

To whom it may concern, I am writing this letter to provide insights into my experience with my son's hockey team (Hill-Murray) not being allowed to play in the state high school hockey tournament.

My son's team qualified for the state tournament by defeating White Bear Lake on Wednesday, March 24th. On Sunday, March 28th my son received a text that there supposedly was a player on the White Bear Lake team that had a COVID test on Friday, March 26th and received the results on Sunday and the result was positive. On Monday, March 29th, the majority of parents from the team met with Hill-Murray administration. We learned that the athletic director from White Bear Lake High School contacted the athletic director at Hill-Murray, the Minnesota State High School league and the MN Department of Health about this supposed positive test. The MSHSL informed our athletic director that our team would not be able to play in their game scheduled for Wednesday morning, March 31 at 11am vs Wayzata as it was only day 7 of the required "quarantine" and the team would not be able to be out of quarantine until day 8. Hill-Murray administration pushed hard to challenge the decision. Their view was this was not considered a "high risk" exposure and the kids would be able to go to school and should be able to participate in their extracurricular activities. Despite their disagreement, Hill-Murray administration contacted the team they were scheduled to play (Wayzata) and requested that the game be moved to Thursday (the day the MN department of health said the Hill-Murray team would be eligible to play). Wayzata was supportive and willing to move the game to Thursday. However, the MSHSL still said "no" as they were not willing to make changes to the schedule. As a result of all of this, the seniors on the team that were 18 years old (9 of them) filed a lawsuit in Washington County in an attempt to stop the MSHSL from forcing them not to play. The lawsuit was not even considered as the judge assigned the case on Tuesday, March 30th opined that the case should have been filed in Ramsey County or Hennepin County which is fundamentally wrong as the plaintiffs resided in Washington County so there is jurisdiction there.

Note: Hill-Murray was given the option by the MSHSL to have the JV team play in the Wednesday game. This is what Hermantown did with a similar situation. This was not a possibility for our team as our JV team had not played or practiced for multiple weeks due to some COVID exposures. Further, it was spring break for Hill-Murray and many of the players were out of the state on vacations with their families. It would not have been possible to field a team as the players supposedly would have to quarantine when they got back to Minnesota and not be eligible to play in the game. We heard rumors that Hermantown had a player fly back from Florida to play in their game – not sure how that was deemed OK by the MSHSL.

This entire situation makes my stomach hurt to this day for all of the following reasons (in no particular order).

- The MSHSL did not have a history of informing schools when they can participate in activities and when they could not. Those decisions had always been left up to the discretion of each school for the past many months.
- We know that in similar circumstances with other teams (hockey and other sports) the Minnesota Department of Health had determined that a "contact" was not deemed as "high risk contact". The entire determination is based solely on the individual at the MN Department of Health that is handed the case.
- We were told that commission of the MN Department of Health communicated "we do our best to be as consistent as possible". Put another way, they are not consistent in their decisions.

- Changing the game to Thursday would have had zero impact on the tournament as boys teams were not scheduled to play that day. No other changes to the tournament would have been needed.
- The attorney for the MSHSL stated to the attorney hired by the senior players, "Oh, so you mean to tell me the worst issue here is that kids are not going to be able to play a hockey game". This attitude is so wrong as its not just a hockey game. As the NHL scout quoted in the affidavit included with the boys lawsuit, he said, "how a player performs in this tournament has a direct impact on where they are drafted in the NHL draft which then has a direct impact on their future earnings potential."
- Social media posts among the kids included statements like, "even if you win you won't be able to play due to contact tracing". It appears this was part of the "plan" given the hatred between these two teams. It has been a powerful rivalry for many decades. Maybe the biggest rivalry in the entire state for any sport.
- There is reason to believe that a positive test was ever received. It has been requested dozens of times and nobody is able to provide an actual positive test result. The department of health won't provide it nor the parent of the child who supposedly tested positive.
- The MSHSL claimed that the decision was in the hands of the MN Department of Health including stating as such in a letter to Hill-Murray. At the same time, the MN Department of Health says they only make "recommendations" and the decision is with the MSHSL. Finger pointing at each other with nobody taking responsibility. As stated earlier, the decision had always been left up to the schools until this point, but for some reason it was not in this case.
- The team was willing to have everyone tested the day before or day of the game to prove no positive cases. This was not acceptable to the MSHSL or the MN department of Health either.
- No players on the team ever obtained COVID from this supposed "contact tracing".
- The video from the game on Wednesday, March 24th where the supposed "contact" occurred was analyzed second by second. The longest time that any player was on the ice as the same time as the supposed positive test player was 1 minute, 18 seconds. More importantly, close contact did not occur for more than 4 seconds between the supposed positive test player and any player on the Hill-Murray team.
- The players are also required to wear masks during the game. Aren't the masks supposed to prevent the spread? These kids were wearing masks and not within close contact of the supposed positive test player for more than 4 seconds.
- Guidelines from the CDC have always been 6 feet for 15 minutes to be considered "high risk" contact. Yet, for some reason the MN Department of Health and/or the MSHSL (not sure who the decision maker is here) deemed 4 seconds to be enough – totally inconsistent with what we are using as guidelines in other situations.
- I went to the Mall of America during "March Madness" and people where shoulder to shoulder. Much higher risk than what happened in this hockey game even if there was a positive case.

Its criminal what the MN Department of Health and the MSHSL did to these kids. The seniors will never get another opportunity for something they literally dreamed of their entire life. The younger players may never get another opportunity. Somebody needs to be held accountable and this needs to be fixed so it doesn't happen to any other player in any other sport again.

Bob Kaufman

