

MILLARD SOUTH RISE TO DOMINANCE IN CLASS A RAISES QUESTIONS FOLLOWING NSAA RULE VIOLATION

After a NSAA violation for “undue influence”, Nebraska’s top-ranked team, as well as other powerhouse programs, face growing scrutiny over recruitment allegations and amount of transfer athletes

Sophia Clark | Social Media Editor

Ten Division I commits. Eight wins so far this season. 538 points scored, and only 17 given up. Millard South High School football isn’t just winning this football season. They are steamrolling opponents and rewriting what dominance looks like in Nebraska high school sports.

But beneath their record and accolades, a different conversation is unfolding: one about recruitment, fairness and the ethics of building powerhouse programs.

In September, LSE lost 77-0 to Millard South. Mason Mehta (11), a wide receiver and defensive end for LSE, said that, although the Knights fought hard, the loss was not a surprise to him or his teammates.

According to Mehta, Millard South’s roster is stacked with DI recruits because “they probably get recruited in or developed in”.

Speculation over Millard South’s recruitment came to public attention on Sept. 18, when Stu Pospisil of the Omaha World Herald published an article revealing that Millard South had played two ineligible players, violating the NSAA’s Bylaw 2.8 – which prohibits acts of “undue influence” – the act of an individual making a decision based off the influence of another party.

The NSAA Constitution and Bylaw handbook states up to 12 examples in which a student loses eligibility to participate in a NSAA-sanctioned activity. It was discovered by Millard South administration that one of these bylaw infractions had been committed by an assistant volunteer coach at Millard South.

This infraction was determined to stem from two Millard South football players living with said coach, despite him not having legal guardianship of players.

Millard South’s penalty included a \$500 fine, forfeit of a game against Arbor View High School, the assistant coach suspended from any NSAA sport for one year and head coach Taylor Mendenhall was suspended from coaching two games.

While Millard South did own up to their faults, some believe this incident reflects a deeper problem within Nebraska Class A football: quiet recruiting and unregulated transferring.

Across several social media platforms, Nebraskans have had a lot to say about the alleged recruitment being carried out by Millard South and other Omaha-area schools.

Jeremy Jensen, former mayor of Grand Island, wrote a Facebook post addressed to the NSAA, which quickly went viral.

In the post, Jensen claims that in his 20 years of involvement in high school athletics, he has recently noticed a lack of competitive balance between high schools of all classes in Nebraska. Jensen said that the reason for this is because of the alleged recruitment going on within Nebraska Class A sports, specifically referencing schools known to dominate. His post calls out the NSAA’s “archaic” methods of grouping teams by student enrollment.

“In every team sport, you have allowed metro area schools to build super teams at the expense of the other 98% of kids you serve,” Jensen writes. “There is no integrity in standing by and watching the #6 team in Class A lose 72-0 at home on a Friday night to a team that actively recruits the top talent from not only the metro, but from the entire state.”

However, speculation of recruitment alone isn’t enough to prompt an NSAA investigation. According to Kara Graham, the NSAA District 1 Board of Director’s representative, these accusations cannot be dealt with unless “people are willing to give proof that there is recruiting going on”.

Even without specific proof of recruitment, there is evidence that, in recent years, athletes are transferring schools in pursuit of better opportunities. In reporting done by Jeremy Turley of The Flatwater Free Press, in the last three years, close to 1,500 high school athletes have transferred from neighborhood schools to join stronger teams.

“The widening gap between haves and have-nots is most evident in Class A football, where transfer-laden suburban squads such as Millard South and Westside far outperform depleted teams from Omaha’s urban core,” Turley writes in his article.

LSE football coach and science teacher David Schumacher said he can understand why athletes transfer, as some schools have better resources and coaching.

“It’s a complicated issue,” Schumacher said. “There has always been some level of player mobility, but the increase in transfers in recent years seems to be getting a little out of hand. It leads me to believe that these athletes and families aren’t making these decisions solely on their own.”

Mehta said he personally knows an athlete who transferred to Millard South after being in contact with the head coach, who eventually recruited him. According to Mehta, these interactions are usually done through social media platforms such as X/Twitter.

A similar situation happened to Mehta during the summer before his freshman season. He said a coach from an Omaha school reached out and explained how they could use him in their offense and defense, in addition to specific roles Mehta could play on the team.

Despite having the opportunity and a secured spot on the team for this Omaha school, Mehta said he wanted to stay loyal to the LSE head football coach, Ryan Gottula.

“Gottula saw the potential in me and I wanted to prove my ability to [play] a dominant role on the football field,” Mehta said.

In his years of playing for LSE, Mehta has been connected with football coaches at the collegiate level through the LSE football coaching staff. Since then, Mehta has received two Division I offers; one from the University of Tennessee at Martin and the other at Liberty University.

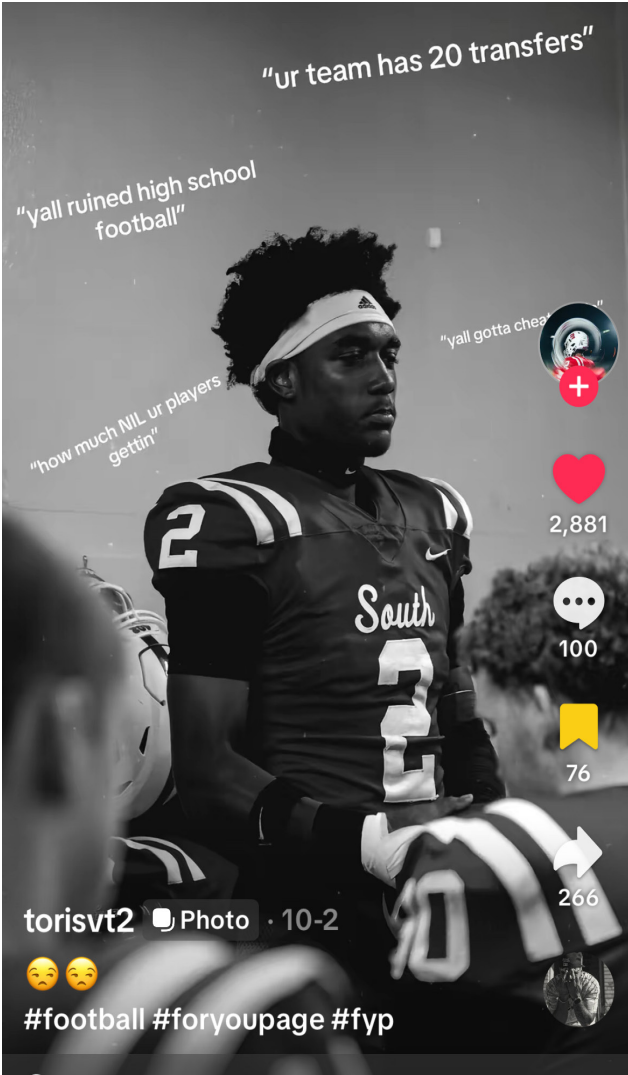
Mehta knows that Lincoln schools struggle to compete with some Metro schools, but he believes that “LSE [football] is probably one of the best in Lincoln”.

Being the best attracts college coaches, so, according to Mehta, they’re more likely to check back on the athletes playing for LSE.

The success of Millard South can be measured not only in their winning record, but also their stream of college recruits. Many Nebraska news sources and even national sources, such as The New York Times, have covered this team, creating a spotlight for talented athletes in Nebraska. This could be a pull-factor for a football player wanting to transfer out of their school and attend Millard South.

But for Schumacher, the issue comes down to what’s lost when athletes are constantly recruited or transfer schools: the development of athletes.

“As a coach and a member of the Lincoln Southeast community, our primary focus is always on our student athletes,” Schumacher said. “We also like to win here at Southeast, and we’ve done it a lot. Our goal is to do it the right way and develop our athletes into great players and people, and through that, the wins will come.”



TikTok post uploaded by Millard South football player, Toris Rudd quotes comments of critique for Millard South Football
Photo Credit: @torisvt2 on TikTok

Along with the spotlight and extra attention on Millard South and its players, comes scrutiny. Millard South cornerback and wide receiver, Toris Rudd (12) weighed in with a viral TikTok post uploaded Oct. 2, in which he quoted various public opinions that have swarmed social media platforms.

In the video, Rudd responded to the growing criticism of his team by using clips of a man repeating phrases such as “Mind your business”, “Shut up” and “People be looking for problems.” The on-screen text quoted some of the remarks Rudd has seen online:

“Ya’ll [Millard South] ruined high school football”
“ur team has 20 transfers”
“how much NIL ur players gettin”
“yall gotta cheat to win”

The post gained over 40,000 views and the comment section was filled with both support and opposition for Millard South football on their tactics in gaining success.

One user, @ybkraye0, wrote: “Aye but Nebraska on the map though.”

Another, @malachiwoods560, added: “Y’all make Nebraska football look good so I ain’t got a problem with it.”

Meanwhile, @iambeanxd pushed back: “Transfer portal ruined high school football in Omaha to be honest no more loyalty and working hard and grinding it out with a bad team.”

The online debate surrounding Millard South reflects a larger conversation happening across Nebraska high school sports: Where is the ethical line drawn when building powerhouse programs?

As more athletes transfer, and the disparity of competition increases, the NSAA faces mounting pressure to reexamine its transfer and recruitment policies. In his Facebook post, Jensen calls on the NSAA to act.

“I allege that no one at the NSAA is willing to think outside of the box to make changes - which is the only way to get participation upslope again,” Jensen wrote. “Do you know what happens when you have competitive balance? You increase participation... which what I always thought was true of the NSAA.”

Graham said that lopsided scores in Classes A-D are nothing new. “We have had many dynasties in the state,” Graham said. “And there has been a Classification Committee with representatives from across the state for years.”

With no clear evidence of wrongdoing and no clear regulation of transfers, the wins will keep stacking up, and the criticism will keep echoing online. But as the spotlight continues to grow, and the scoreboard reflects shut out after shut out, the question looms large: at what point does success start to look a little too good?



LSE head football coach Ryan Gottula and LSE football players watch #18 Isaac Jensen push off LSE defender at the game against Millard South game on Sept. 25, 2025.
Photo Credit: Drew Balus