

The Hanahan High School **wrestling** team's state championships hopes aren't over yet.

School officials got an injunction to halt Thursday night's Class AA state championship **wrestling** match between **Loris** and **Woodruff** in Columbia about a half hour before it was scheduled start.

The injunction came hours after the league's executive committee voted 13-0 to uphold commissioner Jerome Singleton's ruling that Hanahan used an ineligible wrestler in last week's Lower State championship match against **Loris**.

Hanahan was forced to forfeit one bout that cost the team the match. That forfeit turned a 34-33 Hanahan victory into a 39-31 **Loris** victory.

Judge Kristi Lea Harrington issued a restraining order to prevent the state championship match until she hears the case Tuesday.

Wrestlers from both teams were getting ready for the Class AA championship match when they received the news.

"The kids are devastated. They are heartbroken," **Loris** coach Thomas Britt said. "We weighed in. The kids started warming up and Jerome Singleton came in and asked me and the coach from **Woodruff** to come into one of the rooms and he just told us it is not looking good. In all likelihood, this is going to be a long, drawn-out process. I don't see this being over any time soon."

Hanahan seemed to have landed a spot in its first state championship when the Hawks defeated three-time defending state champion **Loris** in the Lower State championship on Feb. 10.

But after the match, Britt said Hanahan violated a High School League eligibility rule and filed a protest. The next day, Singleton determined that Hanahan's Koffi Dwira competed in a higher weight class than is permitted by the league when he wrestled in a holiday tournament.

High School League rules state that a wrestler cannot compete more than one class above his actual weight in any match.

Singleton ruled Dwira became ineligible in the 125-pound division when he competed at 140 pounds earlier in the season. Dwira, who won his bout on the mat, had to forfeit the victory.

"We just feel like fighting for our kids," Hanahan athletic director Charlie Patterson said Thursday night. "We want to put it in front of someone with no ties (to the High School League), a completely impartial body. I don't think that was an impartial body (the executive committee) that we went in front of today."

Patterson would not name the judge who granted the injunction, but Singleton confirmed it was Harrington.

The South Carolina Judicial Department Web site lists Harrington as a resident of Hanahan who has an office in Moncks Corner.

Patterson said the school questioned the validity of the rule and the way it was presented and delivered. Coaches received the rules as handouts at clinics in the summer and fall, as well as through e-mail. School officials argued that even if valid, the rule could be interpreted many different ways.

Patterson said Tommy Bell, an official of the South Carolina **Wrestling** Coaches

Association, told the executive committee that he e-mailed the weight rules to coaches around the state, but admitted he didn't know if his e-mail list was complete.

"I don't know the law, but I don't see an e-mail as a binding document," Patterson said. "Can you be held accountable if you may have or haven't gotten it? We know (Hanahan **wrestling** coach) Ray (Adkins) got the e-mail. But he might not have read it. He gets many e-mails from (Bell), and he doesn't read them all because some are about tournaments and information like that."

Singleton said the injunction after an executive committee's decision isn't new. "But it's been a long time since a member school filed for an injunction (after the executive committee's decision). It's usually a parent or individual, but not by a school or a league member."

Britt hinted that the court process could be time-consuming.

"The High School League appears in court and has to explain their decision to the judge as to why they ruled against Hanahan," Britt said. "And this could be fought all the way to the Supreme Court. In my personal opinion, this will take a long time. We may have to wrestle in May, but I just don't know how you do that."

"The **Woodruff** coach is in the same boat as us," he added. "He feels extremely bad for the kids and he feels that they should be **wrestling** us for the state championship. I apologized to the coach and he realizes it is not us. Obviously (**Woodruff**) doesn't want to wrestle in May."

Josh Hoke of the Myrtle Beach Sun News in contributed to this report.

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