

'Overwhelming' majority of Idaho coaches want a shot clock. But IHSAA rejects it again.

[Michael Lycklama](#)



More than 80 percent of Idaho's high school basketball coaches want to add a shot clock to their sport. But they won't get one anytime soon.

Idaho's high school governing body rejected the latest appeal to add a shot clock to boys and girls high school basketball Wednesday, citing costs, calling it unnecessary and worrying about falling out of compliance with national rules.

The board of directors for the [Idaho High School Activities Association](#) (IHSAA) briefly discussed letters from the 5A and 4A Southern Idaho Conferences and the 5A and 4A Inland Empire Leagues pleading for a shot clock. But no board member stepped forward to call for a vote, allowing it to die on the board's discussion agenda.

"It's unfortunate. But unfortunately, it's not super surprising to me," Vallivue boys basketball coach Ryan Lundgren said. "I had a feeling a lot of them wouldn't really seriously consider it even though it's a real need for our game."

STRONG SUPPORT

A survey conducted last season showed 84 percent of Idaho's coaches, boys and girls, supported adding a 35-second shot clock. That included unanimous support in the 5A classification and 44 of the 46 coaches (96 percent) that responded at the 4A level.

Lundgren, Mountain View boys basketball coach Jon Nettleton and Meridian boys basketball coach Jeff Sanor conducted the survey. Sixty-nine percent of the state's coaches responded, and support held up at the lower levels with each classification topping 70 percent, including 3A (74 percent), 2A (87 percent), 1A Division I (70 percent) and 1A Division II (81 percent).

Athletic directors also voted with 72 percent in favor of a shot clock. Fifty-five percent of the state's athletic directors responded.

"The statistics are overwhelming in favor of the shot clock, both from the coaches and the administrators, from 5A to 1A," Lundgren said.

"It's time to step up and take the steps necessary to implement this."



Borah celebrates after winning the 2001 state championship over Boise thanks to its stall tactics. Borah lost three previous meetings against Boise, but stalled on offense to win the state title game 17-7. Borah led 7-3 after three quarters. "They have the best talent in the state of Idaho, without question," Borah coach Jim Pankratz told the Idaho Statesman. "Our only chance was to take advantage of the clock."

Katherine Jones kjones@idahostatesman.com

THE IHSAA'S REASONS

But IHSAA board members Beth Holt and Bob Ranells said they wanted to see support from the state's principals and superintendents, who would pay for the shot clocks and the staff to run them, before moving forward with a drastic rule change.

Sales representatives from [Nevco](#) and [Daktronics](#), two leading scoreboard manufacturers, told the [Idaho Statesman in 2015](#) adding a pair of shot clocks to existing scoreboards would cost \$1,500 to \$3,000. Wireless capability would add another \$1,000. Paying \$20 for someone to run the clock would add up to \$400 a year for 10 boys and 10 girls home games.

"We have many venues in soccer that don't have a clock, and the rules dictate that we have a clock," Ranells said. "My contention would be before we go off on a sidebar adventure, let's make sure that all of our venues have a running clock. ... Let's take care of all the things we have going on right now with swimming and soccer. And then we can stand back and take a look where we are with this."

A shot clock also would put Idaho out of compliance with rules set by the [National Federation of State High School Associations](#) (NFHS). Holt, the Fruitland athletic director and former girls basketball coach, sits on the national rules committee and wraps up a four-year term representing six states in April.

Idaho would forfeit its right to sit on that rules committee by adding a shot clock. The IHSAA gave up its seat on the wrestling rules committee when it added a 98-pound weight class in the 2011-12 school year. But it has repeatedly said it doesn't want to do the same for basketball.

"This group has made it pretty clear in our discussions that they want to follow the federation rules as much as possible," Holt said. "I think when there is not an overwhelming amount of states adopting (a shot clock), we feel like we are right in compliance with how a lot of other

states feel.”

Nettleton said a company has approached him inquiring about a sponsorship to defray the costs of adding a shot clock, but he declined to reveal its identity. Lundgren added he’d trade Idaho’s place on the national rules committee for a shot clock in a heartbeat.

“All they vote on at the NFHS are what color spandex you can wear under your jersey and how big is the coaches box,” Lundgren said. “It’s pretty meaningless in the grand scheme of things. Adding a shot clock far outweighs our vote on that committee.”

Last year, the [national rules committee](#) approved an exception to the backcourt violation and clarified specifications for game balls.



Meridian junior Jordan Pearce makes a baseline move to the basket around Mountain View's Austin Smart on Tuesday at Mountain View High.

Darin Oswald doswald@idahostatesman.com

SHOT CLOCK NATIONWIDE

Eight states currently use a shot clock: Washington, California, North Dakota, South Dakota, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Washington was the most recent state to add it in 2009-10 for boys basketball after [66 percent of its coaches](#) voted in favor of it. Cost and a place on the NFHS rules committee were not a factor as Washington had used a shot clock for girls basketball since 1974.

Meanwhile, [Arizona](#), [Texas](#), [Arkansas](#) and [Maine](#) are all experimenting with a shot clock for public schools in nonconference tournaments this season. North Carolina's private schools also started a tournament with a shot clock this winter.

Their tinkering follows [USA Basketball and the NBA](#) jointly recommending a 24-second shot clock for the high school level last March. No high schools or colleges nationwide currently use a 24-second clock.

"The 24-second shot clock for ninth- to 12th-graders allows for more possessions for each team, better game flow and places decision-making elements in the hands of players," the national recommendations state.

WHY IT'S NEEDED, NOT NEEDED

Supporters say a shot clock leads to a cleaner, better version of the game. Stalling tactics, while rare, are quickly outlawed. Teams trailing at the end of the game don't have to resort to fouling to mount a comeback. And the shot clock rewards teams that play tough defense by forcing a low-percentage shot instead of letting an opponent wait for a layup.

"I've been at games where you have two team fouls, then all of sudden it's ball in, foul. Ball in, foul. Ball in, foul," Post Falls Athletic Director Craig Christensen said. "You've got to foul five times to get them to the bonus, and then it's a free-throw contest.

"Coming from my coaches, they want the kids to make plays instead

of sitting back and watching who is the best free-throw shooting team."

But detractors say the shot clock is a solution in search of a problem. Few high school possessions last longer than 35 seconds in today's game. So schools should spend those resources elsewhere.

"Some of the feedback I've received from athletic directors, in general, is why would we spend the money on a shot clock and hire somebody for something that affects the game so little, in their opinion," Holt said. "I coached girls basketball for a long time, and we were either going to get a shot off or turn the ball over in 35 seconds."

The latest survey showed growing support among Idaho's coaches. A [2013 survey by the \(Idaho Falls\) Post Register](#) showed 62 percent of the state's coaches wanted a shot clock. A [2015 survey by the Idaho Statesman](#) measured statewide support at 66 percent.

Wednesday's rejection marked the IHSAA's third in recent years. It denied Post Falls' proposal to use it at only the 5A and 4A levels in 2013, and it declined Centennial's request to use a shot clock for a [holiday tournament in the 2014-15 season](#).

Ranells said while the state rejected it again, it doesn't mean it's off the table forever.

"We'll see where we go in the next five years," Ranells said. "The discussion and the decision today isn't something that locks us in forever and ever."