



OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Doug Ute, Executive Director

Student Eligibility Guidance for High School Principals and Athletic Administrators

Bylaw 4-10, Amateur – Questions and Answers

Maintaining compliance with the Amateur Section within Student Eligibility Bylaw 4 is fundamental to the mission of education-based athletics. It is expected that a student who represents his or her school in one of the 28 interscholastic sports sponsored by the OHSAA shall be an amateur in that sport. An “amateur” is one who participates for the physical, mental, social and educational benefits interscholastic sports competition has to offer and not for any present or future monetary or commercial gains. Thus, a clear line must exist and be maintained between education-based sports and professional sports. It is the shared responsibility of school personnel, parents and students to maintain this clear line of distinction.

Bylaw 5-1-1 allows for awards, gifts and/or prizes resulting from participation in any sport in which the student is an interscholastic athlete to be accepted by the student from any source **provided the award, gift or prize does not exceed \$500.00 in value** (See Q8). Cash can never be accepted by virtue of one’s participation in a sport (Bylaw 4-10-2a).

This document represents a list of the most commonly asked questions regarding the Amateurism bylaw.

Q1. Who is subject to the amateur section of bylaw 4?

A1. All students desiring to participate in one of the OHSAA’s 28 recognized sports beginning in grade seven and continuing through high school are subject to the amateur bylaw.

Q2. A student wishes to accept money for winning a Rugby tournament (non-OHSAA sport) in which they participated. Will this affect their eligibility for a different OHSAA sport that they play?

A2. No. The amateur rules apply only to the 28 OHSAA sports and to those sports in which the individual student wishes to retain amateur status. Rugby is not an OHSAA sponsored sport. Therefore, the amateur rules do not apply to this student for this sport.

Q3. A student wants to compete for money in tennis (OHSAA sport) event but still wants to play high school golf. How will this decision impact their athletic eligibility?

A3. Participating for money in tennis will require the student to forfeit his/her eligibility for that sport at any OHSAA member school (Bylaw 4-10-2a). However, participation in this tennis event, in this example, will not impact a student’s eligibility for other OHSAA sports, including golf. A student is allowed to be a professional in one sport and an amateur in another sport.

Q4. Is it a violation to accept money or merchandise with a value greater than \$500 for activities such as a Slam-Dunk Contest, a Hole in One Contest, a Half Marathon or a Three-point shooting contests?

A4. OHSAA amateur rules do not consider these contests to be the same as the sports which they may represent. Thus, it is permissible for a basketball player, for example, to retain OHSAA amateur eligibility for accepting cash or prizes valued over \$500 for a slam dunk contest or winning a Hole in One Contest. However, it is worth cautioning all students that accepting such prizes may compromise future athletic eligibility at the collegiate level. Therefore, the OHSAA recommends that monetary prizes never be accepted for any sports-related participation.

It is worth noting that a golf scramble is considered “golf” and is subject to the amateurism bylaws (See Q5).



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Q5. Are high school golfers permitted to play in a fundraiser outing or a golf scramble where prize money is available?

A5. OHSAA golfers are permitted to play in non-interscholastic events where prize money is available **as long as they complete the “Request for Retention of Amateur Status” form PRIOR TO THE EVENT.** This form acknowledges that they will participate in the competition but may not accept any prize money. Here is a link to the form: <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Eligibility/Bylaw4-10-2RequestRetentionofAmateurStatus.pdf>

Of note, Bylaw 5-1-1 does allow students participating in this type of event to accept awards, gifts and prizes (not cash) based on their performance if the value of the award/gift/prize is less than \$500. In the case where only awards/gifts/prizes are available but prize money is not available then the aforementioned form is not needed.

Q6. Are HS athletes permitted to attend an invitation-only sport camp where they receive travel/meal/lodging reimbursement?

A6. Yes, **as long as they complete the “Request for Retention of Amateur Status” form PRIOR TO THE EVENT.** This form acknowledges that they will participate in the event but that they will 1) not accept any travel/meal/lodging remuneration contingent upon their finish/performance and 2) will not accept any travel/meal/lodging given as an incentive to achieve a specific goal or performance. Here is a link to the form: <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Eligibility/Bylaw4-10-2RequestRetentionofAmateurStatus.pdf>

Of note, Bylaw 5-1-1 does allow students participating in this type of event to accept awards, gifts and prizes (not cash) valued up to \$500. In the case where a student attends an invitation-only sport camp where travel/meal/lodging reimbursement is not available then the aforementioned form is not needed.

Q7. The past two questions referenced a “Request for Retention of Amateur Status” form. When exactly is this form needed?

A7. This form is needed whenever a student competes 1) in an event where prize money is available or 2) if they compete in an event where they receive travel, meals and lodging expenses as long as the expenses are not conditioned on the individual's or team's place finish or performance or given on an incentive basis and such expenses are provided to all participants in the competition.

Q8. Can you explain the difference between Bylaw 4-10-2b and Bylaw 5-1-1? Bylaw 4-10-2b says an athlete can't capitalize on their fame by receiving money, merchandise or services of value but Bylaw 5-1-1 says that awards, gifts and prizes are allowed. What is the difference?

A8. “Capitalizing on an athlete's fame” as referenced in Bylaw 4-10-2b is when an athlete is given money, merchandise or services based in whole or in part upon the notoriety the athlete receives through his/her athletic skills and achievements (i.e. being given \$500 to sign autographs for an hour). Conversely, the awards/gifts/prizes permitted under Bylaw 5-1-1, valued up to \$500, are based on the athlete's direct participation in the sport.

Q9. What acts shall cause a student's amateur status to be forfeited?

A9. There are several specific prohibitions discussed in Bylaw 4-10-2 that place a student's amateur status in jeopardy:

1. **Competing for money or other remuneration.** An exception to this prohibition can be made if a student signs a **written declaration prior to the competition** in which the student agrees that he or she will not accept any prize money. A student may accept allowable travel, meals and lodging expenses provided that these expenses are not contingent upon the student's individual or a team's



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finish or performance or given as an incentive to achieve a specific goal or performance. Receipt of expenses received by the athlete shall be reported to the OHSAA so as to determine whether or not the expenses are in excess of those reasonable amounts for travel, meals and lodging. Click here to access the written declaration form: <http://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Eligibility/Bylaw4-10-2RequestRetentionofAmateurStatus.pdf>

- 2. Capitalizing on the athlete's fame by receiving money, merchandise or services of value.** Some examples of this would be an athlete who, because of his or her "athletic fame," accepts money, merchandise, such as sports equipment, or services of value, such as a membership to a club or free admission to entertainment venues based in whole or in part upon the notoriety the athlete received through his/her athletic skills and achievements. This includes using the athlete's skill, directly or indirectly, for pay in any form in that sport. "Pay" includes, but is not limited to, any direct or indirect remuneration, gratuity or other economic benefit in either the present or future, or any division or split of surplus (bonuses, games' receipts, etc.). Scholarships to institutions of higher education are specifically exempted.
- 3. Signing a contract or making a commitment** of any kind to play professional athletics, regardless of its legal enforceability or any payment received. This prohibits signing a contract during the interscholastic athletics season that is dated after the completion of the athlete's interscholastic athletic eligibility.
- 4. Receiving, directly or indirectly, a salary, reimbursement of expenses, merchandise or services** or any other form of financial assistance or benefits from a professional sports organization based upon athletics skills or participation. **EXCEPTION:** An athlete may receive reimbursement of expenses as per item #1 for a professional tryout.
- 5. Competing with any professional athletics team**, even if no pay or remuneration for expenses was received.
- 6. Entering into an agreement with a sports or marketing agent** (O.R.C. §§4771.01 et seq.).

Q10. Can you describe activities that do not jeopardize amateur status (Bylaw 4-10-3)?

A10. Here is a list that includes but is not limited to the following activities:

- 1. Accepting a fee** for instructing, supervising or officiating in an organized youth sports program or recreation, playground or camp activities.
- 2. Receiving school-sponsored membership or participation fees** in youth serving agencies, athletic clubs, community recreation centers, instructional programs or camps, etc. provided such fees are paid directly to the agency.
- 3. Receiving an award, gift, playing equipment or prize of monetary value** based on their performance in an event which does not exceed the awards amount authorized by the Association – the current value of such items is **\$500**. (Bylaw 5-1-1)
- 4. Receiving all non-monetary benefits and awards provided to members of an Olympic team** beyond actual and necessary expenses, including entertainment, equipment, clothing, long distance telephone service, Internet access, and any other item or service for which it can be demonstrated that the same benefit is available to all members of the nation's Olympic team or the specific sport Olympic team in question.
- 5. Accepting funds that are administered by the United States Olympic Committee** pursuant to its Operation Gold Program.
- 6. Participating in member school, charitable or educational promotions** or fund-raising activities that involve the use of athletic ability by student-athletes to obtain funds (e.g., swim-a-thons, lift-a-thons, shoot-a-thons) from donors provided the student-athletes receive no compensation or prizes for their participation.
- 7. Accepting scholarship funds that are administered by a national governing body**, e.g. the United States Bowling Congress' Scholarship Program, provided such funds are paid directly to a postsecondary institution and the funds are not available until after the student has graduated from high school.

Feel free to contact Kristin Ronai (kronai@ohsaa.org) or Ronald Sayers (rsayers@ohsaa.org) if you have any questions!