



TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, November 3, 2009: Tulsa Public Schools has completed an exhaustive investigation into student athlete eligibility at Booker T. Washington High School. A thorough review of weekly academic standings for participants in all school activities revealed 37 students competed as ineligible athletes in softball, volleyball, cross country and football.

The violations to Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association Rule 3, Scholastic Eligibility, will result in the forfeiture of four varsity volleyball matches, including the 2009 Regional Volleyball Championship, as well as a victory against Tahlequah in the state volleyball tournament. Rule 3 infractions will also force the forfeiture of the varsity BTW v. Miami football game.

Among the BTW victories forfeited on October 28 for violations to OSSAA Rule 9, the Hornets would have had to forfeit the varsity football games against Pryor and Hale because of academic eligibility violations. As well, the Hornet softball team previously forfeited three victories that would have been forfeited due to multiple players' academic ineligibility. A cross country runner was also ruled academically ineligible but no races were impacted in BTW's favor so no forfeitures were necessary.

Area Superintendent of High Schools Kevin Burr said TPS administrators are also cognizant of the ripple effect such violations have on other OSSAA member schools.

"We are aware of our responsibilities to our honorable association with the OSSAA," said Burr. "Allowing ineligible athletes to participate put BTW at a competitive advantage to other member schools that chose to participate by the guidelines we all agreed to. We have a responsibility to athletes of competing schools as well as our own."

TPS's investigation determined the BTW principal, athletic director and assistant athletic director failed to conduct weekly scholastic eligibility checks as required by OSSAA Rule 3, Section 2a, which states: *"Scholastic eligibility for students will be checked after three weeks (during the fourth week) of a semester and each succeeding week thereafter. School may choose to run eligibility checks on any day of the week. The period of probation and ineligibility will always begin the Monday following the day eligibility is checked."*

On Wednesday, BTW Principal Michael Johnson requested TPS Superintendent Dr. Keith Ballard grant him an immediate administrative transfer from Booker T. Washington to another site in the district. Ballard accepted Johnson's request for re-assignment saying, "I appreciate Mr. Johnson's reassignment request which is in the best interest of Booker T. Washington. We will move swiftly to appoint an interim principal and we will take great care to attract the highest-caliber administrator capable of leading this great school into the future."

Ballard said Johnson requested to take earned vacation leave until the district can determine where his experience and abilities will provide the greatest benefit to students. The superintendent said decisions about Johnson's reassignment and an interim principal at Booker T. Washington will be announced within a week.

Meantime, Ballard has tapped longtime educator and former BTW principal James Furch to provide leadership at BTW on a temporary, short-term basis. Furch is currently a co-principal at McLain High School for Science and Technology. He has also served as the district's director of high schools, area superintendent and assistant superintendent for student services.

Other changes at BTW include the appointment of Mike Mims, Booker T. Washington graduate and basketball standout, as assistant principal with responsibility over athletics. Mims will replace Geoff Woodson, who has been granted a request for transfer to an assistant principal's position at Memorial High School. Mims coached Hornet basketball from 1972 to 1982 and served as assistant basketball coach at the University of Oklahoma under Billy Tubbs for 13 years.

Hornet baseball coaches John Potocnik and Jason Doctor were appointed to step in as co-athletic directors after the removal of Antwain Jimmerson and voluntary resignation of Ioder "Butch" Fisher from all athletic duties. Potocnik has led the BTW baseball program for nearly a dozen years. Doctor has coached alongside Potocnik for nearly two years.

The names of students who were ruled academically ineligible will not be released to the public. Each student athlete will be sanctioned in accordance with OSSAA rules. Once TPS presents its self-imposed sanctions to the OSSAA, the OSSAA board will be the final arbiter of consequences for BTW teams, athletes or staff members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY VIOLATIONS AT BTW

Wednesday, November 04, 2009

SOFTBALL

- BTW is required to forfeit a total of nine varsity games due to the use of an ineligible player, Student 2. 8/12—Hale (2 games); 8/25—Metro Christian; 9/1—Hale; 9/8—Webster; 9/19—Quapaw; 9/30—Hale; 10/1—Edison; 10/7—Rogers.
- It should be noted that on 9/30, BTW also played four academically ineligible players; on 10/1, BTW played two academically ineligible players; and on 10/7, BTW played two academically ineligible players. Although those varsity softball games have already been forfeited due to the participation of Student 2, they ultimately would have been forfeited due to the participation of academically ineligible athletes.
- BTW is being required to forfeit a total of three junior varsity (JV) games due to the use of an ineligible player, Student 2. 9/1—Hale; 9/24—Coweta; 10/1—Edison.
- All players must sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while ineligible. Student 2 will sit out of 13 varsity games and three junior varsity games, the other four softball players who participated while academically ineligible will sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while academically ineligible. All ineligible players will sit out of games during the 2010 season.

VOLLEYBALL

- Forfeit a total of four varsity matches for the use of an academically ineligible player. 9/28—BTW v. Bishop McGuiness; 10/6—Regional Tournament BTW v. Central and Edison; 10/16-17—State Tournament—BTW v. Tahlequah (1st round).
- There were three additional volleyball players at the ninth and/or junior varsity level who participated in matches while academically ineligible. BTW did not win any of those ninth-grade or JV matches, so forfeits are not necessary. All players must sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while academically ineligible. All ineligible players will sit out of matches during the 2010 season, unless they are seniors, in which they will sit out the same number of contests during the next sport in which they participate.

CROSS COUNTRY

- One BTW cross country team member ran in a JV meet on 10/14 while academically ineligible. This student is required to sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while academically ineligible. The student will sit out of one meet during the 2010 season.

FOOTBALL 9TH GRADE

- BTW is being required to forfeit a total of five ninth-grade football games, due to the use of ineligible players, Students 3, 4 and 5. 9/7—Central; 9/14—Webster; 9/28—East Central; 10/5—McLain; 10/12—Hale.
- It should be noted that in the 10/12 ninth-grade football game BTW v. Hale, Student 1 also participated while ineligible.
- While these games are being forfeited due to the participation of ineligible athletes, there were also nine academically ineligible athletes that participated in the 9/28, 10/5 and 10/12 ninth-grade football games. These three ninth-grade football games would have been ultimately forfeited due to the participation of academically ineligible athletes, regardless of the participation of Students 1, 3, 4 and 5.
- All players must sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while ineligible. All ineligible players will sit out of games during the 2010 season.

FOOTBALL JUNIOR VARSITY

- BTW is required to forfeit the 9/28 JV football game BTW v. Bishop Kelley and the 10/5 JV football game BTW v. Edison for the use of an ineligible player, Student 1. It should also be noted that during those two JV football games, 12 academically ineligible players also participated. These two JV football games would have been ultimately forfeited due to the participation of academically ineligible athletes, regardless of the participation of Student 1.
- BTW will forfeit the 10/12 JV football game BTW v. McLain due the participation of 12 academically ineligible players.
- All players must sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while ineligible. All ineligible players will sit out of games during the 2010 season.

FOOTBALL VARSITY

- BTW is required to forfeit the varsity game on 10/2 BTW v. Miami, due to the use of 16 academically ineligible athletes. In the Miami game, seven d “starters” were academically ineligible. An additional nine academically ineligible players (“non-starters”) also played in the game.
- While the varsity game BTW v. Pryor on 10/9 has been forfeited due to the participation of Student 6, it should be noted that BTW played seven academically ineligible players in that game. Six of those athletes were “starters” and one was a “non-starter”. **The game would have ultimately been forfeited regardless of the participation of Student 6 in that contest.**
- While the varsity game BTW v. Nathan Hale on 10/15 has been forfeited due to the participation of Student 6, it should be noted that BTW played 15 academically ineligible players in that game. Six of those athletes were “starters,” nine were “non-starters.” **The game would have ultimately been forfeited regardless of the participation of Student 6 in that contest.**
- All players must sit out the same number of contests in which they participated while ineligible. All ineligible players will sit out of games during the 2010 season, unless they are seniors, in which they will sit out the same number of contests during the next sport in which they participate.

COMMENT

- A total of 37 different BTW student-athletes participated in an OSSAA athletic activity while academically ineligible.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED DISTRICT IMPOSED SANCTIONS

- Place the BTW Volleyball program on *Warning* status for a period of one year.
- The 2009 Volleyball Regional Championship plaque will be returned to the OSSAA.
- Require that BTW provide the OSSAA a list of “Out-of District” students who are participating in any OSSAA activity for a period of five years.