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IHSAA board approves transfer proposal

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During its annual review of the Member School By-Laws on May 5, the Indiana High School Athletic Association's Board of Directors formally adopted changes to Rule 19 regarding first-time transfers and added girls' flag football to its Emerging Sport Process. A proposal allowing two schools to enter into co-op arrangements failed to receive enough support.

The board of directors, led by this year's president, Larry Cochren of Washington High School, and vice president, Jim Brown of Fishers High School, approved 11 proposals, three failed to receive enough support and two others were tabled during the meeting in Indianapolis.

All proposals are considered in the order that the rule appears within the current by-laws. The board has four options on each proposal: affirm, deny, table or amend a rule. A simple majority is necessary to act on any measure, and all approved measures become effective immediately unless otherwise noted.

The board officially adopted the first-time transfer proposal of Rule 19-3 (Transfer Eligibility and Restrictions) that was adopted at the Feb. 21 executive committee meeting.

19-3.1 General Transfer Eligibility — A student who transfers to a member school shall be ineligible to participate in interschool athletics for 365 days after enrollment, unless an IHSAA Athletic Transfer Report is ruled on by the Commissioner or designee.

19-3.2 First Time Transfer Between Member Schools — Students who transfer between member schools for the first time during the first six semesters after their initial high school enrollment will have full eligibility, provided:

- The transfer occurs on or before the start of practice date of the sports season in which the transfer occurs; and
- The transfer is not the result of undue influence (rules 20-1 and 20-2, past link).

Students who transfer during the first six semesters, having had the opportunity to participate in three seasons of eligibility of a sport, will be subject to a 30 day non-competition period or 1/2 the maximum number of contests, whichever is less, in each sport in which they participated during or after their third year of eligibility, during the 365 days preceding the transfer.

19-3.3 Second and Subsequent Transfers —

- Notwithstanding rule 19-3.2, when a student transfers for a second or subsequent time, the student's eligibility status — limited, full or ineligible — will be determined according to the eligibility and transfer rules outlined in rules 19 and 20; and
- Second or subsequent transfers after the start of practice date will be subject to a 30-day non-competition period or 1/2 the maximum number of contests in that sport, whichever is less.
- Students whose second transfer involves a return to the member school where they established their initial promotion eligibility within 365 days from their enrollment date at the previous school will retain full eligibility.

19-3.4 Transfers Involving Non-Member Schools — Any time a student's first transfer involves a non-member school, the student's eligibility status — limited, full or ineligible — will be determined according to the eligibility and transfer rules outlined in rules 19 and 20.

19-3.5 Transfers Occurring After the Start of Practice — Students who transfer after the start of practice date will be subject to a 30-day non-competition period or 1/2 the maximum number of contests in that sport, whichever is less.

19-3.6 Senior Transfers —

- Notwithstanding rule 19-3.2, whenever a student's transfer occurs after they have completed six semesters after their initial high school enrollment, their eligibility status — limited, full or ineligible — will be determined according to the eligibility and transfer rules outlined in rules 19 and 20; and
- Students will be subject to a 30-day non-competition period or 1/2 of the maximum number of contests, whichever is less, for each sport they participated in during the 365 days preceding the transfer.
- **Exception:** When a student's parents/guardian(s) make a bona fide change of residence to a new district or territory, the student may transfer and attempt to obtain full eligibility at any public, private or charter school which does not serve the student's area of residence but is located within a 20-mile radius of the new residence of the parent(s)/guardian(s), when the bona fide change of residence involved a move of more than 50 miles, and is the student's first time enrolling in the school.

This new by-law will take effect June 1.

Girls' flag football was approved by the group by a 17-1 vote to join the IHSAA's Emerging Sports Process. The sport joins girls' lacrosse, approved last August, and both will begin the process with the 2025-26 school year.

Girls' flag football, a fall sport, has strong support and financial backing of the Indianapolis Colts.

The Emerging Sport Process, known as Rule 1-4, helps pave a way for those sports and participation to continue to grow with an eye toward eventually becoming a recognized sport and sponsorship of an official state tournament. Girls' wrestling and boys' volleyball went through the same process and became fully recognized and state tournaments sponsored this school year.

By earning the designation as an emerging sport, the IHSAA will now provide rule books, conduct coaches rules meetings and provide coverage in the IHSAA's Catastrophic Medical program. Both sports will now be subject to all IHSAA rules and policies, including the General Eligibility Rules.

For a sport to become officially recognized and an IHSAA state tournament be sponsored, 50% of the membership must be participating in the sport. The IHSAA currently has 409 member schools throughout the state.

"The growth of girls' flag football has accelerated greatly over the past few years, from little league to high school to all the way to the 2028 Olympics," said Kalen Jackson, Colts vice chair and owner. "We're grateful to the IHSAA for continuing this momentum and opening more opportunities for girls and women athletes across Indiana."

A proposed item submitted by Union High School Principal Ryan Chiddister failed to receive enough support for passage by a 6-12 count. It would have been an addition to Rule 9 (Contests) which outlined the conditions under which member schools can form cooperative agreements for team sports, enrollment limits, proximity requirements and application processes.

Under this proposal, two schools would be allowed to team up for athletic purposes. The measure included the following as rules for co-ops to occur:

- Schools must have insufficient enrollment numbers and/or staffing and coaching.
- Schools must have a lack of a program at one or both schools and/or a lack of proper facilities.
- Schools must have fewer than 300 enrolled students on campus.

This amendment would have only applied to team sports since the IHSAA recognizes state champions in individual sports.