

Angelique McDonald

From: Derek Plante <dplante@d.umn.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 9:51 AM
To: Angelique McDonald
Subject: Hermantown HS Hockey State Experience

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today to share my experience in regards to my concern as to what happened to the #1 seeded Hermantown Boys Hockey team and their pursuit to win a state championship after they earned their right to represent our community at "The Tourney '21", the Minnesota State HS Hockey Tournament.

I am the father of one of the players that did get to play in The Tourney, because he didn't play against Virginia due to a separated shoulder injury. I am also a Division 1 college hockey coach that watches these players closely in hopes of bringing them into our hockey program on scholarship which can equate to over \$100,000. These are important games in our decision making process. But not nearly as important as their individual student athlete experience.

Ultimately what I am most disturbed about is that there are Seniors that tried to do the "right thing" by way of our community and rich Minnesota history of staying in HS to play for and with their HS buddies that we all try to promote as the "right thing to do" in our conservative Minnesota culture. In this case there are kids who had real opportunities to go elsewhere (play Jr. Hockey) therefore had to make a hard life decision between what's better for their career or stick with their civic pride. In this case staying in their community to try and bring home their dream which they had been working towards since they were 8 years old, realistic chance at a State Championship. This was snatched away from them in a heartbeat because someone whether maliciously or not claimed they felt symptoms during a game and without penalty or repercussion, while the whole Hermantown team had to sit home and watch as their JV teammates tried valiantly to win a hockey game, which would have allowed the varsity to be back IN The Tourney on that Friday, they lost!!

Much of what I know could be construed at hear-say but this is how I understand what happened. Through talking with the Hermantown coach and knowing when the game vs. Virginia happened (Tues. March 23rd) the timeline of when the teams played and when the administrations communicated there was an issue. This makes the whole incident look like there may have been an intent to make it very difficult for Hermantown to participate at State. Probably the most disheartening part of this scenario is that a few people could make the use of Covid-19 and its rules, guidelines, suggestions and all that goes with the virus a weapon! Used against a team, community and most importantly student athletes. It is my understanding that if a player is symptomatic he's not supposed to play whether by personal decision or by coaches decision. It just seems so easy or with little disregard for everyone involved to just be able to make a claim (to be symptomatic) that takes away a dream of 30 student athlete's plus coaches and parents along with a community. It just feels really wrong to have no recourse or even a solid explanation as to how and why it happened. There has to be a clearer definition of what the rules are and which set of rules we are living by depending on whether they were forced to use MDH rules/guidelines or CDC rules/guidelines might have changed the outcome. This is all very unclear as they seem to be changing all the time and the problem is that real people are being affected and real life opportunities are being missed because of this.

Timeline: The reason the timeline in this situation doesn't make sense is that if a player feels symptoms they should be tested within 48 hours, which would mean the player would have been tested by Thursday 3/25, which is also the day Hermantown played Duluth Denfeld in the Section 7 final to go to State, maybe we shouldn't have played Denfeld??? (This also seems off as the MSHSL gave Hermantown the option of letting Denfeld take our place at The Tourney but wouldn't they also not be able to play because they played Hermantown which played Virginia two days prior?????) anyway most of the Covid tests during this period

are returned within 24-48 hrs. Therefore Hermantown should have been informed likely Friday 3/26 but latest Saturday 3/27th, which would have given Hermantown time to react and get organized and find a solution. It has been said that the Virginia coach knew about this on Friday 3/26!?!? Hermantown was not informed of this situation until Monday afternoon around 1:30pm which didn't leave them time to practice and prepare properly at the very least for their Tourney game on Tuesday. At the end what I was told was the reason Hermantown couldn't play was "the kid" (I don't know the students name) claimed he felt symptoms during the game. Therefore anyone that played for more than a minute in the game wasn't allowed to play in the State Tournament!!! From my understanding there was a chance to push the Hermantown vs Dodge County Tourney game back a day because Hill-Murray HS vs Wayzata could have been moved back a day to allow Hill-Murray to participate (similar experience as Hermantown). This seems like a plausible way to allow "The Tourney" to go on with the teams that earned their place. The MSHSL said NO, and although they have asked kids, families, teachers, everyone in education to be fluid and flexible with the pandemic, when they had an opportunity to be fluid & flexible and when others found a solution for them they just said NO.

Here is what I have learned in the last 13 months, because I've heard it probably a thousand times, it is considered close contact if you are within 6ft for a period of 15 minutes without a mask. This never happens in a HS hockey game as there are only a few players that play a total of 15 minutes and in hockey they don't spend it within 6ft of each other for any extended period of time and on top of that the players are required to wear a mask in order to play. I have also learned although not sure what is most current I guess it depends on who you talk to. If you've already had Covid you have 90 days or 120 days of not having to be tested and are very unlikely to get it again. A few of our kids have had covid and therefore maybe they could have played, not sure that was ever an option!?!?!

I'm not looking for retribution for the young man and don't need him to pay a price, don't even care what his name is in that regard, but I don't think it is right that someone can use this maliciously as a way to take something away from another person. This was something that quite a few people joked might happen and I just laughed at the time but what do you know, it's not a joke!! Would hate to have this happen to anyone else.

I have respect for Covid 19 and all that has been lost because of it, but it seems as though sometimes we lose sight of how important some of these moments are in a young person's life that they will NEVER get back. It turns out that no one on Hermantown's team got symptoms from their game vs Virginia. Surprising?? Not really!

Have a Great Day,

Derek Plante

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