

Judges Rule Football Coaches Cannot Pray on Football Field

A Washington state high school football coach who was punished for taking a knee at the 50-yard line for a post-game prayer violated the U.S. Constitution, according to the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

A three-judge panel ruled the Bremerton School District was justified in suspending Coach Joe Kennedy after he took a knee and prayed silently at mid-field after football games.

“When Kennedy kneeled and prayed on the 50-yard line immediately after games while in view of students and parents, he spoke as a public employee, not as a private citizen, and his speech therefore was constitutionally unprotected,” the 9th Circuit wrote.

Kennedy, who served as an assistant coach at Bremerton High School from 2008-2015, was ordered to refrain from bowing his head, taking a knee or doing anything that could be perceived as praying on public school property.

To be fair—it’s not like Coach Kennedy was conducting a Billy Graham Crusade at midfield. He would simply take a knee, bow his head, thank God for a good game and 30 seconds later, he went about his business.

“An objective student observer would see an influential supervisor do something no ordinary citizen could do—perform a Christian religious act on secured school property while surrounded by players—simply because he is a coach,” the judges wrote.

The evangelical Christian was suspended in 2015 when he defied school officials and continued his post-game religious ritual.

Kennedy was not rehired when his contract expired.

"This is deeply disappointing to us," First Liberty Institute attorney Jeremy Dys said on "The Todd Starnes Show."

"The 9th Circuit believes they can ban all coaches from praying individually in public just because they can be seen," Dys said. "That is simply wrong. It is not American. And it is not the America contemplated by our Constitution."

First Liberty Institute said it has not yet decided whether to appeal the ruling.

"Now all coaches across the country stand under the prospect of being prevented from engaging in any outward displays of religion," Dys told me. "That includes crossing yourself or even taking a knee to pray."

That's right, folks—not even Catholic coaches will be allowed to cross themselves in public, the attorney said.

Welcome to the America that was fundamentally transformed by President Obama and his activist judges.

It's a nation where football players can take a knee to disrespect the flag, but a coach can't take a knee to pray to the Almighty.