After fully investigating the events during and after a December 28, 2014 basketball game between Betsy Layne and Bryan Station high schools, officials from the Fayette County Public Schools have concluded that one student athlete’s hope of praising his teammates for supporting him when he confided in them that he was gay was inaccurately reported and mischaracterized by an online news publication.

“While we are disappointed in the physical play and unsportsmanlike conduct by athletes on both teams, what happened that day is not at all what was described by Outsports.com,” said Fayette County Public Schools Acting Superintendent Marlene Helm. “Our players, coaches and administrators were unfairly maligned and it is important for us to debunk the absolute mistruths in the online report.”

In fact, none of the Bryan Station High School basketball players or coaches knew that there was a gay player on the Betsy Layne team. While there was unsportsmanlike conduct by both teams and their fans on and off the court, no single player was targeted. Descriptions of pounding on bus windows, car chases through the streets of Lexington, hotel lockdowns and police escorts went beyond hyperbole, to reach the bounds of outright fabrication.

In the course of its investigation the Fayette County Public Schools gathered information from the Lexington Police Department, The Campbell House, Lexington Catholic High School, student athletes, coaches, parents and officials from the Floyd County Public Schools who conducted their own inquiry. Sources quoted by the online publication told school district investigators in Floyd County that their comments were taken out of context and confirmed that much of the article was completely untrue.

On December 28, 2014, boys basketball teams from Betsy Layne and Bryan Station high schools met on the third day of a four-day tournament. The game was very physical and there was unsportsmanlike conduct by players on both sides that included a variety of derogatory comments.

After the game, the coach from Betsy Layne High School sent one of his players to the Bryan Station High School team locker room to apologize for his unsportsmanlike play on the court. The Bryan Station High School coach kept his team in the gym an additional 30 minutes with the goal of allowing the Betsy Layne team to clear out of the building first.

As a few remaining members of the Bryan Station team and their families were exiting the gym, the Betsy Layne bus was parked and loading right in front of the doors to the parking lot. Some of the parents from Betsy Layne began yelling at some of the players from Bryan Station High School. Some Bryan Station High School fans engaged in the yelling.

None of the yelling had anything to do with the sexual orientation of any players and we have no substantiation that players from either side were involved in the verbal exchange. In fact, the photo used by Outsports.com to “prove” that Bryan Station High school players were yelling at the Betsy Layne players is not a picture of Bryan Station High School students.

After the Betsy Layne team bus turned right out of the parking lot, there were students on the bus who believed that Bryan Station High school players were intentionally following them. No Bryan Station players or fans were intentionally following the bus, they were just traveling in the same direction headed home. The bus turned around and returned to Lexington Catholic.

When the Betsy Layne bus returned, the Bryan Station High School coach was called out of the gym to come speak with the Betsy Layne coaches and parents. The parents then shared their concerns that Bryan Station players were planning to continue a confrontation about the rough play from the game at the hotel. There was no mention of gay slurs being used or targeting a single player. The Bryan Station coach assured them that his players would not be at the hotel, and drove to the Campbell House, where he confirmed that none of his players had gone there.

The coaches from both Betsy Layne and Bryan Station agreed that bad sportsmanship had been displayed on both sides and both coaches thought the incident had been resolved at that point.

The Bryan Station High School basketball coach followed proper reporting protocol, making the principal of the school aware of the incident, and the principal followed protocol in reporting the incident to district officials. Since the incident had been handled appropriately by the coaches of both teams at the time it had occurred, no further action was warranted.

Our investigation has confirmed:

1. The bad sportsmanship between the two teams was not directed at any single player.
2. No one on the Bryan Station High School team knew of the Betsy Layne player’s sexual orientation until the information appeared on Outsports.com more than three months later.
3. No one on the Bryan Station High School team had any knowledge of the exchange in the Betsy Layne locker room about the sexuality of one of the players.
4. Bryan Station High School players were not assembled at the bus waiting for the Betsy Layne team.
5. Bryan Station High School players were not yelling at any of the Betsy Layne players, “ordering” them to “stay out of the bus and face them.”
6. There were no gay slurs being used by the fans and parents during their verbal altercation in the parking lot.
7. No one from Bryan Station High School pounded on the windows of the bus or the bus itself.
8. No Bryan Station High School players tried to board the bus.
9. A parent from Betsy Layne called the police to complain about the incident in the parking lot. When the police contacted her, the caller did not mention anything related to the sexual orientation of any of the players. She reported a verbal altercation between fans from both teams after some hard fouls and aggressive play on the court. She did not say that Bryan Station players had been following the team bus. She did not describe any of the behavior included on Outsports.com. She told them the coaches had resolved the matter and that there was no need for police follow-up.
10. The Bryan Station coach did not have to “calm his team,” because his athletes had all gone home.
11. Police did not come to hotel where the Betsy Layne team was staying.
12. The hotel where the team was staying was not placed on “’lock down,’ with only the Betsy Layne team allowed access to a particular floor.”
13. There was no police escort given to the team “to and from their hotel and the basketball court.”

The untrue allegations in the original Outsports.com post and its follow up postings, in addition to the publications in other news outlets around the world that picked up the false story have created many issues for the Bryan Station High School community. Members of the public have contacted the school via email and phone and made hateful comments to members of the administration and coaching staff.

It is regretful that any online news source would publish such flagrantly untrue allegations and Fayette County Public Schools formally asks Outsports.com to issue a retraction.

“We are releasing this very detailed statement in order to clearly outline our full rebuttal of the absolute falsehoods in the Outsports.com publication,” Helm said. “The hateful and abhorrent behavior depicted and attributed to our students is categorically untrue and does not reflect the core values of the Fayette County Public Schools.

One of the commitments of the Fayette County Board of Education is to ensure that all students are successful and treated fairly in our schools. We have strong policies prohibiting harassment and denial of equal educational opportunities for students and have been a leader in the state in advancing a commitment to equity and diversity. We will continue to uphold high standards of behavior for our staff and students and stand strongly in their defense when wrongfully accused.

Fayette County and Floyd County teams have enjoyed decades of healthy competition on the basketball court and look forward to many more.”