Girls Softball – State Tournament Format

Submitted on Mon, 04/10/2023 - 8:18 AM

Indicate the category of the proposed recommendation
State Tournament recommendations regarding Date(s) and Site(s)

Authors of the Proposal
Softball Executive Council & Advisory Committee
Jason Baune, President
Dawn Engebretson, Executive Director
Don Krusemark, President Elect
Brenda Carlson, Treasurer
Mike Schumacher, Website Director
Emmett Keenan, St. Cloud Cathedral Activities Director
Chris Pack, Hayfield Activities Director
Dave Niemi, Becker Activities Director
Ricky Michel, Stillwater Activities Director

Activity/Activities (Check all that apply)
Softball, Girls

Current Rule/Policy
State the rule/policy as it appears in the current MSHSL Handbook or Activity/Sport Specific Rules and Policies.
The current state tournament format is a 2-day tournament in which all teams play 2 games on Day 1. Teams that qualify for Consolation Championship games, 3rd Place games, and Championship games play 1 game on Day 2.

Proposed Recommendation
Submit your proposed change to the above-stated rule/policy.
Our proposal is to move to a 3-day state tournament that would create a better experience for student-athletes, coaches, families, and fans. Each team would play 1 game on day 1 and at least 1 game on day 2. The 3rd day would become a "championship day" in which the 4 championship games would be played.

Include any other policies that are impacted by this proposal.
None that we are aware of.

Rationale
What is the history of the proposal?
The current state tournament format is a 2-day tournament in which all teams play 2 games on Day 1. Teams that qualify for Consolation Championship games, 3rd Place games, and Championship games play 1 game on Day 2.

Negatives of the Current Format
1. Student-athletes play 2 games on the first day of the state tournament. This does not allow...
student-athletes or coaches to be best rested or prepared for competition. In a comparison of “similar” team sports, softball is the only sport that requires teams to play twice on the first day of the state tournament.

2. 25% of teams are eliminated from state tournament play on Day 1 of competition. This does not provide for the best state tournament experience for student-athletes, coaches, families, or fans.

3. Playing 32 games on Day 1 often causes delays in game start times. This is not ideal for team preparation or fan arrival. It sometimes causes teams to be playing at 11:00 pm or later on Day 1. Some of these teams are then asked to play again at 9:00 am on Day 2.

4. On a regular basis, one or more teams have graduation ceremonies on the date of the state tournament. This requires games to be “moved up” in the day and sometimes causes teams to play virtually back-to-back, with no time to rest or prepare for their second game. It affects not only the team with graduation, but other teams that don’t know when their second game will be played until after their first game ends.

5. Playing 32 games on Day 1 requires the heavy use of fields #5-6 at Caswell Park. While these fields are similar to fields #1-4, this is generally considered a negative because they are away from the main pinwheel. This also eliminates any field availability for warm-up at Caswell Park. Teams are on their own to find fields and/or open grassy areas throughout the cities of Mankato and North Mankato to warm-up prior to their state tournament games.

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

Our proposal is to move to a 3-day state tournament that would create a better experience for student-athletes, coaches, families, and fans. We believe it may also be a benefit to our host, Caswell Park in North Mankato.

Positives of the Proposed Format

1. Student-athletes would not be required to play 2 games on the first day and would play on at least 2 days. This would provide better preparation, rest, and make the state tournament a better experience for student-athletes. We do not feel that teams playing 2 “championship bracket” games in one day creates the best competitive environment for determining a champion.

2. This format would provide an experience that is much closer to that of other “similar” team sports, such as baseball.

3. Using fewer fields throughout most of the tournament would provide space for warm-up, decrease the chances of playing games very late into the evening, and provide better options for schools with graduations.

4. This would provide a “Championship Day” experience similar to other team sports in which teams are rested and the championship games are not played simultaneously with other championship games.

5. With all teams playing on two days, 8 teams playing on a 3rd date, and a more consistent game schedule, we believe attendance would increase significantly at Caswell Park. The cities of North Mankato and Mankato would also likely see a significant financial benefit to a three day tournament.
What other policies are significant in this proposal?
We don’t believe any other policies are affected by this proposal.

Provide evidence of support for the proposal from other groups
We provided a survey to head coaches throughout the state and had 76% of head coaches respond to the survey. Of the 273 respondents, 92% are in favor of a 3-day state tournament. This includes over 89% in each of the 4 classes. Also, 91% of coaches in sections 7 & 8 (generally farthest from North Mankato) are in favor.

We have shared our proposal with activities directors in different classes and areas of the state. There have been questions about cost to schools and MSHSL, but a majority have responded favorably towards a 3-day tournament that is very similar to baseball's current format. Some activities directors have agreed to sign on as authors of the proposal as seen above.

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

1. Student-athletes would not be required to play 2 games on the first day and would play on at least 2 days. This would provide better preparation, rest, and make the state tournament a better experience for student-athletes. We do not feel that teams playing 2 “championship bracket” games in one day creates the best competitive environment for determining a champion.

2. This format would provide an experience that is much closer to that of other “similar” team sports, such as baseball.

3. Using fewer fields throughout most of the tournament would provide space for warm-up, decrease the chances of playing games very late into the evening, and provide better options for schools with graduations.

4. This would provide a “Championship Day” experience similar to other team sports in which teams are rested and the championship games are not played simultaneously with other championship games.

5. Families and fans of state tournament teams would have a more consistent schedule which would allow for increased attendance and less hassle with game movement and delays.

Administration
How does your proposal impact section and state tournaments?
This proposal would provide a better state tournament experience for student-athletes. It would also better fit the mission of Title IX to provide the same experience for male and female student-athletes as our proposal closely resembles the current state tournament format for baseball.

There would be increased administrative costs including field rental and lodging for tournament administration and game officials. We believe many of these costs would be offset by increased ticket revenue.
Length of Tournament
How does your proposal impact the needed competition time for section and state tournaments?
This proposal would not impact competition time for the section tournament.

It would increase the state tournament from 2 days to 3 days with each team having the opportunity to play on 2 days. The 8 teams advancing to state championship games would be the only teams playing on the 3rd day of the state tournament, similar to the current state tournament schedule for baseball.

Participants
How does your proposal impact the number of participants/teams?
This proposal would not impact the number of participants or teams at the state tournament.

How does your proposal impact the percentage of participants/teams that would qualify for the state tournament?
This proposal would not impact the percentage of teams qualifying for the state tournament.

Facilities
How does your proposal impact the facilities needed to accommodate your recommendation at both the section and state level?
The proposal would require Caswell Park to be rented an extra day for the state tournament.

Awards
How does your proposal impact the number of awards at both section and state?
This proposal would not impact the number of awards.

Other
Provide any other pertinent information not included in this proposal
The Minnesota Twins have become a great partner of ours and we have had some discussions about ways they can impact the sport of softball. There is potential that they may be willing to work with the MSHSL to make a 3-day tournament or "championship day" more feasible. Specifics have not been discussed at this time.

Primary Author and Contact for Proposal
Proposal submitted by
Jason Baune, Minnesota Fastpitch Coaches Association President
Position
Coach
Phone number
320-333-2573
Email
jbaune@isd726.org