

Commissioner Julian Tackett

Topic

Sports Report

Sports Report

Sport

Winter Basketball

Positive Developments and Highlights

The 23-24 basketball season is one week longer than normal, but has proceeded without incident. Mr. Cope has handled regular season inquiries as well as assisting with the district and region and has done a great job. Basketball, compared to others, may have less inquiries about its rules, but with nearly every school fielding at least two teams, the volume of inquiries about every other aspect is very large.

Issues of Concern (legal, playing Rules, fiscal management, etc.)

Seeding Plans

One issue that continues to come up, is the seeding decision made by the board in 2020-21. After a lengthy discussion that year, the recommendation was approved that would eliminate random tiebreakers for any District that had voted to seed their District. This decision affected all team sports district tournaments for which seeding is an option, which includes baseball, basketball, soccer, softball and volleyball. This decision was shared with the membership, and since that time has been continually reviewed in regional administrator's meetings as well as the specific sports rules clinics. At issue at the time of discussion were many outdated seeding plans and the fact that on multiple occasions, regularly each year, the association was asked to "referee" disputes about local decisions. It has always been viewed as best that the seeding issues be made at the local level. That's the reason the board, on multiple occasions over the years, has declined to intervene with districts where there is a dispute about whether or not to seed in the first place. As part of this discussion, the board concurred with the recommendation that once the decision had been made to seed, it was the will of the membership that those ranked positions at the end of the year be decided by contests on the field, pitch, or court. Therefore, our competition rules needed a tiebreaker in the event that the local tiebreaker did not solve the issue. Compounding the problem is that over the years there continues to be a large turnover each year in both athletic administrators and coaches. Many times, district schools are left to try to interpret cryptic shorthand notes made by former coaches and administrators about how these tiebreakers should be determined and applied. This is the ultimate in local control issue without a doubt. As the board was convinced then and the staff remains convinced now, we cannot be as a staff partly in the seeding decisions and partly not in the seeding decisions when there is a dispute. Therefore, it was determined that any seeded District that the published tiebreaker involving contests on the court field or pitch

did not yield clear results, should be determined by simply looking at the RPI of the teams involved on the day following the seeded District game deadline. By using this date, it would be clear that all games had been played that could be counted and a district that had voted to seed should be able to finalize their seed.

Despite these multiple notices over the years and adherence in other sports, there are still a number of districts who have relied on a random tiebreak if their on-court/field/pitch tiebreaker didn't solve an issue. Obviously, this contradicts the policy but the association has been fairly hesitant to order a change in the bracketing. This becomes a contentious issue when the coach or administrator who HAS read or heard the notices, is placed in a negative position by the use of this outdated provision. For the office, the messaging has been consistent. The requirement is the requirement as it comes to seeded district play. However, our best course has continued to be to remind them of the rule and remind them that if issues came to the state office, the board's prior approved determination regarding comparative RPI would prevail. It has seldom been an issue in any of the other team sports. but I think we'd be foolish not to recognize that many of the seeding plans that exist in basketball districts have been in place since long before any person currently in a meeting was in attendance.

The plan right now, is after this postseason, to direct that all prior seeding plans as reported need to be reaffirmed by the member schools in the district. This would require a majority vote of the schools. This would not be a new discussion of whether or not to seed, or any mandate to seed, as those decisions have already been made, and there are protocols and vote requirements if a group of schools wanted to change that decision.

In doing this, is to ensure that the current group of schools are well aware of what the seeding plan is for the district. It is also important that the schools in the district take the time to go multiple levels down impossible scenarios, considering all of the situations that have occurred over the past few years, and execute a much more detailed comprehensive and understandable plan that will survive future scrutiny.

It is 100% not the objective of the office to be involved in these discussions. As a matter of fact, these decisions should be locally made and locally controlled. but it definitely appears a reset and recalibration of all of the existing plans remains the only solution that will help the inconsistent communication among many of our schools. But we as staff don't want to be is the referee for these decisions, and we shouldn't be as these should be made at the local level

Championship Update/Review

Plans are being finalized for the boys and girls state tournaments, as well as 64 district and 16 regional tournaments around the state.

Officials Update/Review

Officiating numbers are level with last year with few if any varsity games canceled due to a lack of officials

**Noteworthy Changes /
Anticipates Changes**

It is likely due to a couple of winter storms that occurred on weekends, that several schools will not meet the required threshold on prime date. Mr. Cope is now responsible for that report and will be reporting to the Board in May.