

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 2-18-2020
Name: Douglas E. Thompson
Are you representing: Yourself NO Organization Ohio High School Athletic Assn.
Organization (If Applicable): OHSAA
Position/Title: Referee
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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): _____

Specific Issue: Assault on Sports Officials

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 2 min.

Please provide a brief statement on your position: Referee for the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Good morning Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and members of the Criminal Justice Committee.

My name is Doug Thompson, I'm a licensed official for the Ohio High School Athletic Association. I've been an official for the past seven years for basketball and eight years for baseball.

On January 19, 2020, I was a referee at Graham Middle School in St. Paris, Ohio. My hometown for 55 years. I was refereeing a 5th grade girls' basketball game.

There was a couple minutes left in the game and somethings were being said about some calls that were being made. There was an interruption in the game and I noticed a spectator looking at me in the front row, of where the comments were coming from. The spectator had a look at me of complete anger. I walked over to him, and ask if there was a problem, and before he could even say anything another spectator just to my right and a couple of rows up, said "Yes there is a problem, you need to learn how to F...ing ref" I told him to leave-go! He then flipped me the middle finger and said F...You again. While jumping to the floor and violently head butting me in the face.

I was scared for my life. I was only trying to keep him from hurting me more. I had neck surgery about 10 years ago where I had a disc removed and a new one put in with metal. Ever since this head-butt assault, my neck has hurt and I have had numbness in my left arm and left hand. I continue to have pain in the upper back and shoulder area, I also have flashes and headaches. I have had to miss multiple games and pass up on future assignments because of this assault.

I have paid over \$700 in x-rays, MRI's and doctor's visits. My doctor says that he believes that I have a concussion with the symptoms that I had described. I blew blood from my nose for 3 days. I am fearful that my neck has been re-injured due to the numbness in my arm and hand. Only time will tell the severity of my injuries.

Today, I am having problems more with the mental side of this assault. I have lost my edge and I am always looking over my shoulder. I feel like I am being watched. I have given games back so I would not have to ref the younger kids, that seems to be where the trouble is for me.

I currently not have health insurance. The combination of lost wages, mounting medical expenses and my mental state have me considering whether or not I am going to continue with refereeing.

I urge you to pass this legislation. I believe it will be a step forward in addressing the declining sportsmanship that we are experiencing from spectators at all levels youth sporting events.

Thank you for your consideration and I am open to any questions that the committee may have for me.