



Kentucky High School Athletic Association

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March 27, 2018

Commissioner Greg Sankey
Southeastern Conference
2201 Richard Arrington Jr Blvd, North
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Mr. Sankey,

First, thanks to you and your staff for the continued excellent communication with our state offices in the SEC footprint. It is a vital and hopefully, helpful line of communication for both our state associations and your staff.

1. As we have discussed in our meetings, the KHSAA utilizes Rupp Arena for our boys' state basketball championships (Sweet 16®) and have for 35 of the past 40 seasons. In reality, we have no other option despite the presence of the Yum Center in Louisville. The demographics of our audience and our past ticket purchasers simply require that we hold the event in Lexington. We have an average of more than 11,000 fans at each of eight sessions over five days, leaving us no other options. This event generates over \$1 million dollars in ticket sales for our association out of our \$3.5 million budget. Obviously, it is critical. Rupp Arena is scheduled to host our boys' tournament through 2028.

We are asking for any possible scheduling considerations for the final regular season week of 2018-2019 as it relates to Kentucky's use of Rupp Arena. We recognize that the University is the largest client for use of the arena. I also recognize that while we may be second in terms of the event size, etc. for Rupp events, it is to everyone's advantage that all of us work together. Please let me detail the reasons for our request.

2. The 2018-19 season presents a particularly "quirk" in scheduling that occurs every few years with the scheduling of the men's basketball seasons. While the schedule for NCAA men's basketball is based on scheduling back from the first weekend in April for the Final Four®, the NFHS planning calendar for state associations is based on the Thanksgiving weekend always occurring during Week 21. This is illustrated by the attached chart. Periodically, as leap year and other calendar scheduling situations occur, the two planning calendars do not line up. 2018-2019 is one of those years, as it 2023-24 as you can see from the attached calendar.
3. Our high school basketball season is always twelve weeks long for us and begins on the Monday following Thanksgiving. The thirteenth week is what we call "district" and the fourteenth is what we call "region". We then have one week for our girls' tournament and one week for our boys' tournament.
4. In most years, the men's conference tournaments occur during our fifteenth week, and we have traditionally played our girls' tournament that week. This is less of a conflict for our Association and has not had a harmful impact on attendance. This would not be the case if we conflict on the mens' side. We have then player our boys' tournament the week of the NCAA first round men's tournament weekend.
5. We have played our girls' tournament at a variety of facilities including Eastern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University and most recently, at Northern Kentucky University.
6. The format and schedule for our two tournaments is the same, with eight individually ticketed sessions. We play at noon on Wednesday (2 games), 6:30 on Wednesday (2 games), noon on Thursday (2 games), 6:30 on Thursday (2 games), noon on Friday (2 games) and 6:30 on Friday (2 games), 6:30 on Saturday night (2 games) and 2:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.
7. It is worth noting that in addition to our own radio and webcast network, we have 13 media outlets that broadcast all 15 games of our tournament, so the logistical setup of all of those media outlets is important for us to consider. They generally setup the afternoon before and all other their requirement remains setup throughout the tournament, so any setup and teardown is an issue for us.
8. For 2018-19, the men's season actually extends into our fifteenth week. Meaning that Kentucky would normally have a home game during the period of March 3-9, 2019, a week later than their normal conclusion of the season.
9. In May of 2017, Rupp Arena responded to an RFP from the KHSAA to host the girls' state tournament in 2019 through 2022. Their proposal offered to host the Girls' State tournament March 6-10, 2019 as no other reserved dates existed on the Rupp schedule. In addition, Rupp was scheduled to host our boys' tournament March 13-17 of that same year. The Board of Control accepted their proposal.
10. In January, 2018 as part of routine preparation for this year's tournament, I confirmed with Rupp that the arena was in fact held for us for those two weeks in 2019. It was only at that time that anyone discovered that the NCAA regular season actually extended into that week for 2019. No prior dates were on hold at Rupp Arena for UK.

11. The same situation as is occurring in 2019 occurred in 2013, and the KHSAA made accommodations for the University of Kentucky home game once schedules were announced that prior spring. We actually moved our finals for the first time to Sunday afternoon to better allow both UK and the KHSAA to use Rupp on the same weekend.
12. For 2020-21, the staff at Rupp Arena previously contacted our office (along with the staff of the University of Kentucky) when they applied to host the NCAA Men's first round. This hosting would necessitate the KHSAA moving its tournament off its scheduled week to allow the arena to be available for the SEC and UK to host that round. Not only did we adjust our schedule for that year, we actually have moved the entire basketball season one week earlier that year (starting before Thanksgiving) to ensure that Rupp Arena is available for both our event and for UK to host that round. This is evidenced by the attached calendar. This is a move we have made on several occasions to work with UK, the SEC and Rupp Arena.
13. In addition, we have made the determination, at least for now, that we are better to conflict with a single game adjustment than to have three days of conflict with the SEC mens' tournament. So for now, our plans are to play our boys' tournament first (March 6-10), then play our girls' tournament March 13-17. This is subject to change based on the UK scheduling decision.

What am I asking on behalf of our office? There appear to be alternatives as schedules are finalized. And of course, UK (who is copied) likely has preferences, but I hope you will at least consider our situation and consider these in preference order.

1. Playing the UK home game on Monday or Tuesday night of that week would allow for an overnight setup of the venue for our tournament to start at its usual noon time. We do not utilize the same seating and auxiliary space setup as UK for home games, but I believe after meeting with the Rupp staff that we could turn enough of the building around to be able to start at noon. We could then finalize any incomplete setup overnight on Wednesday (after our four games conclude around 10:00 p.m.) to be ready to begin again at noon on Thursday. This would be at likely additional labor cost to the KHSAA, but cost that we would simply have to find a way to bear.
2. Playing the UK game on Sunday afternoon. We could then look at a return to our old schedule of playing both our semifinals and finals on Saturday or other modified schedule. This is not desired by our coaches of either gender, but we have to keep it as an option.
3. Playing the UK game on Saturday at noon is an alternative as well. We could then turn the arena once the UK game is over. This will be a hardship on our broadcast teams, but is an option.
4. The absolute worst option is that Kentucky plays on Thursday night, March 7. That would mean displacement of four total games. As we discuss setup and teardown with various operational entities at Rupp, I am not sure this is even practical for us to play there if this conflict occurs, but time will tell.

I guess in the end, I am simply asking that as that schedule is finalized for 2019, particularly with the SEC Network and the league office, some consideration be given to helping resolve this conflict. I realize that Rupp staff did not know that there was such a conflict possible when they bid for this tournament, but this is a landmark opportunity for us to hold both tournaments at our premier venue. But we are going to have some scheduling help to make it work.

I remain available to talk to anyone on staff about any options, and certainly know that UK and Rupp staffs are willing to do whatever we all can collectively do to make it work.

Thank you again for listening

Sincerely,



Julian Tackett
Commissioner

xc: William King, SEC Offices
Matt Boyer, SEC Offices
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Dan Leibovitz, SEC Offices
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