

Prop 42 modified at convention

DALLAS (AP) — Georgetown coach John Thompson's dramatic walkout a year ago in protest of the NCAA's Proposition 42 has worked.

"The central point John was attempting to raise was access to education for the needy," Hoya athletic director Frank Rienzo said Tuesday. "And that has been accomplished. I think he will view this as a satisfactory first step."

Division I delegates to the NCAA convention, after much bitter debate, voted Monday to modify Proposition 42, allowing need-based non-athletic aid to hundreds of athletes and giving Thompson and his allies at least a half-victory.

They had wanted Prop 42 abolished altogether or at least delayed a year.

Now, it's set to go into effect next Aug. 1.

"This is better than what we had, but not what we wanted," Big East Commissioner Dave Gavitt said.

Prop 42 was meant to close a loophole in the controversial Proposition 48 freshman eligibility requirements. Under Prop 48, a high school graduate must have an overall 2.00 grade point average in all high school work, a 2.00 GPA in the "core" curriculum of college preparatory courses and minimum scores on the ACT or SAT college entrance exams.

A partial qualifier is narrowly defined in NCAA rules as an athlete with the overall GPA of at least 2.00 who does not meet all or part of the other criteria. It is not, as many people assume, simply one who meets any part of the requirements.

"The test is archaic," Louisiana State basketball coach Dale Brown said. "It's just a convenient way to categorize and create an aura of selectivity."

The key to the disagreement are the college entrance exams,

which have been shown to be racially and culturally discriminatory. Since Prop 48 went into effect in 1986, more than 700 partial qualifiers have received full athletic scholarships while not being allowed to play or practice their freshman year.

Under Prop 42, these partial qualifiers would have been denied any aid. Now, based on their financial situation, they can receive assistance that is available to students in general but still have to sit out their first year and have just three years of eligibility remaining.

Rienzo said Tuesday he had not talked to Thompson since Monday's 192-133 vote.

"The first and primary issue was that we renewed access to higher education to a broad section of the population that had been denied access by Proposition 42," Rienzo said.

The fight over test scores may be renewed at the 1991 convention since the NCAA is now working with college testing experts on developing new, more representative ways to gauge academic ability.

"One of the important things as a result of John Thompson's protest is that educational testing has gotten involved with the NCAA trying to develop new criteria for eligibility," Rienzo said. "And I do look for new legislation next year that will have new test requirements. So I'm optimistic."

Penn State football coach Joe Paterno, who helped lead the fight for Prop 48 when it was first raised in 1983, argued bitterly Monday on the convention floor with Rienzo and black educators over whether Prop 42 should be abolished altogether.

"We're in the process of changing attitudes about what right does a kid who's a good athlete have to a college education," Paterno said. "He does

not have any right unless he is qualified to do it academically."

But Paterno said the compromise was satisfactory with him.

"Kids will have the opportunity to get financial aid if they don't have the background to qualify," he said, adding that arguments that test scores are not a valid indicator are "not pertinent to the issue."

"What we're trying to do is create some way of deciding whether kids can do the work in college," he said. "Until somebody comes up with a better standard, I don't think just the grade point is good enough."

One argument for the test scores has always been that high schools cannot be trusted, that they are either lax in grading or quick to "help" a star athlete.

"There's no question that preferential treatment can happen," Paterno said. "The test scores give us another indication of whether the kid belongs in college. I don't think we've seen the end of this yet."

Dr. Edward Fort, chancellor of the predominantly black North Carolina A&T, was one of the most outspoken opponents of Prop 42.

"I feel strongly that 42 did have a tinge of racism associated with it in that they knew full well that a disproportionately large number of black youngsters would be negatively impacted," he said. "Notwithstanding that reality, they did it anyway, and denied hundreds if not thousands of kids the right of access to need-based aid."

"When the stinging impact of those indictments a year ago became clear, the delegates said, 'Although we will not overturn 42, we do feel you have a point, and we will give you half a loaf.'"



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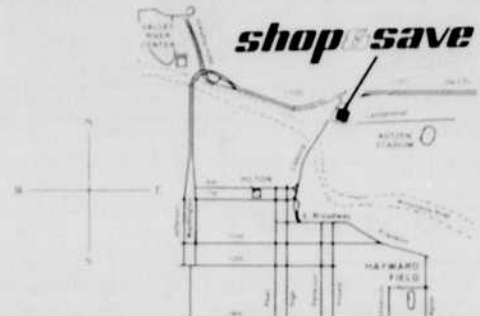
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