

April 13, 2017

Follow-up investigation – RE: Belmont HS. V Dunbar HS.

I was directed to conduct a follow-up investigation into the conversation(s) between coaches, administrators and staff of the Dayton Public Schools that occurred at Welcome Stadium on October 28, 2016.

From an email from Board Member Joe Lacey to myself;

“The board would like to know more about the facts surrounding the plan to throw the game, who was involved in the plan, who was aware of the plan, what efforts were made to preserve the integrity of the game.”

OHSAA’s report conclusions are based upon a meeting of district staff just prior to the attempt to throw the game. All accounts of what took place at this meeting by all attendees and any witnesses may be helpful.”

I have identified the following people associated with conversation before and during the game between Belmont HS. and Dunbar HS.

LaMark Baker – Athletic Director, Dayton Public Schools

Crystal Phillips – Principal, Dunbar High School

Melanie Walter – Principal, Belmont High School

Darren Powell – Head Coach, Dunbar High School

Pete Pullen – Athletic Director, Dunbar High School

Albert Powell – Football Coach, Dunbar High School

Alfred Powell – Football Coach, Dunbar High School

Mr. Pullen; his initial conversation with Mr. Baker after being informed that a Dunbar player was academically ineligible. This conversation was in Mr. Baker’s office when there was conversation around the block schedule. Mr. Baker was unsure of how to interpret the grades as related to a block schedule and called someone on the phone asking for advice.

After a while, Mr. Baker was still on the phone and Mr. Pullen asked “Are we good” or something like that. Mr. Baker made a hand gesture or “thumbs up”, and Mr. Pullen left the office and returned to the field. Mr. Pullen relayed the information as he interpreted “that the student was eligible” to the coaching staff.

About twenty minutes later, Mr. Baker came up to Mr. Pullen telling him that he calculated the grades wrong and the student is not eligible.

Ms. Phillips; I was called to a meeting in Mark Baker’s office at half-time. This meeting included Mark Baker, Ms. Walters and Ms. Phillips. As the meeting started, Darren Powell walked in and

asked Baker, "What do you want me to do?" There was a heated conversation in which Baker replied, "Dunbar needs to lose this game. It's the best thing for the district." I responded, "My primary job is for Dunbar HS not the district." Darren responded, "I'm a competitor! You should understand." Mark jumped up out of his chair and said, "Go ahead and win the game and see what happens". Darren said, "What do you want me to do?", Baker responded, "Do what you want to do".

Ms. Walter: There were two conversations with Mark Baker. The first was as the game began when she told him that Dunbar was playing an ineligible player. Baker responded by saying "The best thing that could happen is for Belmont to win, and he won't have to self-report."

The second meeting was held in Baker's office during half-time between Mark Baker, Crystal Phillips and myself, and then Darren Powell came in. He was upset. There was a heated conversation centered around the comment that "Belmont needs to win" and Darren Powell saying, " You're going to have to tell his kids", and he and Crystal walked out toward the field.

Darren Powell: He was told by his uncle, Alfred Powell, that they had, indeed, played an ineligible player and that it was suggested by Mark Baker that Belmont needed to win. Upset, Darren went to Baker's office where Ms. Phillips and Ms. Walter were meeting with Baker. I walked in and said, "What do you want me to do?" Baker replied, "Belmont needs to win this game". [Darren] "So you're telling me to lose the game" [Baker] "I'm telling you that Belmont needs to win this game". [Darren] "I'm not telling my kids to lose this game" [Baker] "Go ahead and win and see what happens. The district will have a "Shit Show".

Powell left the meeting with Ms. Phillips and returned to the field where the game had already started. He call a "timeout" and removed the ineligible player and told his team what was said, "that Belmont needs to win this game". Darren wanted to keep his integrity and not play the ineligible player, and he never told his team to lose the game.

Albert Powell: Mark Baker had come up to the press box looking for his brother, Alfred Powell, and when he wasn't there, Mark said, "There's been a mistake. I can fix this. You have to let Belmont win. Just tell Darren to let them win the game. I can sweep this under the rug. You need to tell your son (Darren) to let Belmont win." [Albert]" I can't tell my son to do that," and handed the head phones to Baker who tried 3 or 4 times to call Darren on the field, with no response. "If we don't do this, it's going to get ugly for the district." [Albert]" I can't tell my son to do that."

LaMark Baker: Baker admitted to being with Ms. Walter prior to the game and in a discussion about an ineligible player that he said in jest that the best thing that could happen is for Belmont to win, and that he would not have to self-report.

In the meeting at half time with the principals Walter and Phillips in which Coach Powell, Baker informed them that an ineligible player had been played by Dunbar HS. Baker wanted to tell them that he would have to self-report to the state(OHSAA).

Baker denies making any statement(s) during this meeting that it would be better if Belmont won this game or that Dunbar should lose the game.

Baker had no other choice other than to self-report because the ineligible player had played therefore he is obligated to self-report the incident to OHSAA.

Conclusion:

After re-interviewing the above listed individuals and comparing their statements to the original statements that were recorded. No one other than Principal Water mentioned about the suggestive outcome of this football game. That conversation was between Ms. Walter and Mark Baker prior to the beginning of the game, where they were discussing the ineligible player for Dunbar and the question was asked "what are we going to about it" and Baker said "the best thing is for Belmont to win and I won't have to self-report to the state".

Coach Powell never mentioned anything about Baker suggesting to throw the game. AD Pullen mentioned that Baker said anything about throwing the game. Ms. Phillips never mentioned anything about Baker suggesting that Dunbar throw the game.

Until after the investigation was completed no one ever came forward to suggest that Baker had directed anyone from Dunbar to lose or throw the game. Now after the fact all of the coaching staff clearly recalls that almost six months after the event that Baker had suggested that they lose the game.

My original report includes transcription of each of the interviews with all parties with the exception of Coach Alfred Powell and a conversation that took place between himself and Baker in the press box at Welcome Stadium during this game. Please read beyond the Investigative Summary.

Respectfully,

Jamie L. Bullens

Executive Director, Safety & Security