



## SOUTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

Jerome P. Singleton, Commissioner  
P. O. Box 211575  
Columbia, South Carolina 29221-6575  
Phone: 803-798-0120 Fax: 803-737-0029 [www.schsl.org](http://www.schsl.org)

**To:** Jamie Blount – Principal, Emerald High School  
**From:** Jerome Singleton, Commissioner  
**Subject:** Time of scheduled appearance before Executive Committee  
**Date:** September 16, 2020

You are scheduled to appear before the Executive Committee on **September 18, 2020**, to present your case for sanction relief. The meeting will be held at the South Carolina High School League Office, 121 Westpark Boulevard, Columbia, South Carolina. Your scheduled appearance time is 10:30 a.m.

**Please refer to page 1 of the League's By-Laws for the procedures to be used when making appeals to the Executive Committee.** You are to forward copies of your request brief to members of the Executive Committee. Each committee person must receive a complete copy of all pertinent information prior to the meeting. You will have 10 minutes to make your presentation to the Committee.

**Date:** September 18, 2020  
**Time:** 10:30 a.m.  
**Site:** SC High School League  
121 Westpark Blvd  
Columbia, SC 29210



# SOUTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

Jerome P. Singleton, Commissioner  
P. O. Box 211575  
Columbia, South Carolina 29221-6575  
803-798-0120 ♦ www.schsl.org

**SAM TUTEN**

President  
Johnsonville

September 1, 2020

**JASON WARREN**

Vice President  
Greenville

Jamie L. Blount, Principal  
Emerald High School  
150 Bypass 25  
Greenwood, South Carolina 29646

**MIKE BEASLEY**

Barnwell

**KANDACE BETHEA**

Marion

**KYLE BOCZKOWSKI**

Summerville

Dear Mrs. Blount:

**RYAN BROWN**

Columbia

I have reviewed your appeal letter dated August 28, 2020, and the attachments you included. In reviewing the documents provided, including the video, and the prior letters from Mr. Wentzky, I do not see any reason to change the sanction determined by Mr. Wentzky, which is the minimum penalty as previously determined by the Executive Committee. Furthermore, I would like to address some of the points you raised in your letter.

**SONYA BRYANT**

Batesburg-Leesville

**CARLOS CAVE**

Seabrook

**MARTY CONNER**

Rock Hill

**RAY COOPER**

Prosperity

**TONY FOLK**

St. George

**LAURA HICKSON**

Lake City

**KEITH KISER**

Greenville

First, while I have no reason to believe that Mr. Wentzky's recollection of his initial conversation with Mr. McMahon was incorrect, the fact that Mr. McMahon disputes Mr. Wentzky's recollection is irrelevant to my review. The Phase 1.5 Return to Play Guidelines clearly states that "no active defensive play may take place within the group when working on offense drills and no active offense play may take place within the group when working on defensive drills." While Mr. Wentzky noted the seemingly inconsistent statements from his initial conversations with Mr. McMahon and Coach DuBose, I believe his ultimate conclusion is correct; that is, the drill being depicted in the photograph – and confirmed by the photographer – violates the Phase 1.5 Return to Play Guidelines.

**ANNA MILLER**

Chapin

**DARRYL OWINGS**

Spartanburg

**ANDREA PRIDGEN**

Green Sea

**KAREN RADCLIFFE**

Ashley Ridge

**MICHAEL STONE**

Mullins

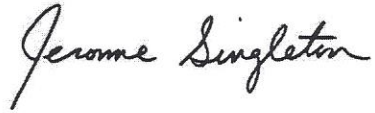
**JOSH TRAHAN**

North Augusta

Additionally, I understand Emerald High School's position to be that it was aware of Phase 1.5. Guidelines and that the drill in question complies with those guidelines. Again, I agree with Mr. Wentzky's findings that the drill in question violated the Phase 1.5 Guidelines. In the video webinar provided to member schools on July 30, 2020, Mr. Wentzky answered three separate questions about football drill work in Phase 1.5. All member high schools' Superintendents, Principals, Athletics Directors, Athletics Secretaries, and School districts' Public Relations personnel were alerted on July 28, 2020, of the Webinar by way of invitation to register for participation and or by the SCHSL Tues News. Additionally, the webinar was broadcasted live and archived on the SCHSL Facebook page. The clarification provided in this webinar included a direct question about drills involving wide receivers and defensive backs, and Mr. Wentzky's response in the webinar is consistent with our determination in this case.

If you wish to appeal my decision, please notify me in writing. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerome Singleton". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jerome Singleton  
Commissioner





Emerald High School  
150 Bypass 225  
Greenwood, S.C. 29646  
864-941-5730



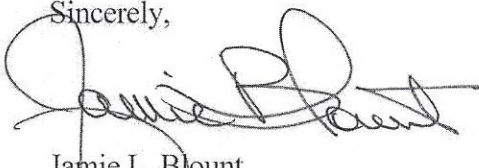
August 28, 2020

Mr. Jerome Singleton  
South Carolina High School League  
P.O. Box 211575  
Columbia, SC 29221

Dear Mr. Singleton:

I am writing you to request an initial appeal of the determination that Emerald High School was in violation of Phase 1.5 of the Return to Play Guidelines enumerated by the SCHSL Executive Committee. The photograph taken by the Index Journal on August 5 shows two players engaged in an agility exercise. Neither player was designated as offensive or defensive. Furthermore, both athletic director, Timothy McMahon, and head football coach, Thomas Dubose have emphatically stated that they understood the Phase 1.5 Return to Play Guidelines. After investigating the incident in question and the conversations used as grounds for the violation, I have determined that it is necessary for me to pursue an appeal. Enclosed with this document are artifacts to support my appeal. The first artifact outlines the grounds for an appeal. The second artifact establishes a timeline of events, beginning with the initial contact. Finally, the third artifact is a video demonstration of the agility exercise our students were photographed completing.

Sincerely,



Jamie L. Blount  
Principal

Enclosure:

Artifact 1. Grounds for Appeal  
Artifact 2. Timeline  
Artifact 3. Drill. Side 1

## Grounds for Appeal

### I. Procedure

- A. Evidentiary Information used by Mr. Wentzky was withheld or admitted in the initial inquiry letter sent to Emerald High School. Furthermore, Mr. Wentzky requested Mrs. Jamie Blount submit a written response to the inquiry letter. Therefore, Emerald High School did not have an opportunity to respond or refute the information Mr. Wentzky used in making his judgement to sanction the school.
- B. Emerald's first appeal which is to Commissioner Singleton will be compromised due to his direct involvement in the investigation prior to Mr. Wentzky's first or second sanction letter sent to Emerald High School.

### II. Evidentiary

- A. Mr. Wentzky in his second sanction letter under bullet number two states that he used information obtained in the initial phone conversation with Mr. McMahon the athletic director to formulate his decision to sanction Emerald High School. Emerald challenges this evidentiary information in two areas.
  - i. Mr. McMahon in the initial phone conversation with Mr. Wentzky never stated or implied that he was not aware of the guidelines in Phase 1.5. Mr. McMahon's only comments during the initial conversation was that he had not seen the photograph and he apologized for any inconvenience. Once Mr. McMahon had seen the photograph he did call Mr. Wentzky for clarification on his judgement that a still photo could demonstrate offensive vs. defensive active. The two questions that Mr. McMahon asked Mr. Wentzky were intended to understand his reasoning and judgement. Mr. McMahon at no time in any conversation with Mr. Wentzky or any other SCHSL leadership state that he was not aware of any of the Phase 1.5 guidelines. In fact such a statement by Mr. McMahon would be in direct conflict with his actions once he had received the Phase 1.5 guidelines. Mr. McMahon prior to any football activity occurring under Phase 1.5 guidelines discussed those guidelines with Coach Tad Dubose and Athletic Trainer Kayla Kieffer.
  - ii. Mr. Wentzky waited thirteen days from his initial contact with Emerald high School to inform Mrs. Blount that he used information from a phone call with Mr. McMahon to formulate his decision to sanction Emerald High School. At no time in the entire process until Mr. Wentzky sent the second sanction letter did anyone from the SCHSL office inform Mrs. Blount or Mr. McMahon that information from a phone call between Mr. Wentzky and Mr. McMahon was used to sanction Emerald High School. If Mr. Wentzky had not decided to issue a second sanction letter, the fact that he used

information withheld from Emerald would never have been revealed.

III. Still photography as evidence of a violation of active defensive vs. offensive play.

- i. In an effort to demonstrate the drill captured in the still photo Emerald High School has submitted a video clip of two assistant coaches doing the exact drill.
- ii. While this drill has elements involving defensive back skills as well as some receiver skills, this drill is best characterized as an agility drill. This drill could involve two athletes from most any sport and the agility skills would transfer.
- iii. The drill was classified as an agility drill or a drill which is defense vs. offense would have been within the Phase 1 guidelines.





## South Carolina High School League

PO Box 211575

Columbia, SC 29221-6575

803-798-0120

[www.schsl.org](http://www.schsl.org)

August 27, 2020

Mrs. Jamie Blount, Principal  
Emerald High School  
150 SC-225  
Greenwood, SC 29646

Dear Mrs. Blount:

This letter is in response to Emerald High Schools request to answer questions pertaining to the decision that Emerald High School violated the following Phase 1.5 Requirement for Football:

*No active defensive play may take place within the group when working on offense drills and no active offensive play may take place within the group when working on defensive drills.*

In an email from you dated August 26, 2020, you asked five questions of me. While the questions you raised are not relevant to our decision, below are the five questions you asked and my response to these questions is answered in bold.

1. How did you come into possession of the photograph that was sent to us in your initial inquiry on August 10? **The photo that was on the Index Journals website was sent to the league office via email.**
2. Was the highlighted circle in the caption present in the photo when you received it? **Yes**
3. Are you aware of who drew the highlighted circle? **No**
4. Have you had any communication with anyone other than Emerald personnel concerning this incident? **When you initially responded via email to the leagues questions regarding the picture, it was stated that the picture was of two players involved in an agility exercise. In a follow up phone call to you by Commissioner Singleton it was shared that based on the photo and phone conversations with your Athletic Director and Head Football Coach we would have to look into the matter further. I then reached out to the journalist who took the photo and wrote the caption under the photo to**

**verify that the caption accurately stated what he witnessed in person while taking the photo. He confirmed that the caption under the photo accurately represented what he witnessed while taking the photo.**

5. Are you aware of anyone else who might have heard your conversation with Tad Dubose on August 7? **Yes, as it has been shared via phone conversation with you by both Commissioner Singleton and myself, Commissioner Singleton walked into my office during my conversation with Tad Dubose on August 7<sup>th</sup>.**

Should you have any questions regarding this issue, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CW', with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Charlie Wentzky  
Associate Commissioner





## South Carolina High School League

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August 20, 2020

Mrs. Jamie Blount, Principal  
Emerald High School  
150 SC-225  
Greenwood, SC 29646

Dear Mrs. Blount:

This letter is in response to Emerald High School holding an illegal practice in football on August 5th, 2020. As you are aware the SCHSL Executive Committee voted to make the return to play guidelines for sports a requirement for all schools choosing to hold practices or workouts. Once the guidelines became required, any school not following these guidelines would be conducting an illegal practice. On August 5th, 2020, Emerald High School held a football workout that allowed active offense vs. defense activity in a drill. This type of drill was not allowed during Phase 1.5 of the return to play guidelines. The decision that Emerald High School had an illegal practice was based on the following information:

- A public photograph on the Index Journals website that showed a player opposite another player in an active drill.
- In the initial phone conversation with your athletic director about the photograph, he stated he was not aware that they could not do offensive vs defensive drills during Phase 1.5 when it was explained what the picture showed and the caption under the picture written by the photographer. During this conversation, it was asked by your athletic director if it was permissible to do this drill even without a ball and it was shared that it was not and was explained during the SCHSL webinar about Phase 1.5.
- In conversation with your head football coach via an incoming phone call he was not aware that this type of drill was not allowed during phase 1.5 if a ball was not being used. It was also shared during this call that the drill was designed for the defensive player to work on his drop, hip turns and leverage based off what the other player was doing. I shared in this conversation that this was not allowed and was explained through the SCHSL webinar about Phase 1.5.

Based on the photo and the conversations held about the photo, Emerald High School will be fined \$500 for holding an illegal practice. In addition to the fine, the Emerald High School football program will have the following sanctions:

- Loss of 1 day of practice. (Emerald High will be allowed to start 1 day after the first day of practice is allowed in football. Currently your first date to practice football will be September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This will delay their pad progression and first date to scrimmage by 1 day as well.)
- Limited to 1 scrimmage ( Jamborees may not be substituted.)

Should you have any questions regarding this issue, feel free to contact me. If you wish to appeal any of these sanctions, please respond in writing to this office within ten days of receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CW', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Charlie Wentzky  
Associate Commissioner



## South Carolina High School League

PO Box 211575

Columbia, SC 29221-6575

803-798-0120

[www.schsl.org](http://www.schsl.org)

August 18, 2020

Mrs. Jamie Blount, Principal  
Emerald High School  
150 SC-225  
Greenwood, SC 29646

Dear Mrs. Blount:

This letter is in response to Emerald High School holding an illegal practice in football on August 5th, 2020. As you are aware the SCHSL Executive Committee voted to make the return to play guidelines for sports a requirement for all schools choosing to hold practices or workouts. Once the guidelines became required, any school not following these guidelines would be conducting an illegal practice. On August 5th, 2020, Emerald High School held a football workout that allowed active offense vs. defense activity in a drill. This type of drill was not allowed during Phase 1.5 of the return to play guidelines.

Emerald High School will be fined \$500 for holding an illegal practice. In addition to the fine, the Emerald High School football program will have the following sanctions:

- Loss of 1 day of practice. (Emerald High will be allowed to start 1 day after the first day of practice is allowed in football. Currently your first date to practice football will be September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This will delay their pad progression and first date to scrimmage by 1 day as well.)
- Limited to 1 scrimmage ( Jamborees may not be substituted.)

Should you have any questions regarding this issue, feel free to contact me. If you wish to appeal any of these sanctions, please respond in writing to this office within ten days of receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

Charlie Wentzky  
Associate Commissioner



Zimbra

cindi@schsl.org

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**Emeralds response to photo**

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**From :** Charlie Wentzky <charlie@schsl.org>  
**Subject :** Emeralds response to photo  
**To :** cindi <cindi@schsl.org>

Wed, Sep 16, 2020 12:16 PM

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**From:** "blountj" <blountj@gwd50.org>  
**To:** "charlie" <charlie@schsl.org>  
**Cc:** "mcmahont" <mcmahont@gwd50.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 10, 2020 10:18:52 AM  
**Subject:** Re: 1.5 Photo

Good morning, Mr. Wentzky,  
I can verify that these two young men are EHS students. However, it is my understanding that this routine they are engaged in is merely an agility exercise. One player is moving forward while the other is moving backward. As this is an agility exercise, neither player is designated as an offensive or defensive player. Furthermore, each player's movement is independent of the other player's movement.

Thank you,

***Mrs. Jamie Blount***  
Principal

**Emerald High School**  
**150 Bypass 225**  
Greenwood, SC 29646  
(864)941-5730  
[blountj@gwd50.org](mailto:blountj@gwd50.org)

On Fri, Aug 7, 2020 at 3:17 PM Charlie Wentzky <[charlie@schsl.org](mailto:charlie@schsl.org)> wrote:  
Mr. Blount

Attached is a picture of what appears to be two Emerald High School students.

Phase 1.5 Guidelines for Football :

No active defensive play may take place within the group when working on offense drills and no active offensive play may take place within the group when working on defensive drills. Handheld dummies and shields may be used when teaching a skill provided those participating wear a face covering or mask

Can you verify that these are Emerald High School Students.

Please respond to this email or in writing to me.

Thanks,

Charlie Wentzky  
Associate Commissioner  
SCHSL

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## SCHSL SANCTION REPORT AND DOCUMENTS

8/25/2020

8/7/2020 1:59 pm Mr. Charlie Wentzky calls Athletic Director Mr. Tim McMahon

Mr. Wentzky stated the following facts.

1. He had received a photo of two Emerald football players involved in an illegal practice on 8/5/2020.
2. Mr. Wentzky read the guidelines of Phase 1.5 which states no active defensive vs. offensive activity is allowed.
3. Mr. Wentzky stated that Emerald High School would be fined 500 dollars. The Emerald High School Football Program would lose the first day of practice 9/8/2020 and be limited to one scrimmage.

Mr. McMahon responded by stating the following fact.

1. He had not seen the photo and apologized for any inconvenience.

Mr. Wentzky responded by informing Mr. McMahon that he would be sending the photo as well as a letter detailing the violation.

End of initial conversation between Mr. Wentzky and Mr. McMahon.

Total length of conversation four minutes.

8/7/2020 2:05 pm Assistant Coach locates picture on his phone and shows it to  
Athletic Director.

8/7/2020 2:07 pm Mr. McMahon calls Mr. Wentzky for clarification on his judgement that the still  
photo demonstrated active defensive vs. offensive activity. Mr. McMahon ask Mr.  
Wentzky two questions.

1. How can a still photo of two athletes who are over six feet apart without the presence of a ball be judged as an offensive vs. defensive activity?

Mr. Wentzky responded by saying "The photographer's caption says Emerald player **name redacted** covers teammate **name redacted** during Wednesday's Phase 1.5 workout.

2. Would any agility drill involving two athletes facing each other while wearing face coverings and who also never became closer than six feet apart be a violation of Phase 1.5?

Mr Wentzky responded by saying "The picture shows active defense vs. offensive play."

Total Length of conversation three minutes.

8/7/2020 2:45 pm Mr. Wentzky calls Mr. McMahon and ask for the name of the Principal of Emerald  
High School stating that he had it listed as a Mr. Gamble? Mr .McMahon informed  
Mr. Wentzky that Mrs. Jamie Blount was the current principal.



Mr. McMahon ask four additional questions during this conversation.

1. Is it permissible for an athlete to hold a hand shield while another athlete contacts that shield if both athletes are wearing face coverings?  
Mr Wentzky's response was yes that is permissible in Phase 1.5 as long as the bag is cleaned after each group and not shared with other groups.
2. When using hand shields must the athlete who is holding the hand shield be stationary?  
Mr. Wentzky's response was no.
3. If one of the Emerald athletes were holding a hand shield in the photo in question would that demonstrate offensive vs. defensive activity?  
Mr. Wentzky's response was no.
4. Can you explain how a still photo of two athletes over six feet apart wearing face covering demonstrates a violation of the guidelines.  
Mr. Wentzky's response "None of this matters because your football coach just called and confessed to it."

Mr. McMahon immediately ended the conversation telling Mr. Wentzky that Emerald's response to the violation claim would be in writing after receiving his letter.

Total length of conversation seven minutes.

8/10/2020 7:30 am Mr. McMahon and Football Coach Tad Dubose meet to discuss the situation.

Mr. McMahon ask Coach Dubose the following four questions.

1. Did the two athletes in the still photo engage in any activity that was outside what he and I had agreed on as permissible drills based on Phase 1.5 guidelines?  
Coach Dubose response was no they did not.
2. Did the two athletes in this drill come within six feet of each other?  
Coach Dubose response was no they did not.
3. Did you during a phone conversation with Charlie Wentzky on 8/7/2020 confess or admit that the drill in question involved offensive vs. defensive activity?  
Coach Dubose response was "absolutely I did not."
4. Is it your belief today that the drill in question is within the guidelines for Phase 1.5  
Coach Dubose response was yes.

8/10/2020 10:00 am Mrs. Jamie Blount, Mr. Tim McMahon and Tad Dubose met to discuss situation.

Mrs. Blount reviews the initial inquirer letter from Mr. Wentzky and writes official response.

8/10/2020 2:45 pm Mrs. Jamie Blount, Mr. Tim McMahon and SCHSL Commissioner Jerome Singleton participated in a conference call to discuss Emerald High School's written response.

The commissioner ask Mr. McMahon if he had discussed with Coach Dubose the conversation that occurred between Mr. Wentzky and Coach Dubose? Mr.

McMahon informed the Commissioner that he had interviewed Coach Dubose about

the entire incident including the coach's phone conversation with Mr. Wentzky. Mr. Singleton then stated that he had also heard the conversation between Coach Dubose and Mr. Wentzky. Mr. McMahon then informed the Commissioner that he could not comment or discuss the details of a phone conversation that he was not apart of. The Commissioner agreed with Mr. McMahon that he would not be expected to comment on that phone conversation. Mr. Singleton ask Mr. McMahon to speak with Coach Dubose about the conversation between Mr. Dubose And Mr. Wentzky . Mr. McMahon informed Mr Singleton again that he had already Interviewed Coach Dubose and he absolutely denies confessing or admitting what Mr. Wentsky claims he said. Mr. Singleton then stated he needed to investigate the violation further. Mr. McMahon ask the Commissioner if he needed any additional information from Emerald High School. Mr. Singleton responded by stating no we have your written response.

8/18/2020 Emerald receives sanction letter for holding an illegal practice from Mr. Charlie Wentzky.

Mr. McMahon calls Mr Wentzky for information on the appeals process and clarification on the findings from his investigation. Mr. McMahon ask Mr Wentzky if the still photo was the only information he used to make his judgement that Emerald had held an illegal practice? Mr. Wentzky stated that he used the still photo and the phone conversation he had with Coach Dubose as evidence. Mr. McMahon then requested that the phone conversation be included as findings in the sanction letter. Furthermore, since he had used the phone conversation as evidence it should have been included in his initial letter of inquiry sent 8/10/2020. Mr. Wentsky stated he would ask the Commissioner about the matter.

8/20/2020 9:30 am Mr. McMahon leaves voice mail for Mr. Wentzsk asking for the status on his request to include the phone conversation as part of the official written record.

8/20/2020 10:19 am Charlie Wentzky calls Mr. McMahon and informs him that he would need to speak directly with Commissioner Singleton on this matter. Mr. Wentzky

explained that his part in this matter was concluded and he no longer would be communicating with Mr. McMahon on this matter.

Total length of conversation forty-six seconds.

8/20/2020 10:25 am Mr. McMahon calls Mr. Singleton and discusses why it is important that any phone conversation used as evidence in a league sanction should be included in the sanction letter. Secondly, the same phone conversation should have been included in the initial inquiry letter sent by Mr. Wentzky which would have afforded Emerald High School an opportunity to include it in our response. The conversation ended with the commissioner stating that he would look into it.

8/20/2020 11:32 am Emerald receives second sanction letter from Mr. Charlie Wentzky which contains the new information not included in either the 8/10 letter of inquiry or the original sanction letter sent on 8/18. Additionally, Mr. Wentzky included as part of the evidence he used to make his judgement a phone conversation between Mr. McMahon and himself on 8/7/2020. This conversation occurred thirteen days prior to ever being introduced as evidence in formulating Mr. Wentzky's judgement. Mr. Wentzky in his second sanction letter writes that Mr. McMahon stated that he was not aware that offensive and defensive drills were not allowed in Phase 1.5. Mr. McMahon's and Mr Wentzky's initial phone conversation on 8/7/2020 as already been described in detail earlier in this document. The only information that can be stipulated as fact in Mr. Wentzky's second sanction letter is under bullet one.