

Advisory Committee Recommendation Form (2019)

Submitted by: Pat Barrett

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Rule/Policy: (State the rule/policy as it appears in the current Rules and Policies Manual).

Under the current structure, class AAAA boys and girls basketball is divided into 8 sections with geographic proximity as the only criteria. Coaches vote to seed each section 1 through 8. A champion is crowned in each of the 8 sections. The 8 section champions constitute the 8 team class AAAA state tournament field.

Submit your proposed change to the above-stated rule/policy:

In Class AAAA, each section will have a playoff to determine the top two teams in their section. The 16 teams so identified will be seeded using the same format implemented in the other three classes. This seeding model is based on the vote of coaches of the remaining 16 teams. The MSHSL will appoint a committee to place teams accordingly. The top eight seeded teams will each be placed into a separate section. The remaining eight teams will then be placed into one of the sections. In placing teams, the geography will be a primary consideration, but not the only consideration.

Identify your rationale for the proposed change:

The boys and girls basketball coaches associations believe there are at least two tremendous benefits to this format in class AAAA.

1. This format creates an opportunity for the best teams to reach the state tournament and
 2. With the best teams on the biggest stage we believe there will be greater fan interest and attendance.
- Under the current structure there are always sections that feature 2 or 3 of the top 10 teams in the state and other sections that feature no teams that merit top 10 status. This means that annually the first round of the state tournament will feature one of the top teams in the state facing off against a mediocre team (sometimes even a team with a losing record) and this does little to excite the fans of either team or to engage casual basketball fans around the state.

Frequently first round state tournament games for both the boys and the girls have featured less than compelling blowouts. By seeding AAAA as outlined in this proposal we would create an environment that would allow a state tournament field of 8 top flight teams where fans could be confident they would see a quality, competitive game.

This proposal has overwhelming support from both associations. When surveyed in mid-January of 2018 77.7% of the AAAA boys coaches supported this proposal and 80.43% of AAAA girls coaches favored the adoption of this format.

Cite an example of how the proposed change would affect this activity:

While there are examples on the boys' and girls' side literally every year, to demonstrate the merits of this proposal we will offer this year's section 6AAAA in girls basketball. Wayzata is currently ranked #2 in the state with a perfect 14 and 0. Perennial power Hopkins is ranked #1 and also boasts an undefeated record. Under the current structure only one of these two exceptionally talented and worthy teams can reach the AAAA state tournament.

In another area of the metro there is a section where only 2 teams have a winning record and neither is considered worthy of top 10 status in any poll or statistical measure. Under the current format a slightly above average team will enjoy playing on the state's biggest stage while one of Minnesota's most outstanding teams will be forced to watch. And the two sections referenced here mean nothing in terms of "regional representation" as every team in these two sections would be characterized as "metro".

Of the 16 teams in these two sections the two schools that are furthest away are separated by only 45 miles. The current structure makes no consideration of competitive aptitude. It relies entirely on arbitrary lines that

artificially and accidentally create sections of “haves” and “have nots”. Our proposal respects the geography but simultaneously allows for adjustments to be made by coaches (via seeding the final 16 teams) and the MSHSL committee based on competitive ability.

Again, the ultimate change we anticipate from adoption of this proposal is a better, more competitive state tournament and greater fan interest with the potential for the best eight teams to be playing on the state’s greatest stage.

How does your proposal impact:

a. the tournament administration: In terms of the state tournament itself, this proposal would not impact tournament administration at all. The 8 section champions will continue to be seeded for state tournament quarterfinal play following the current state tournament seeding format.

When it comes to section tournament play almost nothing changes. Each of the AA Administrative Regions will be run their eight team playoff bracket through the semi-finals and they will still host a section championship game. Sections will continue to administrate and receive revenue earned (as they currently do). The revenue generated shall be shared among the sections according to the current policy for the “Division of Receipts between Region Secretaries for Section Activities that cross Administrative Region Lines.” If the revised seeding method generates the interest we anticipate the sections will benefit from greater attendance and increased revenue.

The coaches of the final 16 teams would be asked to submit their online seeding ballot no later than noon on the Sunday before the section championship. The MSHSL appointed committee would review the coaches seeding Sunday afternoon/evening and would finalize and release the 8 section championship matchups to the public on Sunday evening. Incidentally, both the boys and girls associations expect this release would create greater public interest and anticipation as fans across the state speculate on possible matchups.

b. the change in competition time needed to accommodate your recommendation: Our proposal would not necessitate any change in competition time. Most section tournaments would follow the same dates (quarter finals Wednesday, semi-finals Saturday, Section Championships on Friday). The state tournament would not have to deviate at all from its current format.

c. the number of competitors: There would be no change in the number of competitors in section or state tournament play.

d. the facilities needed to accommodate your recommendation: There would be no change in facilities needed to accommodate the plan. Most sections currently have the higher seed host the first round game and/or second round game before moving to a neutral site for semis and/or finals. This would continue to be the case.

e. the number of awards: This plan would create no change in the number of awards handed out by the MSHSL or the sections.

f. other items which should be considered regarding the above-stated proposal: We would just highlight that this plan has the overwhelming support of the AAAA boys and girls coaches and that it has been a plan both associations have been promoting in some capacity for more than ten years. Minnesota coaches overwhelmingly and sincerely believe this move is in the best interest of class AAAA athletes and schools. It has no direct impact on class AAA, AA, or A schools with the possible exception of more fans attending those games as well as they’ve made the trip to the Twin Cities to see this exciting new format that features the best basketball our state has to offer.

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