

Are YOU Eligible to Play Next Season?

By DANIELLE SARUBBI

Student athletes have always had to pass their classes and have a good attendance record, but now, according to the new Public School Athletic League (PSAL) student eligibility rules instituted last year, student athletes must follow new, even more stringent rules or risk getting kicked off their team.

According to athletic director, Mr. Dumont, small but meaningful changes happened to Madison's student eligibility rules. Student athletes must be "good citizens" meaning no suspensions but their attendance requirement increased from 80% to 90%. Under previous rules, athletes only had to pass four classes per semester and their gym. Now, athletes have to pass five classes per semester and their gym. Finally, in order to remain eligible, student athletes must accumulate ten credits and a gym every year.

Coaches and students expected the tougher rules to decimate teams and make Madison less competitive, but according to athletic director Mr. Dumont, they were pleasantly surprised by the results.

"Now here's the crazy thing," Mr. Dumont exclaimed, "we all expected a lot of kids to be ineligible, but fewer kids are ineligible than ever before!" He thinks that Madison's athletes always had it in them, but holding them to a higher standard brought out the best in them.

The rule change was set to take effect in February of 2014 but Ms. Cohen started them a term early so that student athletes who play sports in the spring would be held to the same eligibility requirements as those who play sports in the fall.

The PSAL sets eligibility rules to establish academics as a student athlete's first priority and most important of all the rules is the requirement to pass five classes in order to play a sport. Michael Totillo, a junior lacrosse player, was kicked off his team last year because he failed algebra. According to Michael, his love for playing lacrosse and his desire to be on the team next year forced him to do better in school. Michael has worked hard to raise his grades and intends on being eligible for the upcoming 2015 season.

Because of the priority placed on grades under the new rules, some student athletes drop advanced electives that would look good on their high school transcripts but might jeopardize their eligibility to play on a

team.

Senior Stephen LaSpina is going into his third year of playing lacrosse for Madison and he admits to dropping his trigonometry elective when he got a "U" in the first marking period because he didn't want the class to keep him from playing lacrosse. Apparently, the exchange of a difficult class for an easier one in an athlete's senior year isn't rare. In fact, there is a rule for senior athletes in Stephen's case called the "Trig Exception."

The "Trig Exception" only applies to senior athletes who are taking four classes with their team practice as their gym class. Students in this position were going to Mr. Dumont worried that they wouldn't be able to play because of a failing grade in an advanced-level class. Ms. Cohen and Mr. Dumont agreed to the "Trig Exception." If a kid takes an advanced elective like an AP class or trigonometry but maintains eligibility in all of his or her other classes, Mr. Dumont would examine that student's transcript on a case-by-case basis.

The boys' lacrosse coach, Mr. Punzone, is anticipating losing half of his team members because of the new eligibility rules, but acknowledges that in the long run the changed rules will help the team be smarter and the students will become better athletes. To help his players maintain eli-

gibility, Coach Punzone constantly pushes his boys to go to class. He sends out emails and letters to his players' teachers to make sure his players are going to class, peeks into his players' classes whenever he can to see if they're in class, and he also speaks to the students about their classes.

On the other hand, the flag football coach, Mr. Monteserrato, boasts that the new PSAL eligibility rules are not affecting anyone on his team. All fifteen girls who played last year can play again this year. As a coach and a history teacher, Monte tutors some of the girls on his team in history and also calls parents, teachers, and guidance counselors to keep his girls eligible.

"As a teacher I see sports as a privilege that has to be earned and you have to earn it in the classroom. If you don't want to do your schoolwork then you shouldn't play on a team," stated Monte.

Students concerned with their eligibility should see Mr. Dumont in room 508.

| Old Student-Athlete Eligibility Rules | New Student-Athlete Eligibility Rules |
|---|---|
| • Need to pass 4 classes per semester | • Need to pass 5 classes per semester |
| • Need to pass gym class for the entire year | • Need to pass gym class for entire year |
| • 80% attendance | • 90% attendance |
| • No suspensions | • No suspensions |
| • 65 average | • 65 average |
| • Need to accumulate eight credits and 1 gym class per year | • Need to accumulate ten credits and 1 gym class per year |

Football Star Tears Lung

By VLADIMIR TOGONIDZE

The Madison football Knights' senior defensive end and wide receiver Elijah Sobanke tore his lung during Madison's 30-22 overtime victory over Staten Island Tech on September 27th, 2014 when he returned a kick-off 90 yards for a touchdown.

For the first three quarters of the game, Elijah had trouble breathing but played through the discomfort and didn't mention it to his coaches. But in the fourth quarter, with Madison leading 20-8, Elijah fielded a kickoff and ran nearly the entire field for a touchdown. The play was brought back due to an illegal block but Elijah didn't even notice the flag. He immediately went to the bench and took off his heavy shoulder pads to try and breathe easier.

"The chest pains weren't that bad until I returned the kickoff. Then I started to really feel it," recalled Elijah. When his teammates saw him in pain, they informed their coaches who called over the team doctor. After examining Elijah, the doctor removed him from the game and called an ambulance. He was taken directly to the hospital.



After being out for three weeks as a result of a torn lung, Elijah Sobanke (#5), a senior, returned to run his cross slant routes against Tilden High School.

There, the doctor diagnosed Elijah with a torn lung and kept him in the hospital overnight for observation. After three weeks of doctor visits and sitting out of practices and games, his doctors allowed him to play ball again.

"I'm feeling much better - little to no pain at all," he reported. Elijah's not sure how it happened but he believes a hit in the first quarter started the tear since that's when he started feeling discomfort. Even with these pains, Elijah caught a 15-yard receiving touchdown and had three tackles in the game.

"I felt tight chest pains in the first quarter, but I really didn't think of it as something so severe so I just played through the pain," said Elijah.

A month later, Elijah came back fit and ready against Bayside High School on October 25th. Madison ended the season with a 7-4 record, and lost in the first round of the playoffs against Bayside.

Girls' Soccer Out of Their Rut

By DANIELLE SARUBBI

After finishing last year's season with a winless record of 0-12, Madison's girls' varsity soccer team turned their 2014 season around with 9-2 record, placing them second in their division and earning them a trip to the second round of the playoffs.

At the start of this season, senior captain Jade Banham's goal was to get her team focused, in shape, and determined to restore its pride. According to Jade, winning nine more games than last year and going deep into the playoffs did exactly that.

A defining game in this turn-around season was against Fort Hamilton's team, a team that the Knights had tied earlier in the season. Determined to win against a school that was once better than them, the Lady Knights went to Fort Hamilton after a tough practice the day before, ready to score. After a close and hard-fought game, Madison overcame one of their toughest opponents by a score of 2-1.



Following a 9-2 season and making it to the second round of the playoffs, determined freshman Nicolette Sarubbi spends her evenings practicing soccer in preparation for next year's season.

"They were a very difficult team but our defense was indestructible and we really came together and won!" exclaimed Jade about the victory.

But the game that, according to Jade, showcased the team's talent and resolve on the field was a home

game against the undefeated Grand Street Campus team. Grand Street came to Madison with 12-0 record winning 5 of their game by more than 10 goals. This was the first and only time Madison would face Grand Street and the team saw this game as their chance to make a statement. Madison had already secured a spot in the playoffs, and beating Grand Street 3-2 and ruining their undefeated season gave them the confidence they needed to finish the season strong and go into the playoffs as winners.

"It felt good...like really good. [We] were really excited because if we were able to beat them then we felt we could beat any playoff team," said freshman Nicolette Sarubbi. The girls shut out the Long Island City Bulldogs 2-0 in the first round of the playoffs but lost to the Frances Lewis Patriots in round two.

Coach Tighe attributes the team's turnaround season to the addition of skilled players and a "tremendous amount of hard work."

"These girls worked hard at team practices and I know for a fact that a lot of them went home and practiced there too," said Coach Tighe. Tryouts for next year's team will be in May.