

Dallas football player ruled ineligible files appeal, but game remains a loss

By HEATHER B. JONES
Post Staff

DALLAS - A Dallas High School senior football player has filed an appeal to the District 2 PIAA regarding his eligibility to play for the Mountaineers.

The player (whose name has been withheld by the school) was unaware of his PIAA eligibility status until September 5, when Frank Galicki, Dallas High School principal, and Jack Wolensky, Dallas athletic director, were contacted by Tim Honeywell, Berwick athletic director. Honeywell told Wolensky and Galicki that in 1996-1997 one of the Dallas players had played on Berwick's eighth grade squad. He felt Dallas might have a problem with the eligibility of the player in question.

"Mr. Galicki and Mr. Wolensky then went through the student's records and then started to follow up with the District 2

PIAA officials," said Dr. Gilbert Griffiths, Dallas School District superintendent.

The senior played in the opening game of the season between Dallas and Wyoming Valley West on August 31. Dallas won the game against Wyoming Valley West 14-0, but must now forfeit the victory. Depending on the outcome of the rest of the season, the forfeit could prevent the team from advancing to the post-season.

According to PIAA eligibility requirements, students have eight semesters of athletic eligibility starting in ninth grade, said Griffiths. The player is currently in his ninth semester under those rules.

"The Dallas School District appreciated the conversation with the athletic director from Berwick. He brought this to our attention so we didn't have to go through the rest of the season and have to forfeit any more

"This program has been a positive influence on this young man. His behavior and actions in the classroom are exemplary."

Frank Galicki
Dallas High School Principal

games," said Griffiths.

Student athletes with extenuating circumstances can appeal to the PIAA for the right to participate in sports. "One of the things we do realize with this appeal process is it's not retroactive," Griffiths said.

Even if PIAA does grant the student eligibility at the appeal on September 12, Dallas still forfeits the Wyoming Valley West win.

The student played football at Western Wayne in the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 school years, his ninth and 10th grade

years. He left Western Wayne and entered a program at Intermediate Unit 17 in Williamsport for 1999-2000. The IU program offered no athletics.

"In March of 2000 he enrolled in Dallas and he was given sophomore standing for his academics. This is where he slipped through the cracks on us," Griffiths said. "He had sophomore academic eligibility for academics, but he should have had junior standing for athletics."

"He started the new year 2001-2002. He played in the first game. He was an ineligible

player, because he had 12th grade academic standing and had no more eligibility left for athletics," said Griffiths.

Griffiths blamed the mixup in the student's eligibility on his being in several school districts and foster homes in recent years. The student has gone through a number of foster placements and has been placed in a foster family in Dallas. "Records did not accompany him as quickly as they should have," said Wolensky. "That caused a major problem obviously."

Eligibility is checked through the athletic office once it is notified by the coaches who will be playing. "We can't say that it's any one person's fault," Griffiths said. As a result of this incident the Dallas School District has begun tracking transfer students differently.

"I feel very badly for the boy because he had 12th grade academic standing and had no more eligibility left for athletics," said Griffiths.

lar to post in his younger days, and then bounced around now, after finding a place where he really felt like home. He felt like this was a place where he could succeed and do well," said Griffiths. "The athletic program at Dallas was giving him that vehicle and all of a sudden it stopped."

"We're actually very concerned about him as an individual. He feels that he might have let the team down and that is not the case," said Griffiths.

"This program has been a positive influence on this young man," said Galicki. "His behavior and actions in the classroom are exemplary."

Galicki said the student is not letting the incident affect his academic performance.

"He told us, 'I will graduate. I will get my diploma. Don't you worry about it, Mr. Galicki, I will graduate.'"

Home

(continued from page 1)

Guarnieri's frustration with Thomas's property is understandable. But for Joe Moskovitz, borough manager, this problem is much deeper than an unkempt property.

"I'm not supposed to be living in slums; I pay taxes."

Ann Marie Guarnieri
25 Rice St.

"It's not that I don't want to do anything about it," said Moskovitz. "I'm very concerned about putting an 85-year-old man on the street."

"As for the cats, we can address that," said Moskovitz. "It is enforceable and we can look at that."

The ramifications of putting Thomas out of the house outweigh his neighbor's complaint for Moskovitz. In talking with other neighbors, he said, they don't like it either, but no one wants to see Thomas lose his homestead.

"Morally, I'm between a rock and a hard place because I am not going to put old Merle Thomas out on the streets," Moskovitz said. The home has been in disrepair for nearly 20 years.

"I'm willing to let the cards fall where they may," he said. As borough manager and zoning officer, Moskovitz said he doesn't want to be lax on issues such as this, but he also has to be able to look at himself in the mirror each morning.

Moskovitz said he will be discussing the issue with Matthew Reinert, borough solicitor. He

"It's not that I don't want to do anything about it. I'm very concerned about putting an 85-year-old man on the street."

Joe Moskovitz
Dallas Borough Manager



POST PHOTO/HEATHER B. JONES

The house on Rice St. occupied by 85-year-old Merle Thomas has been in disrepair for many years.

said the only action he will take against the Thomas property is if he is legally bound.

Moskovitz also suggested there may be something the community could do to help out Thomas with the condition of the property.

In other business:

- The borough police will be conducting roaming patrols to stop and check child car seats. Officers will make sure the car

seat is installed correctly and will have stuffed animals for the children, said Patricia Peiffer, council member.

- An extra police officer will also be added during night hours due to the outbreak of burglaries in the borough.

- Pasonick Engineering of Wilkes-Barre was awarded the capital improvements bid.

- Council accepted the 2000 audit of the borough.

L-L school director faces DUI charge

DALLAS TWP. - A Lake-Lehman school board member has been charged with driving under the influence in Dallas Township.

On June 30, Dallas Township Police responded to a motor vehicle accident on Kunkle-Alderson Road. Charles J. Balavage, RD 2, Box 55, Harveys Lake, was operating a green Ford truck which was leaning against a guard rail, according to the police report.

Balavage told police when he rounded a curve, he swerved his vehicle to avoid hitting a deer. He tried to get the truck unstuck but was unable due to condition of the truck.

Doug Higgins, Dallas Township Police officer, surveyed the scene and found no signs of a sudden event which would be consistent with Balavage swerving to miss a deer.

Instead, Higgins found marks on the dirt berm of the road which indicated Balavage gradually left the roadway. His car traveled west approximately 280 feet, crossing into the eastbound lane and then back to the west-

bound lane. Balavage then left the roadway and traveled approximately 38 feet and struck the guard rail, according to the police report. He damaged approximately 97 feet of guard rail.

David Fitch, Dallas Township Police officer, interviewed Balavage while Higgins surveyed the accident scene. Fitch observed Balavage to have red, glassy, blood shot eyes. Balavage said he was coming from Cousin Bill's Bar on Route 309 in Dallas Township.

Fitch then asked Balavage to perform field sobriety tests, which he failed to perform to the officer's satisfaction. Balavage was then placed in custody and transported to the Luzerne County DUI Central Processing Center in Wilkes-Barre.

Balavage agreed to take a chemical test of his breath which showed his blood alcohol was .124 percent, above the legal limit of 0.10 percent.

Balavage has been a member of the Lake-Lehman School Board since November 2000. He is running for re-election this fall.



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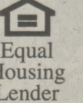
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