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TO: John Miller
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Brian Smith
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FROM: Carl Blackstone
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DATE: May 18, 2016

RE: WIAA Response to Bellevue School District Violation Report dated May 11, 2016

On March 22, 2016, Carl Blackstone and Robert Westinghouse submitted an Investigative report to the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (“WIAA”) relating to the Bellevue High School (“BHS”) football program. The WIAA Investigative Report (“Investigative Report”) contained findings that BHS and the Bellevue School District (“BSD”) had violated a number of WIAA rules. WIAA provided the Investigative Report to BSD on April 1, 2016. On May 11, 2016, BSD/BHS presented a WIAA Violation Report (“Violation Report” or “District’s Report”) to the KingCo League during a self-report hearing. On May 13, 2016, George Crowder, KingCo League President, requested that WIAA and its investigators evaluate the information contained in the BSD/BHS Violation Report.

The Violation Report identifies 10 allegations in the Investigative Report. The Violation Report provides substantive responses to only six of the allegations. BSD reports that it is continuing to investigate the remaining four violations and represented that it would respond by May 16, 2016. To our knowledge, BSD did not respond by that date.

In this memorandum the WIAA investigators will respond to the six allegations addressed in the Violation Report. The investigators will submit a supplemental response after BSD provides a substantive response to the four remaining allegations.

Allegation #1 – Whether coaches directed players to the Academic Institute

WIAA Rule 27.1.0 provides that no student may receive, or be offered, any remunerations of any kind, or to receive or be offered any special inducement of any kind which is not made available to all applicants who enroll or continue to be enrolled in the school or apply to the school.”¹ Special inducement “shall include, but not be limited to “the offer or acceptance of money or other valuable consideration such as free or reduced tuition during the regular year or summer school by anyone connected with the school.”

BSD/BHS (hereafter referred to as “BSD”) agree with the WIAA conclusion that coaches directed football players to attend the Academic Institute (“AI”). BSD concludes, however, that this is not a violation of WIAA rules. The District asserts that if coaches only counseled players or directed them as to where to seek help if struggling academically there would be no violation. The facts uncovered during the WIAA investigation, however, disclose that the coaches did much more, including the following:

- Coach Goncharoff, in an interview with investigators, denied encouraging or directing a player to attend AI; yet, emails obtained from the District clearly establish Coach Goncharoff directed a player to attend AI to “replace” four classes. (Investigative Report at 45-46, Exhibits 101 and 102). The investigative report also identified three other players who Coach Goncharoff directed or encouraged to attend AI. (Investigative Report at 46-48). In fact, the Investigative Report contained a recorded interview of one player, ██████████ stating that “my coach got me into AI.” (Exhibits 105 and 106).²

Coach Goncharoff’s denial that he directed players to attend AI is not credible. As a result, his conduct appears to violate the WIAA Code of Ethics which states that “It is the duty of all concerned with school athletics . . . to emphasize the proper ideals of sportsmanship, ethical conduct and fair play.” (WIAA Handbook, Appendix 9).

- Coach Goncharoff sought “sponsors” to pay the players’ tuition at AI. (Investigative Report at 46-48, Exhibit 104A).
- The Booster Club paid the tuition for several players to attend AI. (Investigative Report at 50-53, Exhibit 104).

¹ The WIAA Addendum to Investigative Report RE: Bellevue High School Football Program, contains a typographical error as to Allegation I in that it cites the WIAA Rule 27.1.1 rather than WIAA Rule 27.1.0

² All references to Exhibits are to the Exhibits submitted with the WIAA Investigative Report.