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STATEMENT

Tupelo (April 6, 2024) - On Thursday, April 4, Andrew Brown; his parents, Candise and Jim Brown; Tupelo Public School District superintendent, Dr. Rob Picou; and I appeared before the Mississippi High School Activities Association's Executive Committee to petition for Andrew's reinstatement of eligibility to run track and field for Tupelo High School. Andrew's eligibility was suspended due to his participation in the New Balance Nationals Indoor Championship March 7-10 in Boston. Andrew is the fastest high school freshman "miler" in the United States and earlier this year qualified to run at the prestigious New Balance event. On Friday afternoon the MHSAA denied Andrew's petition and therefore he will not be eligible to participate in track and field for the Golden Wave this season. His eligibility will be restored next year.

Andrew was advised by a letter dated March 20th that he had violated Rule 6.2.3 of the MHSAA Handbook which states "A student who is a member of a MHSAA school team shall not participate in any manner in any event in a meet or a contest as an unattached contestant against a high school team, a junior high school team, a collegiate team, a club team or other unattached individuals in that same sport. One individual shall constitute a team in indoor and outdoor track and field." At Thursday's hearing his father, Jim, argued that Andrew had not violated Rule 6.2.3 because MHSAA does not have Indoor Track & Field and there is no season for it in Mississippi, therefore his participation in the Boston meet was not in the same sport in which he participates for Tupelo High School. Andrew only participates in Outdoor Track & Field, because that is currently the only track and field season offered in Mississippi public high schools.

Further, other states such as Alabama, recognize the two as separate sports.

The Browns also argued that the procedure by which a student-athlete's eligibility is questioned was not followed, pursuant to Rule 2.3, which required such inquiry to be made in writing, which Jim Brown explained was not done.

Andrew and his parents are going to take a few days to decide whether to continue their pursuit of having his eligibility restored. Mississippi's track & field regular season ends this

weekend and time constraints will be considered.

While the Browns are very disappointed in the MHSAA's decision, they appreciate the outpouring of support from the track and field community nationally, statewide and locally. They have received countless emails and social media posts from track coaches and players from throughout Mississippi and surrounding states supporting Andrew's position. The Browns also thank Dr. Rob Picou for his unwavering and outspoken support of Andrew's reinstatement.

Regardless of the final outcome of this matter, Andrew and his parents urge the MHSAA to closely examine its rules to insure that they do not hinder Mississippi's student-athletes from competing in top level events that showcase the athletes' skills and abilities. The Browns strongly believe that Mississippi has some of the very best athletes in the country and they need and deserve to have every opportunity to pursue excellence in his or her respective sport.

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