

Activity Advisory Committee Recommendation to the MSHSL Board of Directors

Submitted on Wed, 10/12/2022 - 11:49 AM

Activity/Activities (Check all that apply):

Tennis, Boys, Tennis, Girls

Indicate the category of the proposed recommendation

State Tournament Recommendations regarding Format and Non-NFHS Rules or NFHS Experiments

Authors of the Proposal

MN Tennis Coaches Advisory + Ad Hoc Committee

(Committee) Members:

*/** David Wareham (Totino-Grace), * Les Zellmann (St. James), ** Robb DeCorsey (Glencoe-Silver Lake), ** Jeff Prondzinski (Wayzata), ** Scott Storricks (Coon Rapids), ** Lisa Salo (Brainerd), * Steve Tacl (Rochester Lourdes), * Rick Slachta (Mounds Park Academy)

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Current Rule/Policy

State the rule/policy as it appears in the current MSHSL Handbook or Activity/Sport Specific Rules and Policies.

The current rule/policy regarding is found in the MSHSL Handbook in the 400.00 Bylaws pages 78-81 regarding class competition (updated 12/6/18) ... [of particular note is Section D "Class Competition" #4]

4) Classification Formula for Activities Conducted in Multiple Classes. Unless otherwise determined by the Board of Directors, tournament competition may be conducted in multiple classes as follows:

- * 32-63 teams competing within a class shall have a four (4) team tournament
- * 64 or more teams competing within a class shall have an eight (8) team tournament

... Dance Team shall be an EXCEPTION to the classification formula and shall be classified each placement cycle as determined by the Board of Directors.

Two (2) Class Tournament: When there are 96 or more teams registered for a League sponsored activity, the divisions will be based on enrollment as follows:

OPTION 1: Class AA: the 128 largest teams by enrollment; Class A: the balance of registered teams.

OPTION 2: Divide the registered teams either by the top 64 by enrollment, or by the bottom 64 teams by enrollment, provided that activity meets the minimum requirement for two classes.

OPTION 3: Divide by an even split of teams – One half of the teams in each class

Three (3) Class Tournament: When there are 192 or more teams registered for a League sponsored activity, the divisions will be based on enrollment as follows:

OPTION 1: Class AAA: the 96 largest teams by enrollment; Class AA: the next 128 teams by enrollment; Class A: the balance of registered teams.

OPTION 2: Class AAA: the 64 largest teams by enrollment; Class AA: the next 64 or 96 largest teams by enrollment; Class A: the balance of registered teams.

OPTION 3: Class AAA: Even split of teams – One third of the teams in each class

Proposed Recommendation

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

We propose an exception to the policy and formulas regarding multiple classes: moving to 3-classes for both Girls' and Boys' tennis, including an exception to the number of teams required for Boys' tennis. Our proposal is twofold:

First, our proposal is to move to 3-classes for both Girls' and Boys' tennis (as an exception to the required number of teams), applying a consistent and uniform classification formula.

Second, to do so our proposal seeks a "modification" to Bylaw 4 (pg. 79): Classification Formula for Activities Conducted in Multiple Classes. The 3-class State Tournament would be divided using the following formula for both Girls' and Boys' Tennis:

Top 32 teams = Class AAA = 4 sections of 8 teams

Girls = 32

Boys = 32

Remaining teams = 50/50 split between Class AA and Class A

Girls = 82 in Class AA, 82 in Class A

Boys = 66 in Class AA, 67 in Class A

Our proposal provides a gender equity component for three classes and is appropriately addressing the unique disparity challenges in both enrollment and socioeconomics faced in Minnesota high school tennis for both girls and boys. Further, the recommended modification ensures eight or more schools in each of the sections in all three classes in our proposal for both girls' and boys' tennis, something not happening under the current two class system. For example, in the current model in Girls' Tennis for Class A, only 56 teams compete.

Include any other policies that are impacted by this proposal.

We don't see other policies beyond Classification Formulas and Tournament Competition impacted. We believe we have thoroughly and successfully addressed these in the proposal.

Rationale

What is the history of the proposal?

Under the current MSHSL policy and formula adopted in 2018, the number of girls' tennis programs meets the required number of programs (192) to be divided into the three classes. The Tennis

Advisory recognizes the difference in the number of programs between girls' (194) and boys' (165) programs; however, it is important to note that our research indicates the same challenges, including the notable numerical disparities existing from the largest to the smallest programs in boys' tennis.

For the top classification, both girls' and boys' tennis enrollment ratios are the highest amongst MSHSL sports: for example, 7.2:1 in AA girls', 4.4:1 in AA boys'. Most ratios among the top classes for all activities are in the 2s. [Of note, the smallest classes among all sports/activities have higher ratios among classification.] Improving the ratios in tennis will create opportunities for teams and individuals to advance further in the postseason and (potentially) set up more competitive matches within sections. This will make a significant and positive impact on the tennis experience.

Tennis remains one of the few still with two classes.

18 of the 22 multi-class MSHSL sports have a minimum enrollment of 1128-1353 students for the biggest class. Boys/Girls Tennis and Boys/Girls Golf (3-classes) are the only exceptions. Girls' Tennis is has a minimum of 474 for AA; Boys Tennis is 768 for AA.

This disparity can be seen in multiple schools that have a boys' program in Class A and a girls' program in Class AA. For example, the Mound-Westonka tennis teams serve as an example of a program maligned by the current 2-class system. Up until last year (2022), the boys' program was assigned to Class A, competed against schools comparable to their size, and enjoyed a great deal of success - winning their section six times, and even competing for the state title. In addition, more than a dozen individuals have had an opportunity to compete at the state level, going so far as the state championship. On the girls' side, it's been a completely different story. Under the same coaching staff, the girls' team has been in Class AA, competing over the years in sections against much larger schools such as Minnetonka, Eden Prairie, Wayzata, and Edina. The girls' team has won only one subsection match and has sent one individual to the state tournament over the same 25 years. A similar story would show up for schools like Fridley, Columbia Heights, or Foley that have made section semis, finals, and even state tournament appearances in Class A boys' but struggle past the first round in Class AA versus schools five times their size.

There are an estimated 80 schools (enrollments 474-1200) that only compete with the largest schools in the sport of girls' tennis. This number is 40 schools (768-1200) for boys' tennis.

Research reveals that two driving factors are important to success, including advancement in postseason play, in MN high school tennis: (larger) enrollment plus (higher) socioeconomics. Both socio-economic disparity and enrollment disparity are well documented.

Imbalance to facilities, either in access or affordability, exists. In northern Minnesota, Virginia has a four court indoor facility that serves multiple programs, including Duluth, 65 miles away. Access to indoor facilities and off-season training/coaching for teams in or around Brainerd, which is more centrally located in MN, is also greater than 60 miles away. And while indoor tennis training facilities are more available in suburban / urban MN and Rochester MN, the training facilities become restrictive based on the economics of a community. More simply, the more affluent larger metro school areas can find the access and afford the indoor (off-season) training programs. For some of the larger schools in the metro, a majority of their players can't afford it.

History of the state tournament is further proof, evident in the top 32 schools dominating AA tennis, and private schools in the urban and suburban communities dominating Class A tennis.

Class A

The last time a Class A champion in boys' tennis represented a public school was in 1991. There have been three public school champions in Class A boys' tennis since two class tennis began in 1979. In girls' tennis, a similar picture can be shown. Since the fall of 1978, public schools have won the state team championship four times: Blue Earth ('85), Virginia ('89), Orono ('94-'95). This means that 41 state champion teams are from private schools. Both Orono and Virginia (now Rock Ridge) are now AA schools under current classification. A similarly profound trend can be found in State Individual champions since the move to two classes. Socioeconomic conditions clearly impact the sport of tennis.

Class AA

The same picture of tennis dominance can be presented in Class AA where champions in both girls and boys have been historically dominated by a top 32 school with few exceptions. Since 1997, only four schools outside of the top 32 largest have won team State titles: Mpls. South ('01), Rochester Mayo ('06 & '10), Elk River ('12), and Orono ('22). It can be noted that Rochester Mayo is the 33rd biggest school in enrollment for tennis. And the few champions not in the top 33 of enrollment came from programs in higher socioeconomic areas, who have greater access to facilities and coaching year round.

A look at the current State team rankings will bear this out – nine of the top fourteen teams come from the top 32 enrollments. The four other teams come from higher socioeconomic urban areas with access to facilities for indoor training. Further, with the current formula of bottom 64 in Class A, the rest in Class AA has resulted in significant disparities in the number of section teams across the state. In girls' tennis that has meant multiple AA sections as large as 18 teams, while only two in Class A have at least eight teams. In boys' tennis that has meant multiple Class AA sections (4) with 13-14 teams. [* This based on MSHSL online listing of sections.] The result of such disparity is that many programs around the state have decreased opportunities for post-season advancement and/or success. As shown previously, Mound-Westonka, Columbia Heights, Fridley are examples of this impact.

Why won't current formula options achieve the same success as our proposal?

The answer is simple: the impact would be minimal for the biggest class, marginally impactful on mid-sized schools/programs, and negatively impactful on the smallest school. Switching to 50/50 breakdown, under a two class system, would improve overall ratios for the top class: Girls' AA 7.2:1 > 4.0:1 and Boys' AA 4.4:1 > 3.3:1, yet, these ratios would still be above those of other activities' biggest class, except golf. Further, class A ratios in both would increase. Much the same in a 1/3 division. But, most importantly, such a shifts don't adequately address the underlying needs of tennis regarding enrollment disparity and socioeconomic impact. More directly, the top 32 teams would still likely dominate the biggest class. And while some mid-sized schools could benefit from a move to a smaller class, this could negatively affect the smaller schools in with less socioeconomic affluence that currently have found success in advancing in postseason play. Flipping from the (current) bottom to the top 64 teams and the rest would only yield a similar impact. The current formula options don't work well for the specific challenges facing tennis.

How does your proposal benefit education-based opportunities and MSHSL Mission and Beliefs for all Minnesota students?

A notable part of the MSHSL mission is "to provide educational opportunities through interscholastic athletics and fine arts programs..." The result of the notable impact of enrollment and socioeconomic disparities in MN high school competitive tennis is decreased opportunities for

post-season advancement and success. Our proposal – top 32, rest 50/50 – seeks to directly address this issue by creating more equitable opportunities for all programs and players.

The Tennis Advisory proposal would positively benefit MN high school tennis in important ways. Three class tennis will provide more equitable opportunities regarding socio-economic conditions and school size disparity. More specifically, the 32–50/50 proposal will do the following:

- * Create healthier section competition

- * Designed for (at least) 8 teams per section across all three classes for both Girls' + Boys' tennis

- * Reducing number of teams in some sections from 16 to 18 (currently in AA girls) to 8-11 in AA and A

- * Class AAA – we propose 4 sections in order to have 8 teams per section, allowing for two teams to qualify for the state tournament

- ** Having two teams from a section qualify for state provides opportunities for teams in strongest sections (for example, two top ranked teams in same section); having top 4 qualifiers in individuals creates opportunities for highly skilled players from programs other than top teams in section

- * Class AA – provides opportunities for mid-sized schools that currently have to compete in sections with the largest schools

- * Class A – still keeps smallest programs together and having more teams in the section will create more balanced, competitive sections

- * Reduce enrollment disparity within each class and section

Girls' Tennis – (Class AAA 1.9:1) (Class AA from 7.2 to 2.6:1) (Class A from 3.1 to 5.5:1)

Current girls AA: Wayzata 3396–Glencoe Silver Lake 480. Girls A: Belle Plaine 467–St. John's Prep 154.

Boys's Tennis – (Class AAA 1.9:1) (Class AA from 4.4 to 2.2:1) (Class A from 12.4 to 12.6:1)

Current boys AA: Wayzata 3396–Duluth Denfeld 768. Boys A: St. Paul Wash. 759–Schaeffer Academy 62

The proposed ratios are consistent with those provided to other MSHSL sports and activities with 3 (or more) classes

- * Provides opportunities with 8 more teams + 48 individuals qualifying for State

- * Continue to provide geographic representation across the state within each class\

- * Keep option for teams to opt-up

- * Help build programs due to increased opportunities for post-season advancement

- * Provide significantly greater opportunities for success and more student-athletes a more positive tennis playing experience.

What other policies are significant in this proposal?

The most significant policies involved include Classification Formulas and Tournament Competition. We feel we have thoroughly addressed both within the proposal.

Provide evidence of support for the proposal from other groups

MTCA membership clearly supports this change: from 176 responses (representing 78% of membership), 82% percent support 3-classes for both girls' and boys' tennis, 88% support the 32-50/50 recommendation. Athletic directors who have tennis programs were also surveyed and indicate similar support: 85 of the 100 responses answered 'yes' in support of the proposal. Only

three indicated 'no' from the 100 responses (85%). Our Ad Hoc Committee, 20 coaches from both Class A and AA programs, crafted this proposal.

Impact

How does your proposal affect this activity, including its impact on all classes, areas of the state, and variety of schools

Class AAA – 4 sections, top 2 teams advance, top 4 in individuals

Top teams can advance to State from same section; top players from programs without the same depth have opportunity to advance to State

Example: Shakopee, Burnsville, Prior Lake, Brainerd (teams); Champlin Park, Coon Rapids, Roseville (individual players)

Class AA: brings together teams with (more) similar enrollment plus creates opportunities for mid-sized schools to advance to State

Example(s): Delano, Hutchinson, Chisago Lakes, Mankato East, Mankato West, Grand Rapids, Alexandria, Spring Lake Park, Monticello, Red Wing, Princeton

Class A: still keeps smallest schools together and * added teams (smallest from current AA strengthens section competition)

Example(s): Foley, East Grand Forks, Thief River Falls, Luverne, Mora, Stewartville, *St. Peter, *Hill-Murray, *St. Anthony Village

Administration

How does your proposal impact section and state tournaments?

Consistent with the MSHSL mission of creating opportunities:

Will require an additional State Tournament site

Will require additional section (4) management plus State Tournament site management

Class A Section Tournaments be administered by Class "A" Regions

Class AA & AAA Section Tournaments be administered by Class "AA" Regions

Will add 8 more teams + 48 individual participants

Will require more USTA roving officials

Length of Tournament

How does your proposal impact the needed competition time for section and state tournaments?

We can use the same schedule for Section + State tournaments. Therefore, no change in competition time will be necessary; however, as there will be fewer teams per section in the biggest classes (AAA & A), the start date for section play could be moved later, which could allow for late, regular season rescheduling of matches from inclement weather.

Participants

How does your proposal impact the number of participants/teams?

Our proposal will increase the number of teams by 8 and individual participants by 12-16 individuals in singles + doubles.

How does your proposal impact the percentage of participants/teams that would qualify for the state tournament?

This will modestly increase the percentage of teams by 4% (from 8% to 12% in Girls' Tennis) and 5% (from 9% to 14% in Boys' Tennis). The increase of qualifying individual participants will be approximately 4% of overall individuals in both Girls' and Boys' tennis.

Facilities

How does your proposal impact the facilities needed to accommodate your recommendation at both the section and state level?

An added class will require an additional (indoor) facility for State competition. The MTCA has communicated with the Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center (FORT) in Minneapolis and LifeTime Fitness in Bloomington regarding interest and availability in hosting a State Tournament.

The FORT indicated they could accommodate a Boys' State Tournament (but would have scheduling issues w/ programming in the Fall for Girls' State).

Lifetime Fitness has enthusiastically expressed an interest in hosting both Girls' (fall) and Boys' (spring) State tournaments at one of their facilities.

* Both facility options are located in the Twin City metropolitan area, consistent with current State Tournament sites at the Baseline Tennis Center and InnerCity Tennis. Lifetime Fitness previously has hosted the State Tournament.

** Poor weather conditions have a direct impact on (outdoor) tennis compared with other sports; therefore, indoor facilities are important for the State tournament – notably for the girls' tournament in late October. Moving boys' consolation to an outdoor (school) facility could be considered to alleviate costs if that helped move this proposal forward.

Awards

How does your proposal impact the number of awards at both section and state?

Our proposal will require an increase of 4 team + 60 individual medals for Team State and 10 medals for Individual State competition.

Other

Provide any other pertinent information not included in this proposal

The Tennis Advisory and Ad Hoc Committee that designed this proposal are well aware of the exception for tennis that we seek. Of particular importance is that we recognize that while girls' tennis meets the (current) 3-class threshold for number of teams (194), boys' tennis does not (165). Yet, the SAME enrollment disparity and socioeconomic conditions – including access to indoor facilities and year round training availability – likewise negatively impact boys' tennis and the student-athlete experience. Thus, we are seeking an exception to MSHSL policy for the required

number of teams for 3-classes for boys' tennis and a modification to the classification formula. Our proposal purposely addresses those challenges uniformly, consistently, equitably, and fairly for both girls' and boys' high school tennis.

The Tennis Advisory and Ad Hoc Committee designed this proposal to best benefit tennis programs and players across the state and not one particular team or school. We are confident that it achieves its purpose.

In recent years, the MSHSL has recently addressed the challenge of classification across multiple sports/activities, creating more opportunities for student-athletes. We, the MTCA and high school tennis, are seeking the same consideration. We recognize the inherent challenge in making direct comparisons between sports/activities. However, the MSHSL does have a precedent for modifying the classification formula to best suit the specific needs and challenges of a sport/activity. Football and Dance Team are examples. Due to the clear disparities in enrollment and socioeconomic issues (indoor tennis facility access and affordability, year-round training), we are seeking the same consideration for tennis.

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