



Bridenbaugh, Sarah <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>

Requests Concerning All-Girl Small Cheerleading Championship

5 messages

Schepers, Joseph R. <joseph.schepers@jefferson.kyschools.us>

Sun, Jan 11, 2026 at 10:11 AM

To: "Bridenbaugh, Sarah" <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>, "Cope, Butch" <bcope@khsaa.org>, "Collins, Christopher C." <christopher.collins2@jefferson.kyschools.us>

Good morning,

Attached is a formal request regarding the results of the 2025-26 KHSAA All-Girl Small Cheerleading State Championship held yesterday, January 10, 2026 at George Rogers Clark High School. I am sending this to Sarah Bridenbaugh and Butch Cope from the KHSAA who I personally saw in attendance administering the championship. I look forward to your response and thank you for your time.

**JOE SCHEPER**Eastern High School
Athletic Director

502-754-1262

joseph.schepers@jefferson.kyschools.us

12400 Old Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40241

eastern.org

KHSAACheer011126.pdf

145K

Bridenbaugh, Sarah <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>
To: Julian Tackett <jtackett@khsaa.org>

Sun, Jan 11, 2026 at 10:38 AM

Sarah Bridenbaugh
Assistant Commissioner

KHSAA
2280 Executive Drive
Lexington, KY 40505
Phone: (859) 299-5472 , ext 225
Email: sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org
Website: www.khsaa.org
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KHSAACheer011126.pdf

145K

Bridenbaugh, Sarah <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>

Mon, Jan 12, 2026 at 3:17 PM

To: "Schepers, Joseph R." <joseph.schepers@jefferson.kyschools.us>
 Cc: "Cope, Butch" <bcope@khsaa.org>, "Collins, Christopher C." <christopher.collins2@jefferson.kyschools.us>
 Bcc: Julian Tackett <jtackett@khsaa.org>

Joe -

This response is to acknowledge receipt of this email. Please allow us a couple of days to consult with our partners at Varsity who can recap with their assigned staff.

Thanks,

Sarah Bridenbaugh
 Assistant Commissioner

KHSAA
 2280 Executive Drive
 Lexington, KY 40505
 Phone: (859) 299-5472, ext 225
 Email: sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org
 Website: www.khsaa.org
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Schepers, Joseph R. <joseph.schepers@jefferson.kyschools.us>

Mon, Jan 12, 2026 at 3:32 PM

To: "Bridenbaugh, Sarah" <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>
 Cc: "Cope, Butch" <bcope@khsaa.org>, "Collins, Christopher C." <christopher.collins2@jefferson.kyschools.us>

Thank you for your response. I look forward to hearing back from you.



JOE SCHEPER

Eastern High School
 Athletic Director

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From: Bridenbaugh, Sarah <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>

Date: Monday, January 12, 2026 at 3:18 PM

To: Schepers, Joseph R. <joseph.schepers@jefferson.kyschools.us>

Cc: Cope, Butch <bcope@khsaa.org>, Collins, Christopher C. <christopher.collins2@jefferson.kyschools.us>

Subject: Re: Requests Concerning All-Girl Small Cheerleading Championship

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Bridenbaugh, Sarah <sbridenbaugh@khsaa.org>

Wed, Jan 14, 2026 at 5:10 PM

To: "Schepers, Joseph R." <joseph.schepers@jefferson.kyschools.us>
 Cc: "Cope, Butch" <bcope@khsaa.org>, "Collins, Christopher C." <christopher.collins2@jefferson.kyschools.us>, "Zuberer, David P" <david.zuberer@jefferson.kyschools.us>, Julian Tackett <jtackett@khsaa.org>, Abby Jackson <ajackson@khsaa.org>
 Bcc: Chad Collins <ccollins@khsaa.org>

Mr. Scheper,

Thank you for your message regarding the results of the competitive cheer competition in the Small All-girls division. It is important that we provide as much clarity as possible to the process used with all Varsity Spirit judging panels in this sport-activity that has always dealt with objective criteria judged in a subjective manner. I also appreciate the opportunity to consult with Varsity Spirit to ensure consistency in what was reported back to you in allowing our mostly out-of-state judging panel and supervisory panel to complete their travel plans prior to any response.

At your request, I have followed up with our partners at Varsity Spirit, who handle 100% of the training, certification, and assignments for judges in regional and state competitions, to obtain an explanation for you as a member school. No member of the KHSAA staff or event staff has any role in compiling the scores or determining the outcome. Staff role, as with every other event, is limited to executing the necessary steps following the compilation of final results. This process begins with the public announcement of the final results, followed by the archival posting of the results and the sharing of individual scoresheets with the member school coaches.

The process, as directed by Varsity Spirit, was standard during that competition. And as you know, scoring in each division is, without question, comparative throughout the event. Allow me to provide you with what was reported to me, as well as other notes:

- The judges make an initial evaluation of the routine in several areas during each routine, and then within the scoresheets, score each individual area.
- The data entry is then executed when the judges are complete with each squad; however, and this is critical, nothing is ever final until the end of all judging and any subsequent deliberation by the judges.
- On that initial entry, the accuracy of mathematical calculations is reviewed as they are entered.
- Anything posted in the tabulation sheets is always preliminary until all squads have competed and the judges have completed their work.
 - While we know that photos showing this preliminary entry have circulated, without a doubt that it was preliminary and not a final score.
- Everything done before the final results, including anything observed on any data screen, is absolutely preliminary prior to the announcement of final results.
- Scores are always preliminary, and scoresheets are subject to revision if warranted by the judging panel only for a specific category, in order to correctly separate and rank teams.
 - This step of adjusting an individual's scoresheet is necessary to validate the integrity of the score, especially when the judges are able to see all squads and potentially determine that early squads were perhaps judged too strictly or too leniently.
 - Judges track scores throughout an entire division and are comparing, ranking, and separating scores as the division progresses.
 - It is standard protocol for Varsity Spirit to allow a judge to make a change to his/her own category score in order to rank and separate his/her scores correctly as the division progresses.
 - It was confirmed that the building judges did make changes during the division (not after) to three teams. These scores were adjusted to enable the judges to rank and separate specific category scores accurately across all teams from the beginning of the division. Building judges did not see other category scores during this time, and had no awareness of team rankings, only their individual category scores.

- We can confirm that Eastern was one of the 3 teams adjusted during the small all-girl division, and well before the final squads performed.
- It is standard Varsity Spirit practice that changes in scoresheets are not only revised in the results sheets, but are also initialed by the category judge who makes the adjustment, whether during the competition or during deliberation. I can confirm that this step was not done. I have requested that we ensure this is done each time in the future for the sake of transparency.
- As I mentioned, scores are reviewed and verified by judges before being announced. The judging panel for the all-girls small division noticed a few score sheet input errors in the tabulation. Once these were corrected, it resulted in a tie for 2nd place between Eastern and Pikeville.

Once results are released, they are considered official and are not subject to revision. As a reminder, this was covered in the conference call with participating teams and is outlined in the state instructions.

After the competition was complete:

- The printed results were taken to the judges for review.
- I can confirm that at the end of the competition, the results had Madison Central in first place, and Eastern was 2nd.
- At no point after all squads had competed was Eastern in 1st place.
- At no point were any teams moved in place or position; only recalculations were made due to the aforementioned errors that were caught and corrected, which align with the process and procedures used by Varsity Spirit judges. These same procedures are also used across Regional and National events.

We hope this information helps clarify the events of that day and we appreciate the opportunity to confirm.

Sarah Bridenbaugh
Assistant Commissioner



Kentucky High School Athletic Association
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