

HISTORY OF THE CALIFORNIA
INTERSCHOLASTIC FEDERATION
SOUTHERN SECTION
(CIFSS)

14th historical “tidbit.”

THE FIRST BIG LEGAL BATTLE – 1932

COVINA HIGH SCHOOL CASE



The difficulties encountered by the CIFSS to control and direct interscholastic athletics reached a high point in 1932, when the CIFSS ejected Covina High School from membership for failure to refund a certain amount of money (\$1616.00). This money was from play-off games and Covina felt they should keep the money or turn it over to the Community Chest of Covina. Covina High School fought back by addressing the Council in October, 1932, and filing suit (\$25,000) in the Superior Court to compel the Council to reinstate them in the CIFSS. Seth Van Patten retained a lawyer who felt CIFSS could win the case, but the Judge upheld Covina’s complaint and the CIFSS was forced to reinstate them as a bona fide member (they were kept out of the remainder of the 1932 football season.) Many felt that this decision undermined the ability of the CIFSS to regulate interscholastic sports and the CIFSS appealed to the Appellate Court. The case was settled outside court and Covina High School was back in the CIFSS with the understanding that play-off revenues would go to the participating schools and the CIFSS.

Covina High School was often considered to be the “bad boy” of the Southern California high schools. They had played ineligible players and recruited “a couple of fine Indian players” from the Sherman Institute. Even the citizens of Covina were “mad” at the high school and embarrassed by their transgressions. The “Los Angeles Times” of October 14, 1932 stated:

“Shed a tear for Covina. No one will play them. Nobody wants them in their league. Just orphans of the storm.”

West Covina 1930's



CITIZENS "MAD" AT COVINA
Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File), Oct 14, 1932, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1985)
 pg. A12

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Even Townsfolk Siding Against Prep School in Battle With C.I.F. Over Grid Suspension

The California Interscholastic Federation and members of the Citrus Belt League aren't the only ones mad at Covina High, recently suspended from the Citrus loop. The townsfolk of Covina are all maddened up at their own school.

In this case the old saying that money is the root of all evil holds true. With dollar bills getting scarcer, Covina High officials decided to charge 50 cents for the Colts practice games. This was looked on with disfavor throughout the town. And when the lawsuit storm broke public sentiment went with the C.I.F.

"IN BAD" BEFORE

Covina has for some time been the "bad boy" of the Southern California high schools. When Chief Newman was the Colt coach, quite a fuss was raised when a couple of Indians, fine football players, were found on the Covina team. Indians are not supposed to stray from their reservations. The Chief and the principal of the school, however, had themselves appointed "guardians" of the Indians. Covina was kicked out of the league.

Time healed that wound, but now up pops the devil again.

The recent controversy started when Covina was found to have used an ineligible player last fall not only throughout the league season, but in the Colts' three play-off games for the Southern California title.

When the discrepancy was disclosed, Covina forfeited its league honors and was asked to relinquish its share of the pay-off money. Colt officials refused to do this, saying that Covina fans had paid most of the money and that the school was justly entitled to it. C.I.F. officials however, asked what about Pomona, South Pasadena and San Luis Obispo who missed out on their rightful share of the gate receipts because Covina beat them. Maybe the Colts could have won without the half, with the forged transfer

credits. Maybe they would have lost.

The C.I.F. through its commissioner, Seth Van Patten, asked Covina to give the disputed money to the Olympic Games Committee, but Covina refused and finally informed Van Patten that the money had been used for scholarship purposes, another worthy cause.

Consequently, the C.I.F. suspended Covina from the Citrus League. The Colts retaliated with a lawsuit for \$25,000. The case comes up next week. The most recent development was when members of the Citrus League voted to back the C.I.F. and went on record as refusing to play Covina under any conditions. So even should the Colts win their lawsuit and force the C.I.F. to reinstate them, they will lose out.

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COVINA HIGH APOLOGIZES

Officials Deplore Incidents Which Caused Ousting of Colts from San Gabriel Valley League

COVINA, June 28.—Two years late, but necessary for reinstatement in the California Interscholastic Federation, Southern Section, Covina High School today extended a written apology to the schools of the San Gabriel Valley High School League in appreciation of the action taken on May 18, last, by the California Interscholastic Federation, which re-entered Covina High School in the league.

Covina has been playing an independent hand during the last two years following a heated row among valley schools over the decisions of a local umpire which were branded as unfair. Accusations that Covina athletes disobeyed the rules of the league for their own advantage caused the final break when the league took steps to oust the local high school.

DEMAND ACCEPTED

According to the dictates of the interscholastic federation, Covina must make an humble re-entry into the league with a note of apology, which has been compiled with by Ben S. Millikan, principal, and members of the high-school board. The letter of apology is as follows:

To the schools of the San Gabriel Valley School Athletic League:

The California Interscholastic Federation, Southern Section, at its annual meeting on May 18, 1929, placed the Covina High School in your league for athletic competition for the next school year.

The authorities of the Covina High School wish to publicly express regret that conditions arose two years ago that made it seem best for the California Interscholastic Federation to permit Covina High School to withdraw from the San Gabriel Valley League and compete in high-school athletics as a free lance.

REIMBURSEMENT OFFERED

For any indignity which may have been suffered by any other school in the league for which Covina High School was in any way responsible, the constituted authorities of the school hereby apologize and offer reimbursement for property damage done.

In returning to the league and resuming a regular status among the schools of the interscholastic federation, the Covina High School wishes to assure all parties concerned of a firm and whole-hearted purpose to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of all regulations laid down by the league and the federation for the control of interscholastic athletics, and furthermore promise to co-operate to the utmost of their ability with other school authorities of the league to prevent a recurrence of such conditions as made the prior suspension of Covina from the league necessary.

(Signed) Ben S. Millikan, principal, Covina High School; Board of trustees of Covina High School: F. J. Cline, president; Thomas B. Reed, clerk; J. W. Morgan, H. Allison and W. S. Sawyer.

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THIS CONTEST WILL NOT BE PLAYED, ACCORDING TO CHAFFEY HEADS.

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COVINA-C.I.F. WAR CONTINUES

Writ Mandate Overruled by Judge Emmett Wilson

Reinstatement Plea to Be Heard Next Week

Colts May Not Have Games From Grid Eleven

Warfare between Covina High and the C.I.F. flamed anew yesterday in Superior Court before Judge Emmett H. Wilson. A demurrer to the Colts' petition for a writ mandate was overruled by Judge Wilson, and an answer to the suit was filed. Judge Wilson also agreed to a hearing next week to decide whether or not the Colts will be allowed to play in a scheduled league games.

The suit was filed in the name of the school, members of the Board of Education and Ben S. Millikan, Covina High principal, against the California Interscholastic Federation, southern section; Seth Van Patten, commissioner of athletics, and others.

The court was asked to issue a writ of mandate directing the C.I.F. to reinstate the school in the Citrus Belt League and permit it to compete in football with other members of that league, and for \$25,000 damages.

Because Covina used an ineligible player last fall, the Colts forfeited the Citrus Belt League championship. The C.I.F. asked Covina officials at that time to also give up Covina's share of money taken in play-off games. The money was to be turned over to the Olympic Games Committee. Covina authorities declined to give up this money, which amounted to \$1660.60. It was then that Covina was barred from the C.I.F.

It is understood that, even should Covina be reinstated in the Citrus Belt League, Butler Gorrel, Covina coach, would have trouble in getting games for his eleven, as other members of the league do not care to play with the Colts.

Covina has a game scheduled for Friday with Chaffey Union High. This contest will not be played, according to Chaffey heads.

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C.I.F. PLANNING TO APPEAL CASE

(Continued from Seventh Page)

vina had obtained as a result of the play-off games, which perhaps they had no right to play.

"It was first suggested that it go to the Olympic Games, and was next suggested they leave it in the fund to be disposed of at a later date, which clearly shows there was no set idea in the council's mind that they wanted to take this money from Covina for the purpose of using it for the council's benefit, which clearly indicates to me that the purpose was to take from Covina everything which they had gained as a result of participating in these play-off games, which they wouldn't have been able to participate in had they not been playing an ineligible player.

"I am satisfied, further, that the action of the council on October 1, in reference to Subdivision 6 of the minutes, attempted to rectify a previous proceeding, which wasn't within the limits or within the provisions of the Constitution. They were attempting, prior to the 1st inst., to do that indirectly which they couldn't do directly, i.e., place a condition upon the suspension. Article 10 gives them the right to suspend for a period of the next succeeding season. If we were going to be hypertechnical, the court's decision could stand upon one technicality alone, and that is that the council suspended by its action of the 1st inst., the Covina High School from playing football for one year."

"Article 10 gave them the right to suspend Covina High School for playing an ineligible player for the next succeeding football season, and therefore, being hypertechnical, in suspending Covina for one year they exceeded their authority under that article, because the suspension order was made on the 1st inst., and thereafter for one year, and they would be suspended until September 30, 1933, which would be longer than the next football season, it having been testified here that the football season started in September, and that therefore they are limited. Their suspension for the next football season could not have been beyond the succeeding September, the first week in September, when the 1933 season would start. That is being hypertechnical and not decided upon that ground alone. As I stated before, possibly the council was thoroughly justified in making their demand upon Covina for the return of the \$1616 from a moral standpoint. I think from a moral standpoint Covina should have returned the \$1616."