

19. Grouping and Seeding State Tournament Series

Developing a Rationale for Grouping and Seeding State Tournament Series

The cornerstone of IHSA state tournaments has long been geographic assignments to the state series leading to geographic representation at State Final tournaments. The geographical concept was developed to insure that interscholastic participation was compatible with a school's educational objectives. The geographic concept helped maintain a reasonableness to competition and safeguarded key resources such as time and money, while, at the same time, providing for a structure that was equitable to all member schools. Since 1991, when sectional complexes were first adopted in Class AA basketball, IHSA administrators have been struggling with how to group and seed the lower-level tournaments in other sports and activities. Without an official policy regarding seeding, the current system has developed into a hodgepodge that lacks consistency and an overarching rationale.

It is important to note that the interscholastic programs of a school are designed to enrich the educational process (* Note Article 1.140 of the Constitution). The establishment of sound standards and procedures for the regulation and control of interscholastic programs not only provide for fairness and equity, but they also keep the programs in an educational context. The geographic principle is essential to regulating the character of interscholastic competition. This document strips away the conflicting arguments and returns to the IHSA's fundamental principles to establish a framework for organizing a state tournament series.

The Geographic Principle of IHSA State Tournament Series

1. The State Series is designed to determine a State Champion. The State Series is not intended to necessarily advance the best teams in the state to the State Final.
2. Representation in an IHSA State Final Tournament is determined on a geographic basis that is, schools advancing to the State Final Tournament (or in Boys Football, the State Final Game) qualify from given geographical areas of the state. Pairings for the State Final Tournament are determined every year in a drawing that is open to the media/public.
3. The number of schools in a State Final Tournament, and levels of competition in the State Series, are determined by the number of schools entered in the series.
4. Schools are assigned to first level tournaments/meets on a geographical basis so that there is a reasonable balance in the number of schools assigned at each first level site.
 - A. Factors considered in assigning schools to first level tournaments include:
 1. Schools willing/eligible/selected to host and their location;
 2. Number of schools entered in state series and their locations; and,
 3. Classification of schools in the state series.
 4. In individual state series tournaments/meets, the number of schools with full teams assigned to the beginning competition is balanced as much as possible. Travel distance to the tournament/meet site could justify an imbalance in the number of schools assigned to a site.
 - B. Factors considered in assigning schools to first level tournaments do not include:
 1. Won-lost records of the schools;

2. Strengths or weaknesses of the schools in a geographic area;
3. Anticipated or potential revenue; and
4. Individual, private requests of schools and/or coaches.
5. Assignments to first level tournaments are reviewed and rearranged every 3 years (though the host of each first level tournament may change from year to year). Sometimes, changes in schools willing to host or schools entered may necessitate intermediate adjustments to the assignments.

Guidelines for Seeding for Bracketed Team Sports (Four Class System and Football)

1. Seeding shall occur only at the lowest level of competition, and therefore, neither the super-sectionals nor the state final shall be seeded.
2. The coaches of the schools involved, except in football, where an objective computer-based system shall be used, shall do seeding of each group. When voting on seeds, coaches shall not vote for their own school.
3. In Class 3A and 4A in the Chicago suburban area, all state tournament series will begin with a sectional complex. The sectional complex will utilize true seeds unless conflicts arise from the seeds of the pre-determined hosts.
4. In Class 3A and 4A, all state series tournaments outside of the Chicago suburban area will begin with geographic regionals.
5. In Class 1A and 2A, all state tournament series will begin in sub-sectionals. The top four seeds will be distributed by seed to predetermined regional sites. Seeds #1 and #4 will be assigned to the same regional unless there is a hosting conflict. The remaining schools will feed into the regionals based on geography.
6. In football only, after the field for each class is determined, schools in each class must be grouped geographically into brackets of 16. If the bracket has more than one game with a travel distance of 150 miles or more, that half of the bracket will be placed in quadrants.

Criteria for Increasing the Number of Classes in IHSA Sports and Activities

The following criteria shall be followed when considering proposals to increase or decrease the number of classes in IHSA sports and activities:

1. The Board of Directors shall determine the number of classes based on the criteria set forth in this policy.
2. The classification systems used by Boys Football, Music, and Competitive Cheerleading are unique and are determined by the Terms & Conditions of the respective sport or activity.
3. For all other sports and activities, entries may be divided into classes according to the criteria in the following tables:

Bracketed team sports/activities

Number of schools entering teams	Number of classes
600 or more	4
300 to 599	2
all others	1

Individual sports/activities

Number of schools entering teams or individuals	Number of classes
450 to more	3
350 to 449	2
all others	1

Boys and girls sports with comparable entries shall have an equal number of classes.