

08/27/18 – KHSAA PARTICIPATION NUMBERS REACH RECORD LEVELS IN 2017-18



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Student-athlete participation in Kentucky High School Athletic Association sports and sport-activities reached record levels in 2017-18 with 106,214 rostered participants across the KHSAA's 13 sports and five sport-activities. Participation has increased by 6.6% since the 2012-13 season, with an increase of 6,571 rostered participants over the last five years, buoyed by the addition of five sport-activities (Archery, Bass Fishing, Bowling, Competitive Cheer and Dance) and the sport of Field Hockey. KHSAA participation in 2017-18 was also boosted by the continued growth of the Unified Track & Field and Unified Bowling programs.

Despite a drop in 463 rostered participants from 2016-17 to 2017-18, Football remains the most popular sport in the state in terms of participation with 13,304 student-athletes across all levels (33 females) playing for 221 schools. At the varsity-only level, football participation dropped 214 student-athletes between the 2017 and 2018 seasons. Part of the decline in participation numbers can be attributed to a greater push by the Association for accurate roster entry from its member schools.

"Our participation numbers are always based solely on the rosters submitted by the membership," said KHSAA Commissioner Julian Tackett. "Last year, our schools reported 13,271 boys playing football (freshmen, JV, varsity) and an additional 33 girls. This is a decrease from the prior year of 13,732 boys and 35 girls from the 2016-17 year. This certainly follows a national trend in this one sport. While our varsity numbers were only down less than one student per team (11,859 total compared to 12,073 the year prior), it is a clear sign that the non-varsity participation continues to decrease.

"This will likely factor into future varsity participation numbers if our schools are unable to reverse this trend. It is certainly disappointing to see this decline in participation, but it is not a problem isolated to Kentucky. While the sport has never been safer, in terms of both rules and equipment, declining school enrollments and other sports with perceived less injury risk offer alternatives that many are choosing."

Among the sports with separate teams for each gender (boys and girls), Soccer ranked first in the state with 12,451 total rostered competitors, followed by Basketball (12,374) and Track & Field (12,026). Among boys' sports, Baseball was second in the state with 7,230 participants, followed by Basketball (7,061), Track and Field (6,633) and Soccer (6,545). On the female side, Volleyball was the most popular sport among girls with 6,221 participants, followed by Softball (5,659), Track & Field (5,393), Basketball (5,313) and Soccer (5,096).

Competitive Cheer was the most popular sport-activity with 5,066 total rostered participants, followed closely by Archery at 4,883. Bowling (1,926) and Bass Fishing (1,452) were third and fourth among sport-activities, with Dance registering 1,240 participants in its first year as a KHSAA-sanctioned offering.

Archery saw the greatest year-over-year growth in terms of increased participants, with 425 more student-athletes in 2017-18 versus 2016-17 (an increase of 9.5 percent). Tennis ranked second with 207 new participants, while Bass Fishing (162) and Bowling (123) each added over 100 new competitors.

Basketball ranked as the most-sponsored sport across Kentucky with 270 schools fielding boys' teams last year and 268 fielding a girls' team. Volleyball had the second-highest number of teams with 264, followed by baseball (261), track and field (258) and softball (257).

Subsequent to the release of the NFHS participation data, a transposition error was discovered in the data attributed to Kentucky. The information has been corrected with the NFHS and is reflected in the data available at KHSAA.org (<https://khsaa.org/general/resources/membership-reports-and-data/>).

-KHSAA-

About the Kentucky High School Athletic Association

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association was organized in 1917 and is the agency designated by the Kentucky Department of Education to manage high school athletics in the Commonwealth. The Association is a voluntary

nonprofit 501(c)3 organization made up of 280 member schools both public and private. The KHSAA sanctions 44 state championships in 13 sports and 5 sport-activities, licenses and trains over 4,000 officials, provides catastrophic insurance for its more than 70,000 member school student-athletes, as well as overseeing coaching education and sports safety programs.

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