

OSSAA board votes to reclassify high school football teams based on October attendance

OKLAHOMA CITY — OSSAA board members voted Wednesday to use October attendance numbers to reclassify high school football teams and change upcoming schedules to comply with a recent court ruling.

Last week, [a judge prohibited the association from enforcing amendments](#) to a rule that would elevate private school classification based on postseason achievement instead of enrollment.

"We're basically using the same process, we're just using a different set of numbers this time," OSSAA Executive Director David Jackson said. "Being up against a time component where we are starting to play football in August and schools will need to make schedules, that becomes the biggest issue for us right now."

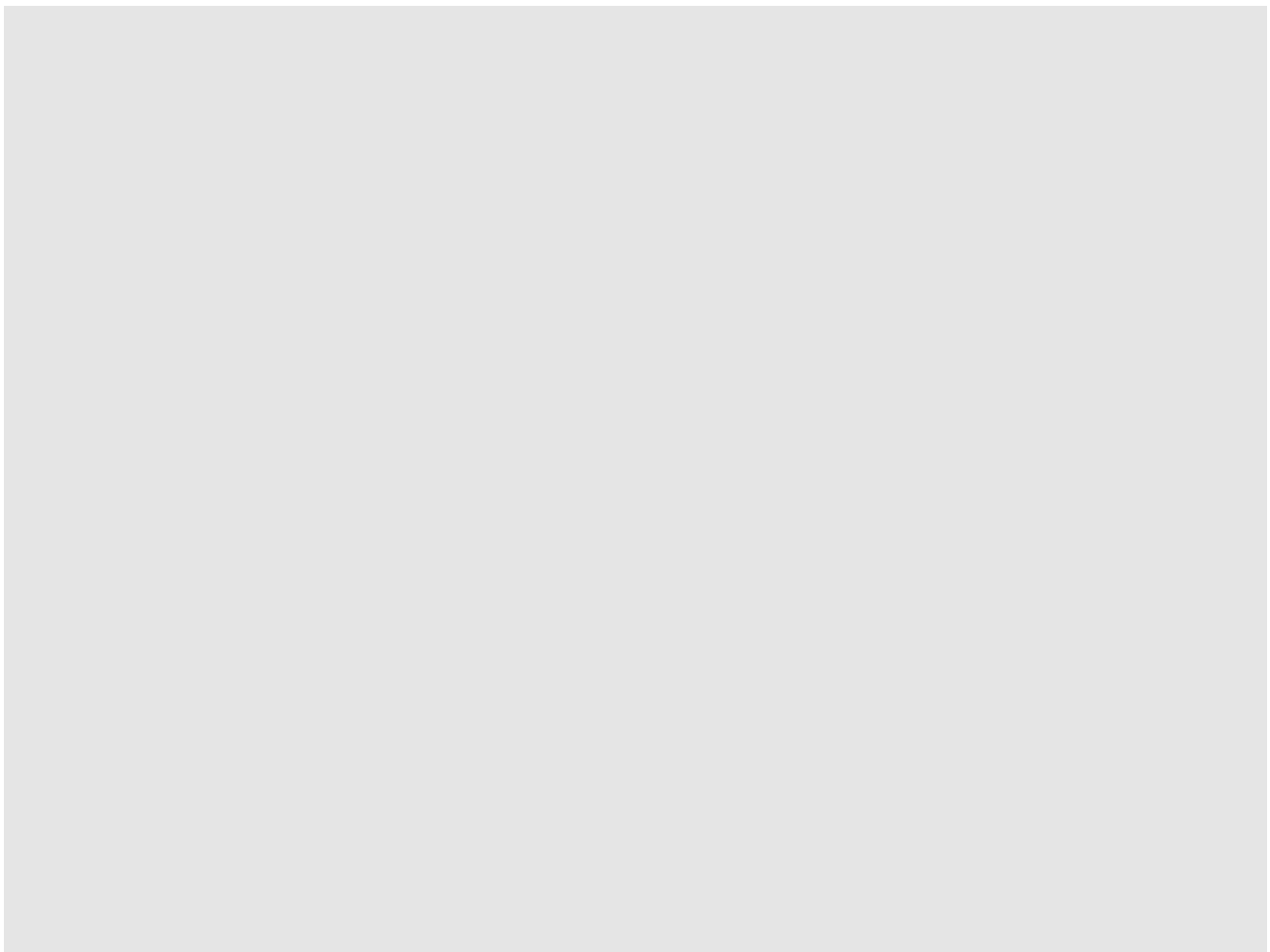
People are also reading...

Oklahoma County District Judge Richard Ogden ruled in a lawsuit brought by five Oklahoma City-area private schools that amendments to Rule 14 adopted before the 2023-24 school year must be voided effective July 1.

Rule 14 places private schools in higher classifications than they would normally be placed based on enrollment if they have extended postseason success in an effort to achieve competitive balance.

“The courts intervening in any of our rules is probably the biggest concern for us and our membership,” Jackson told reporters. “We have rules and policies, we have mechanisms with which to change those in the organization. “In a membership-driven organization ... the membership wasn’t able to have the final say there.”

In December, the five private schools — Crossings Christian, Heritage Hall, Bishop McGuinness, Oklahoma Christian School and Mount St. Mary — filed a lawsuit claiming that the rule is unconstitutional.



Administrators gather before the OSSAA board meeting Wednesday in Oklahoma City.

Tim Willert, For the Tulsa World

After meeting in executive session, the OSSAA issued this statement,

"In consultation with the attorneys for the OSSAA, the OSSAA Board of Directors approved the formation of an ad hoc committee today. The committee will include OSSAA Board Members, Executive Director David Jackson, Assistant Director Grant Gower and OSSAA attorneys. The committee will explore a resolution of the pending litigation and what Rule 14 will look like going forward."

Sapulpa football coach Tim Holt was among dozens of football coaches and athletic directors who filled the OSSAA board room for Wednesday's meeting.

Holt, accompanied by basketball coach Jordan Nagel, worried about the consequences the ruling could have on his team's classification going forward.

"This could affect us more than anybody on the east side because we are at the top of (District) 5A," he said. "Whatever happens, we could get bumped up to 6A.

"We were solidly in 5A, football wise, for the next couple of years. We've already got our schedules set, which is going to be the hardest part. If they reclassify and they bump everybody around, we might have to find new non-district games because our district's going to change."

As a result of the judge's ruling, classification and district alignments in several sports will likely need to be adjusted. Currently many schools, especially those below 5A, don't know for sure who they'll be playing in their season openers, or on any week during the season.

"Anytime you have to make changes like this it is going to create a chaotic situation," said Norman North football coach Justin Jones, the executive director of the Oklahoma Football Coaches Association.

"For our membership at the OFBCA, we are happy with the decision by the OSSAA board to use October numbers to reclassify. Though we have a lot of work to do in the coming days we feel confident we can accomplish this task. By using October numbers, we are able to assure that every school in Oklahoma is playing off the same data points of (average daily membership) as well as accounting for on field results from the 22 and 23 seasons."

Jackson said the process for creating new football districts will look "similar to what it is" and will include input from the Oklahoma Football Coaches Association.

"They will present districts to us like they normally do ... what they would like to see in terms of those district alignments," he said. "We will evaluate those and then we will take that final recommendation to the board to approve."

Jones said coaches and athletic directors will meet in the coming days to propose and vote on new districts and schedules.

"We hope to have this accomplished by early May," he said.

The Tulsa World is where your story lives

The Tulsa World newsroom is committed to covering this community with curiosity, tenacity and depth. Our passion for telling the story of Tulsa remains unwavering. Because your story is our story. Thank you to our subscribers who support local journalism. Join them with limited-time offers at tulsaworld.com/story.

Get in the game with our Prep Sports Newsletter

Sent weekly directly to your inbox!

