

York Region champs lose boardroom appeal

High school golfers 'stripped' of trip to provincials

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The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans thought they were going to represent the York Region Athletic Association at next week's provincial championships.

They were packing their golf bags for the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations boys' tournament in Windsor after being declared team winners at last week's YRAA championships at Cardinal Red Crest Golf Club near Kettleby.

Turns out the Spartans' trio of Ben Sear, Connor Murphy and Josh Burkholder won't be in the field at the Essex Golf and Country Club Oct. 16 and 17.

And they're not happy about it. Rather, the Bill Crothers (Unionville) team of Alexander Vegh, Brandon McLean and Maxwell Sear — Ben's cousin — will have the honour.

Designated as a school for elite student athletes, Bill Crothers had been ruled ineligible to win individual and team medallions, pennants and trophies.

But the rules, which were in place for last year's YRAA championships, do not say the school can't go to OFSAA.

Crothers, which finished 14 strokes better than Stouffville, appealed after this year's York finals, saying they were not properly informed before the start of the competition their squad would be ineligible for OFSAA.

'I think the whole thing was handled horribly ... My teammates were promised a trip to OFSSA and were stripped of it.'

A three-member YRAA appeals committee sided with Crothers and overruled the original decision Friday.

Ben Sear, whose 73 was the best score overall at the York championships, will represent Stouffville as one of two YRAA individual competitors.

But he wants his team in Windsor. "I think the whole thing was handled horribly and rules should have been made before the tournament and everyone should have known how Bill Crothers would stand," the Grade 11 student said. "My teammates were promised a trip to OFSSA

and were stripped of it. Stouffville deserves to go as a team and I wish they were coming with me."

Steve Shantz, the YRAA's athletic co-ordinator, called OFSAA to see if a second YRAA entry could be sent due to the circumstances. But with a field capped at 120 golfers, chances aren't good.

"The Bill Crothers team wasn't aware of the rule change during the round," he said. "The committee felt they did what was the right thing to do."

"Clearly someone would be disappointed with the ruling."

Shantz takes the blame.

"I didn't make it clear to the Bill Crothers coach beforehand," he said. "The YRAA appeals committee said I had responsibility to make the rules ultimately clear."

To prevent such an incident from cropping up again, Shantz said the YRAA hopes to incorporate a new rule that will state Crothers golfers can qualify only as individuals for OFSAA.

Coaches with both teams declined offers to comment.

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SUN TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Ben Sear will golf at the provincial championships in Windsor, but his Stouffville Secondary teammates won't be there.

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