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JUNE 4, 2025 | NEWS

Shumaker Wins Temporary Restraining Order Against NCAA to Keep Eastern Michigan Football Player on the Field

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TOLEDO, OH – The national law firm Shumaker secured a key court order keeping Eastern Michigan University football player Blake Bustard eligible to play — despite the NCAA's attempts to bench him under a controversial rule.

Michigan Judge Julia B. Owdziej issued a Temporary Restraining Order against the NCAA, blocking enforcement of its so-called "Five-Year Rule" and other eligibility bylaws that would have barred Bustard from taking the field this upcoming season. The case is: *Blake Bustard v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*, No. 25-000779-CP in 22nd Circuit Court, Washtenaw County, Michigan.

"This is a victory not just for Blake, but for fairness in college sports," said Shumaker attorney Diana Florence. "The NCAA's rigid eligibility rules were threatening to derail a student-athlete's future, and the court recognized the serious harm that it would cause."

Reshaping the Future of NCAA Eligibility Rules

The NCAA's "Five-Year Rule" gives athletes five calendar years to compete in four seasons of play. It's meant to accommodate redshirt years, but in practice, it has also been used to deny players like Bustard their final year of eligibility — even in cases where they faced circumstances beyond their control.

Shumaker attorneys argued that enforcing the rule would cause irreparable harm to Bustard's athletic career, personal development, and ability to capitalize on his Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) opportunities. The court agreed, noting the damage "is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify."

Why It Matters

The case comes at a time when the NCAA's long-standing rules are under increased legal and political

scrutiny, especially in the wake of proposed athlete revenue-sharing and a landmark antitrust settlement. Legal challenges like this one are shining a spotlight on how eligibility policies may need to evolve in a changing landscape where college athletes are increasingly treated as professionals.

“This could be a bellwether case,” said Shumaker Attorney Nicholas Stack. “The courts are beginning to recognize that student-athletes have rights — and that outdated NCAA rules can’t stand in the way of those rights without meaningful justification.”

The court’s temporary order allows Bustard to fully participate in football activities at Eastern Michigan while the case moves forward. The NCAA has been ordered to show cause on June 12, 2025 as to why a longer-term injunction shouldn’t be issued.

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