

FENWICK



Dear Fenwick Students, Parents, Faculty, Staff, and Coaches,

Yesterday afternoon we received a response from the MIAA. The MIAA reviewed our letter, discussed the matter, and determined that their sanction prohibiting all student-athletes at Bishop Fenwick from participating in the 2023-24 MIAA state tournaments remains in place.

In the spirit of full transparency and respectful of the MIAA's thorough communication, we are sharing with our Bishop Fenwick community the full text of the MIAA's response (**MIAA Response**) to our August 7 letter (**Fenwick Letter**), which we received on August 21.

This decision is incredibly disappointing. It is also grossly unjust. Our Fenwick administration has taken responsibility for the errors in the identified waiver application and in the misunderstanding of the partnership with St. Mary's (Danvers). We have apologized to the MIAA's Board of Directors numerous times, both in person and in writing, noting our remorse for the violations cited. We have outlined our plans for how our school and our administration will ensure compliance with MIAA rules and regulations going forward.

Despite these efforts to remedy the situation and to retain our students' ability to compete in the post-season, the MIAA has deemed our apology for the mistakes, our ownership of the errors, and our plan/promise to ensure complete compliance going forward, as inadequate. The MIAA, by whatever standard of measurement they are using, continues to believe that we have not taken sufficient responsibility or made an

“unequivocal, explicit statement of institutional acceptance of compliance” that meets with the organization’s approval.

For the record, we remind everyone that we have complied with all the MIAA rulings in these specific matters. The student who submitted the 5th year waiver application never touched the field last year. Over a year ago, the team with the middle school student forfeited the required three games, all middle school students were removed from all Fenwick teams, and no middle school waivers were (or will be) submitted following the decision.

Still, the MIAA has chosen to punish our entire community by precluding all student-athletes in our 24 varsity athletic programs from post-season competition for the entire 2023-24 academic year. We have yet to hear of such a sweeping, stark sanction for any infraction, of any size or severity, by any school or team, at any time in recent history. Personally, I cannot fathom how such a measure is reasonable, appropriate, or fair.

The stated mission of the MIAA is, in part, *to serve member schools and the maximum number of their students by providing leadership for the conduct of interscholastic athletics which will enrich the educational experiences of all participants*. This ruling, which actually punishes a maximum number of young people at Bishop Fenwick (and at the schools with whom we co-op) for a matter that did not involve any of them, seems antithetical to that mission.

We have scheduled a special meeting of our full Board this Thursday, August 24, and we also will be meeting with our legal counsel and our Administrative Team. We will be considering the options available to us, recognizing that the health and well-being of our students and the integrity and success of our school are the top priorities.

However we decide to move forward, it is clear that our young people do not deserve this punishment. It is also clear that our students have the courage, character, resolve, grit, tenacity, toughness, grace, and class to meet any challenge. With all our support, our Crusaders will rise to the occasion – of this we can be certain. Take care.

Sincerely,

Tom Nunan, Jr.

President