

Girls basketball: NYSPHSAA to vote on switching to NFHS rules despite significant pushback

[Mike Zacchio](#) | Rockland/Westchester Journal News Updated 18 hours ago



For the third time in the last decade, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) will vote to determine whether it will implement rules set out by the National Federation of State High Schools Association (NFHS) when available.

Sports that would be affected by the vote include girls basketball, softball, gymnastics and boys and girls volleyball.

The vote is scheduled to take place on May 2 at the NYSPHSAA

Annual Meeting at The Embassy Suites in Saratoga Springs. The meeting is open to the public.

The motion, which was handily defeated twice in the past, has received continuous pushback from coaches and officials throughout the state. The rationale behind voting for a third time is “designed to bring resolution to this topic,” [according to the NYSPHSAA meeting agenda](#).

The vote stands to have the most serious implications on girls basketball, which has been playing by NCAA rules — with modifications for high school play — for over 35 years.

Many in the girls basketball community across the state believe switching to NFHS rules would be a step back for Title IX, which was instituted in 1974 as a way to ensure equality between women and their male counterparts in athletics.

“The NYSPHSAA Girls Basketball Committee is in unanimous support of maintaining the NCAA rules for New York State Girls Basketball,” NYSPHSAA girls basketball coordinator Tim Lincoln wrote in a letter to state coaches. “There has been no evidence or support from NYS Section Coordinators or NYS High School Girls Basketball coaches across the state asking for a change to NFHS rules.”

The NYSPHSAA previously voted on adopting the NFHS rules in 2011 and 2014. The action was overwhelmingly defeated on both occasions, 17-5 and 20-2.

'Major' differences in the rules

If approved, the changes would not go into effect until the 2022-23 season, according to the New York State Girls Basketball Officials Association (NYSGBOA).

Lincoln said he has identified 28 “major” differences between NCAA rules and NFHS rules, which is used by NYSPHSAA boys basketball teams. Among the differences, the most notable is that [the NFHS has no rule for a shot clock](#). Waivers may be applied for the implementation of a shot clock, but it is possible games would be played without one.

A change to NFHS rules would also eliminate a stopped clock on a made basket in the final minute of fourth quarter and overtime, the ability to advance the ball to half-court in the same time frame, and change how bonus free throws are awarded throughout the game.

The Ossining girls basketball team, which has [won five Class AA NYSPHSAA championships](#) in the past seven years, has played games under NFHS rules in various states and tournaments. Pride coach Dan Ricci says the game is not the same as it is under NCAA rules.

“We're advanced, there's no doubt,” said Ricci, who has been an outspoken critic of the potential rules change. “Everywhere we go, when people are told we play by NCAA rules, they're like, 'Wow, you guys are lucky. We should be playing by those rules.' ”

Margaret Fraina, who serves as executive secretary-treasurer of the NYSGBOA, believes the NYSPHSAA will question why New York is one of the only states in the country that uses NCAA rules for girls basketball. Fraina, however, believes using NCAA rules puts the state on the “cutting edge.”

“What’s wrong with being different, when different makes for a better game?” she asked.

Fraina said the biggest impact would be on the officials.

More than 2,200 officials would need to be retrained and tested on NFHS rules in order to become certified, which would be a “costly undertaking” for the 26 girls basketball officials boards throughout the state.

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Overwhelming opposition

In February 2018, Lincoln conducted a survey asking all 709 schools that participate in girls basketball throughout the state if they prefer to play by NCAA or NFHS rules. More than 75 percent of schools responded, and the results were staggering.

Of the 547 schools than responded to the survey, 521 of them voted to keep playing by NCAA rules, which works out to just over 95 percent.

NYSPHSAA executive director Robert Zayas conducted his own survey in final week of June 2018 which included coaches, officials and school administrators throughout the state. In the survey, Zayas directly asked both coaches and officials which rules they prefer to use.

More than 85 percent of the 481 officials that participated in the survey voted in favor of NCAA rules. The results were even greater in the coaches poll, where just under 88 percent of 414 coaches surveyed supported NCAA rules.

Zayas said there is a misconception that he is pushing for the use of NFHS rules.

"Absolutely not the case," he said. "It doesn't matter to me one way or another what rules we play by."

Zayas attended the Section 1 Athletic Council meeting Tuesday morning, and tweeted that the section "does not support NFHS Rules in all sports nor the proposed adjustment in sport season lengths."

The NYSPHSAA Executive Committee, which is comprised of two representatives from all 11 sections, will vote on the matter at the May 2 meeting. Section 1 will be represented by Bronxville athletic director Karen Peterson and Hen Hud principal James Mackin.

Section 1 Executive Director Todd Santabarbara would not explicitly say how the section will vote, but indicated that the consensus favors the existing rules.

"The general feeling is that our membership is expressing to our male and female reps that they would like to see us support the current existing rules for those sports that are in question," he said. "We want to make sure we're in a place where we have a good grasp of how our membership feels and how they want us to vote, but ultimately our male and female reps are the ones casting the vote."

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