



ELECTRONICALLY FILED
2/5/2026 2:41 PM
63-CV-2026-900089.00
CIRCUIT COURT OF
TUSCALOOSA COUNTY, ALABAMA
MAGARIA HAMNER BOBO, CLERK

EXHIBIT 1

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF TUSCALOOSA COUNTY, ALABAMA

CHARLES BEDIAKO,)
)
Plaintiff,)
)
v.)
)
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC)
ASSOCIATION, INC.)
Defendant.)

Case No. 63-CV-2026-900098.00

AFFIDAVIT OF SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE COMMISSIONER
GREG SANKEY

1. I am the Commissioner of the Southeastern Conference (the “SEC” or the “Conference”). I make this declaration of my own personal knowledge and, if called on to do so, could testify competently to the facts stated herein under oath.

2. NCAA Bylaw 12.6 (Seasons of Competition: Five-Year Rule) provides that a student-athlete shall not engage in more than four seasons of intercollegiate competition in any one sport, and Bylaw 12.6.1 (Five-Year Rule) affords student-athletes five calendar years to complete those seasons. These longstanding rules are grounded in the principle that athletics are an integral part of the academic experience. The rules align the time permitted for college athletics with the pursuit of an undergraduate education and further the important purpose of preserving opportunities for future student-athletes to participate in college sports.

3. To maintain eligibility to participate in college athletics, NCAA Bylaw 12.2.4 (Contracts and Compensation) provides that a student-athlete “shall not enter into any kind of agreement to compete in professional athletics, either orally or in writing, regardless of the legal enforceability of that agreement.” This rule, too, is grounded in the

principle that college athletics are reserved for current college athletes who are actively pursuing a degree while also participating in college sports and for future college athletes who seek to benefit from the unique educational, athletic, and leadership opportunities provided through college sports. The rule also promotes competitive fairness in the context of college athletics. It recognizes, for example, that an athlete who has chosen to pursue a professional sports career, whether domestically or internationally, will have benefitted from the structure of professional sports, which permits athletes to focus solely on sports development and competition, stepping away from the educational requirements of college sports and engaging the opportunity to mature in a new environment with the benefit of dedicated athletic resources.

4. Changes to these rules open the door to undermining these fundamental principles. Permitting former professional athletes to return to competition creates a competitive disadvantage and fundamental unfairness for current student-athletes who have not pursued a professional sports career but instead have maintained their commitment to the collegiate athletics model, fulfilling the academic standards and participating actively in an educational community while also participating in college sports. It is also unfair to college sports programs that have operated within the existing framework for college athletics and thus have not sought to add former professional athletes to their rosters.

5. Changes to these rules also impact opportunities for high school student-athletes to access the benefits of participation in college athletics. Each roster spot filled by a former professional athlete is a roster spot that becomes unavailable to a high school

student-athlete or another less-developed athlete who would benefit from the educational and athletic growth opportunities uniquely available through college sports.

6. These rules, enacted through the NCAA membership's legislative process, reflect the informed judgment of hundreds of educational institutions to protect the distinctive character of collegiate athletics and the opportunities it provides for current and future college athletes. Consistent application of these standards promotes fair competition, supports sound program planning and administration across institutions and conferences, and sustains the differentiated product that is college sports.

7. Inconsistent application of the NCAA eligibility rules challenged in this case—through court rulings or otherwise—fuels disruption in college sports. Without consistent application of these rules, college athletes cannot have confidence in the rules of the competition in which they are engaged or the real-world effects of their decision to pursue a professional sports career; college coaches do not receive clear guidance on actions they can and cannot take to build their rosters for effective and compliant competition; and entering college freshmen face unclear limitations on their opportunities to join a roster and benefit from the experience of participating in college sports.

8. I respectfully ask the Court to uphold the NCAA eligibility rules challenged in this case, which are essential to the integrity of college sports, to the educational mission they serve, and to the opportunities they provide for current and future student-athletes.

[Signature page follows]

February 5, 2026



Greg Sankey
Southeastern Conference Commissioner

Sworn and subscribed before me this
5th of February, 2026.



Kathryn R. Switz
NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires:

August 22, 2027