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October 28, 2013

Onondaga Community College Club Football Investigation

Situation: On Saturday 10/12/13, Onondaga Community College Club Football (OCC) was placed on probation by NCFA Commissioner Sandy Sanderson for conducting the football operations of their team in a manner not considered acceptable by NCFA standards as per Rule 16.01.0.

- 16.01.0 A team can be placed on probation if they forfeit 2 or more NCFA scheduled conference games in a single season or if they conduct the football operations of their team in a manner not considered acceptable by NCFA standards.

The reason for the change of status to probationary stemmed from an email that was sent to NCFA Commissioner Sandy Sanderson, NCFA Director of Football Development Keith Mora, as well as team officials for both George Mason Club Football and Coppin State Club Football on Thursday 10/10/13 from OCC Director of Football Operations (NAME WITHHELD). The email was in response to an email sent to all NCFA teams by Keith Mora, reminding them of the upcoming November 1st Roster Freeze Deadline. In the email, he stated; “While we respect the 2.0 GPA mandate we allow guys to compete below that number provided they are on track for graduation, attend our weekly study-hall sessions, and have permission from their professors to continue with the program in the form of completed progress reports.”

This raised a red flag amongst all recipients of the email as allowing players to compete with a less than 2.0 GPA is in direct violation of Rule 7.01.0.

- 7.01.0 At the time of any roster submission, a letter from the academic institution must be submitted to the NCFA listing that each player is enrolled in a minimum of 6 undergraduate credits OR is enrolled as a graduate student at the school AND holds a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA.

Due to this admitted failure to comply with NCFA rules, OCC was immediately placed on probation with a further investigation into the incident scheduled to begin on Monday 10/14/13.

On Saturday 10/12/13, OCC defeated George Mason in an NCFA Non – Conference Game which was played under protest by George Mason because OCC did not have an eligible roster on the NCFA website and OCC was suspected of using academically ineligible players based upon the email sent on 10/10/13 by the OCC Director of Football Operations. On 10/20/13, George Mason’s protest was granted and they were awarded a forfeit victory over OCC.

Investigation: On Monday 10/14/13, a conference call was scheduled and conducted between Sandy Sanderson, Keith Mora, and the OCC Director of Football Operations. During this call, the OCC Director of Football Operations was specifically asked if OCC used players with less than a 2.0 GPA during their NCFA Sanctioned Football Game against Eastern Connecticut. The OCC Director of Football Operations refused to answer. He was informed that refusing to answer the questions would result in the NCFA assuming that players with less



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than a 2.0 GPA were in fact used. He was asked again and continued to refuse to answer. He was then asked if OCC used players with less than a 2.0 GPA during their NCFA Sanctioned Football Game against Buffalo State (JV). Again he refused to answer. He was then asked if OCC used players with less than a 2.0 GPA during their NCFA Sanctioned Football Game against Morrisville State (JV). Again he refused to answer. He was then asked if OCC used players with less than a 2.0 GPA during their NCFA Sanctioned Football Game against New Jersey CFC. He noted that this game was never played due to New Jersey CFC having forfeited the game to them. Finally, he was then asked if OCC used players with less than a 2.0 GPA during their NCFA Sanctioned Football Game against George Mason. Again he refused to answer.

On Wednesday 10/16/13, a conference call was scheduled and conducted between Sandy Sanderson, Keith Mora, and Monty Flynn (Onondaga Community College – Director of Student Activities) who oversees the club football program on campus. Mr. Flynn was brought up to speed on the issue and agreed to get in touch with the Registrars Offices in order to determine which if any of the players playing on the OCC Club Football team are in fact academically ineligible to compete in the NCFA.

On Friday 10/18/13, an email discussion was begun between Sandy Sanderson, Monty Flynn, and Rahim Booth (Coppin State Club Sports Director) regarding if OCC would honor their commitment to travel to Coppin State and play their scheduled game on 10/19/13. In this discussion, Monty Flynn stated “If players that do not meet the 2.0 GPA requirements were held out we would not have enough players to field a team.” OCC requested that the game not count towards the NCFA (ie. Exhibition) and Coppin State refused this request as an exhibition game did them no good in trying to further their season other than open their players up to possible injury. Sandy Sanderson encouraged OCC to play the game with the understanding that Coppin State would most likely play the game under protest.

On Saturday 10/19/13, OCC defeated Coppin State in an NCFA Non – Conference Game which was played under protest by Coppin State because OCC was suspected of using academically ineligible players from based upon the email sent on 10/10/13 by the OCC Director of Football Operations and 10/18/13 by Monty Flynn. As an additional note, OCC still did not have an eligible roster posted on the NCFA website at the time of this game either.

On Wednesday 10/23/13, Monty Flynn informed Sandy Sanderson via email that Bill Bryan (Onondaga Associate Vice President for Student Development) and Dr. Julie White (Onondaga Vice President for Student Engagement & Learning Support) would be taking over the communication with me moving forward regarding this investigation. Sandy Sanderson brought Bill Bryan up to speed on the situation via telephone and followed up with a summary email to both Mr. Bryan and Dr. White following the phone call.

On Thursday 10/24/13, Dr. White informed Sandy Sanderson via email that “As soon as OCC became aware of the eligibility issues with the football club, the College took appropriate actions to remedy the situation. It has become clear that we need to forfeit any games we’ve already played. It is also clear that we are unable to field a team of players that conform with the NCFA eligibility requirements.”



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Ruling:

Onondaga's Week 3 North Atlantic Conference win over ECSU has been reversed and a forfeit victory has been granted to ECSU.

Onondaga's Week 4 non-conference loss to Buffalo State JV will remain.

Onondaga's Week 5 non-conference win over Morrisville State JV has been reversed and a forfeit victory has been granted to Morrisville State JV.

Onondaga's Week 6 non-conference win over New Jersey CFC via forfeit will remain since Onondaga did not violate any NCFA rules in achieving this forfeit win.

Onondaga's Week 7 non-conference win over George Mason has already been overturned via protest by George Mason and a forfeit victory has been granted to George Mason.

Onondaga's Week 8 non-conference win over Coppin State has been reversed and a forfeit victory has been granted to Coppin State.

Onondaga's Week 9 non-conference game scheduled against Erie CC has been declared as an exhibition game by the NCFA and has been removed from the schedule.

Onondaga's Week 10 North Atlantic Conference game scheduled against Vermont remains on the schedule and will be monitored closely to determine if Onondaga uses only eligible players in this game.

Onondaga's Week 11 non-conference game scheduled against Wachusett has been declared as an exhibition game by the NCFA and has been removed from the schedule.

Another issue is that the Onondaga Director of Football Operations was fully aware of the NCFA Rules requiring all eligible players to maintain at minimum a 2.0 Cumulative GPA. He decided to ignore the NCFA Rules and use players who did not meet this requirement. With this blatant disregard for the NCFA Rules and the NCFA Officers, the NCFA will administer the following sanctions against the Onondaga Club Football Team and the Director of Football Operations:

- 1) The Onondaga Club Football Team will remain on probation for the remainder of the 2013 NCFA Season and the entire 2014 NCFA Season (Or their next season as a member of the NCFA, whichever comes first).
 - a. Since Onondaga did not forfeit their Week 3 Conference Game against ECSU, but rather a forfeit loss was handed down to them by the NCFA after the game was played, NCFA Rule 14.01.0 does not apply to Onondaga. Thus they remain eligible to win the North Atlantic Conference Title and compete for the NCFA National Championship provided they do so using an eligible roster of players as per NCFA Rules.



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- 2) Following the precedent set in 2006 by CollClubSports against the UCLA Club Baseball Team for a similar infraction, the Onondaga Director of Football Operations will be banned from holding any Administrative Officer position with ANY NCFA member club football team. He will be ELIGIBLE to participate in the NCFA as a player provided that he meets the specified eligibility requirements listed in the NCFA rules or as a coach.

The NCFA would like to thank Onondaga Community College's Monty Flynn, Bill Bryan, and Dr. Julie White from for their assistance and professionalism during this investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Sanderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandy Sanderson
President
National Club Football Association