

## STATEMENT FROM APP STATE ATHLETICS

Written by Mike Flynn  
Friday, 27 September 2013 13:47

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Over the past 24 hours, a handful of media members have offered their opinions on the situation between Appalachian State University's men's basketball program and Devonte Graham, a student-

athlete who signed a binding NCAA National Letter of Intent to attend Appalachian State last November.

We take particular exception to the unsubstantiated and irresponsible opinion of some media members that we are holding a student-athlete "hostage." With his family's blessing and support, Devonte Graham willingly and excitedly chose to sign a National Letter of Intent with Appalachian State last November after having the opportunity to be recruited by 351 NCAA Division I programs. Furthermore, if he thought that a more desirable situation might arise in the future, he also had the option to wait until the late signing period in April to make his college choice. Since he chose to sign a binding Letter of Intent with Appalachian State, we stopped recruiting a large number of student-athletes at his position in his class who would have been grateful for the opportunity to receive a full scholarship to attend and play basketball at our great institution.

As our coaching staff fully expected, Devonte had a terrific senior season last winter and, accordingly, drew the interest of programs from what are widely recognized as "power conferences." However, due to his binding agreement with Appalachian State, other programs were not permitted by NCAA rules to contact him, be it directly or through people claiming to represent his interests. Due to our concerns that these rules were not followed and the fact that we had turned away all other potential student-athletes that could have capably filled his spot on the roster, we denied his request for a release from his binding Letter of Intent. We also made the NCAA aware of our concerns.

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On the contrary to the opinion that we are holding a student-athlete "hostage," we feel like we are acting in the best interests of all student-athletes and Division I programs that operate under the principle that a National Letter of Intent is a binding agreement meant to be upheld by both the student-athlete and the institution. When that principle is not upheld by a small number of people with selfish motives, it is to the detriment of the student-athlete, the vast majority of Division I institutions (particularly mid-major programs) and all of college basketball.

While we understand that it is en vogue for the media to hammer away at the perceived bureaucracy of the NCAA, recruiting rules and guidelines are in place to protect student-athletes and NCAA institutions alike. Without them, recruiting would be utter chaos. Also, while we greatly appreciate the advocacy of the national media covering men's basketball, especially related to reforms in recruiting practices as a whole, we are confident that those who have shared their opinions over the past 24 hours are not aware of the full circumstances in this particular situation. If all of the facts regarding the situation and how it has unfolded since last spring were to come to light, we believe that the opinions that we are holding a student-athlete "hostage" would change. It would be very disappointing if not.

All of that being said, the situation is now in the hands of the NCAA and will be resolved by its governance. Therefore, we will not have any further comment on the matter.