur off campus and outside the supervision of school people, it is important that your athletes and their parents understand the strict limitations of this rule. Violation of this rule renders the athlete ineligible for one full year. Student athletes cannot receive gift certificates, golf balls, sneakers, skis, warm-up suits, etc. without violating the amateur rule.

I hope the aforementioned proves helpful Please feel free to call whenever I might be of assistance.

Dick.



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