



NEWS RELEASE

Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, Inc.

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Mechanicsburg, PA., (June 20, 2014) –

The PIAA Board of Directors, at its Thursday, June 19th meeting, unanimously adopted a new By-Law which governs the participation of boys and girls participating in the same sports. The action was the first taken on this subject since the 1975 Commonwealth Court decision that restricted boys and girls from playing sports together. Since that decision, a number of girls have participated in football and wrestling, as well as occasional other boys' sports. That participation has not negatively impacted on boys' opportunities or competitiveness in the boys' sports. For some time, however, schools, legislators, parents, administrators and coaches have expressed concerns as to the increasing level of boys who are playing sports designated for girls. That participation has resulted in diminished opportunities for girls, increased risks of injuries for the girls and competitive advantages for the teams that have used boys. Nevertheless, PIAA felt constrained in addressing the issue due to the 1975 order.

In the fall of 2013, the Commonwealth Court clarified the 1975 decision by noting that that case was brought on behalf of a girl seeking to play a boys' sport and the injunction should only be read to apply to girls playing boys' sports. Over the past nine months, PIAA conducted an extensive review of the issues, looking at the interests of both boys and girls, at the issues involved in mixed gender participation, in the objectives of high school sports generally, and in how mixed gender participation impacted on levels of participation, sportsmanship, fairness and competitiveness. Ultimately, the Board crafted a policy which, while it will no doubt not satisfy all, attempts to address the competing interests in a way that is fairest to the largest number of our member schools and participating athletes.

PIAA Executive Director Robert Lombardi stated that the new By-Law focuses on three critical factors: opportunities for female participation, the risk of injuries to girls, and the possibility of significant competitive advantage if boys are allowed to participate in girls' sports. With some additional guidance, high school principals will be given discretion to assess and apply these factors when boys desire to play on a girls' team.

Where teams have both boys and girls playing, they will be considered mixed gender teams. Because PIAA currently sponsors only playoffs for boys' and girls' classifications, and not a mixed gender one, the Board decided to classify mixed gender teams as boys' teams. This was felt to be appropriate in light of the number of girls already playing on boys' teams and the competitive advantage that an overwhelming percentage of the membership believe mixed gender teams have when competing against girls-only teams. For playoff purposes, mixed gender teams will play in the boys' playoffs. To facilitate this decision, the Board also took jurisdiction over boys' field hockey, with the hope that the sport will grow and have enough all boys and mixed gender teams to have boys' playoffs in the future.

Dr. Lombardi stated that "This is a watershed day in the history of PIAA. The Board has taken unanimous action to address a complex and challenging issue in a way that protects the ideals of fair competition and the health and safety of our student athletes. The new by-law is attached and will go into effect July 1, 2014 and be in effect for the upcoming 2014-15 school year.

PIAA Contact: PIAA Executive Director, Dr. Robert Lombardi.

ARTICLE XVI

SEASONS AND OUT-OF-SEASONS RULES AND REGULATIONS

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Section 4. Mixed Gender Participation. PIAA strongly supports and encourages participation by both boys and girls in interscholastic athletics. Based upon real and demonstrable physical and competitive differences between similarly aged and trained high school boys and girls in athletic performances, PIAA recognizes that combining genders for competition purposes would have a chilling effect on female participation in interscholastic athletics. PIAA further recognizes that, historically, girls' participation has been much more limited than boys' participation. To promote participation by the historically underrepresented gender in a fair competitive environment, PIAA, therefore, classifies sports by gender and limits mixed gender participation as follows.

A. If a school has a Boys' Team in a sport, boys at the school are not eligible to play on the school's Girls' Team in that sport. If a school has a Girls' Team in a sport, girls at the school are not eligible to play on the school's Boys' Team in that sport. The Principal may waive this limitation for a girl seeking to play on a Boys' Team if the Principal believes that the girl's skill level is such that participation on the Girls' Team would not provide meaningful competition for the girl.

B. Girls may play on a Boys' Team if the student's school does not sponsor a comparable Girls' Team in that sport. NOTE: softball and baseball are not viewed as being comparable sports. Despite some differences in rules, boys' volleyball and girls volleyball, as well as boys' lacrosse and girls' lacrosse, are viewed as comparable sports.

C. Boys may play on a Girls' Team if the student's school does not sponsor a Boys' Team in that sport and the Principal determines that;

1. the overall boys' athletic program at the student's school provides fewer opportunities for boys to participate than for girls;
2. the boy would not displace any girl from the Team's roster;
3. the boy would likely not, due to his physical size, athletic ability, and/or other characteristics, pose an increased risk of harm to opponents beyond that which would be posed by an average-sized and skilled participating girl; and
4. the boy would not provide his Team with a significant competitive advantage (as applicable herein, this means that the boy's participation would likely cause the Team to be noticeably more competitive than it would be without the boy's participation on the Team).

In considering whether to permit participation, with regard to factors 3 and 4, above, the Principal shall be guided by the following:

a. Where there is a question as to the risk posed to opponents or to a possible significant competitive advantage to the Principal's Team, such questions should be resolved in favor of the health and safety of opponents and in favor of preventing significant competitive advantage.

b. Due to the increased risk of injury to opponents in direct contact sports (field hockey, lacrosse, soccer and volleyball), particular scrutiny should be applied by the Principal to requests in these sports.

Notwithstanding any other provision in this Section, boys are permitted to participate on a Spirit Team without Principal approval.

D. Rules applicable to Mixed Gender Teams: Because PIAA does not have a Mixed Gender classification, the following provisions govern participation by Mixed Gender Teams:

1. for Post Season purposes, Mixed Gender Teams (other than in the sport of Spirit) shall compete only in the sport classifications designated for boys.
2. For enrollment classification purposes, a Mixed Gender Team shall be classified by using the school's enrollment number for whichever gender constitutes a majority of the Team members.
3. In the sport of volleyball, a Mixed Gender Team shall play during the boys' Regular Season and Post Season.

E. Where a student's gender is questioned or uncertain, the decision of the Principal as to the student's gender will be accepted by PIAA.

F. Nothing in this Section shall be interpreted to require a school to have a Mixed Gender Team where such participation would be inconsistent with the school's religious beliefs.

G. The refusal of a Team to participate in a Contest against a Mixed Gender Team shall result in forfeiture of the Contest by the Team which refuses to participate. In sports in which individual events or matches are conducted, refusal of a contestant to participate in any event or match will result in forfeiture of that event or match by that student and not by the Team.

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GLOSSARY

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BOYS' TEAM: A Team consisting of all boys.

GIRLS' TEAM: A Team consisting of all girls.

MIXED GENDER TEAM: A Team consisting of both boys and girls. Participation of both boys and girls on a Team in any Contest during a season causes the Team to be considered as a Mixed Gender Team for that season.

