

# Proposal to Remove Cross Country from the Competitive Balance Formula

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## INTRODUCTION

The WIAA has approved a competitive balance formula ([link here](#)) that seeks to improve competitive balance/equity regarding post-season tournament procedures. While the work of this committee is noble and serious, the sport of Cross Country should not be included in this model. Cross Country should be classified solely based on enrolment, with teams placed into three divisions.

## STATE BY STATE

Every state has divisions or classes with multiple state tournaments and champions in nearly all sports. All states use enrollment as the primary method of classification. The process of moving a team up or down a division is referred to as reclassification. Generally, teams are reclassified as enrollment numbers shift. Many states reclassify based on enrollment yearly, but some reclassify over a set period of time (three or four years). Some states adjust classification with a SES (student eligibility status) multiplier which allows a team to appeal to move down a division, generally based on free and reduced lunch populations. Other states adjust classification based on a multiplier for private schools. 1.35 is the most common, although some have a multiplier of 1.8 or even 2.0, depending on the sport.

In many states, students must compete in home districts and do not have open enrollment amongst public schools. In states with closed enrollment, private schools are often seen to have an advantage as they can recruit from multiple areas. Also, in many states private schools can give tuition assistance, or scholarships, and such schools are seen to have an advantage.

A few states alter classification based on a performance factor. A list of numbers of states is in the table below and at [this link](#) (note: this data comes from scouring the by-laws of state athletic associations, which isn't easy, and may contain errors).

MODIFICATION	STATES	CROSS COUNTRY	NOTES
29 States - classification based solely on enrollment	AL, AZ, DE, FL, HI, ID, KS, KT, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MS, MT, NE, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, RI, SC, SD, TX, UT, VT, VA, WY	NA	These states use enrollment entirely. Some states separate private and public schools for tournament play.
6 States - Multiplier for Private Schools Only	MO, AR, CT, GA, IL, AL,	All sports, all classifications	Private school multiplier is 1.35 or 1.8, depending on the state and sport.
5 States - Multiplier to move-down based on hardship / free and reduced lunch	MN, OK, OR, WA, WV	All sports, all classifications	These states allow for a team to petition for reclassification to a lower division based on free-reduced lunch, hardship or extreme lack of success. In WY, teams that move down are ineligible for tournament play for one year.
5 States - "Success Factor" exempting Cross Country	CO, IO, OH, PA, IN	Exempt	These "success factor" states have rules that affect bracketed tournament sports only.
1 States - Teams move up and down together	NV	Not exempt	If a sport moves-up a classification, both genders move up together
2 State - Complex systems	CA, NH	Unknown	California... is complicated.
1 State - In Progress	TN	Unknown	1.8 / 2.0 multiplier for privates, attempted to institute a success factor and is currently in litigation

From the above list, assuming the information is accurate, no state has a process by which a cross country boys team attends a different sectional in a different classification than its girls team. Wisconsin would be the only state in the country to have separate classifications for boys and girls. This creates significant problems for member schools.

## **BRACKETED TOURNAMENT SPORTS**

The most common term amongst states that use a competitive balance formula for reclassification is “bracketed tournament” sports. Cross country is not a bracketed tournament sport in Wisconsin (or in any other state). Our state, as well as nearly every other, has a sectional format which advances top teams and individuals in that sectional to the state meet. Every team races at a sectional meet. In every other sport, a team has to advance to a sectional through tournament play. Since cross country is not a bracketed sport, Wisconsin should do what nearly every other state does and remove cross country from the competitive balance formula.

## **PROBLEMS WITH SEPARATE CLASSIFICATIONS IN CROSS COUNTRY**

No other state separates boys and girls cross country for purposes of classification. The WIAA competitive balance formulas will create a situation in which teams will be split. For example, a boys team might move up to D2 while a girls team from the same school remains in D3. Amongst nearly all teams that achieve enough points to move-up a division, girls teams will go to sectionals in one division and boys teams will go to a sectional in another division. For the 2024-25 school year, only one team had both boys and girls programs acquire enough points to move up. All other teams had only boys or girls moving up. This creates significant problems.

First, most teams have the same head coach for boys and girls. Nearly all teams in the state have boys and girls programs that travel together to the same meets for the entire season. And while there are some schools that have completely separate boys and girls programs, this occurs only in the largest divisions and only in a few cases.

## **CROSS COUNTRY AND COMPETITIVE BALANCE IN WISCONSIN**

Under the current formulas, 14 teams will move-up a classification in cross country. One of those teams, Notre Dame, has both boys and girls moving-up. The remaining 12 teams will now have programs which split boys and girls. Also, there will be a number of teams that move-down, and while it is highly likely that both boys and girls squads will move down there will be a few teams that have one team (boys, for example) move down while the other team stays in their division. We could have as many as 17 or 18 teams splitting for the tournament, and this is only in the first year. The problems related to splitting teams are listed below;

### **ONE HEAD COACH**

Most cross country programs have one head coach for boys and girls. If a girls team is moved to D2, and the boys program affiliated with that school is still in D3, the coach will have a difficult time determining which sectional to attend. It would not be acceptable to have a varsity football or basketball team at a state tournament without their head coach. Many small cross country programs that have to split their teams would have to use assistant coaches or parent volunteers. Those assistants might not fully understand how to manage a team at a meet, check-in properly, get a meet packet, attend a coaches meeting and properly preview a course. Those assistant coaches most certainly will not be on the communications from host schools, which could result in serious miscommunication that could impact teams.

### **EQUIPMENT**

Most teams, especially smaller schools, have one tent, one spike kit and one med kit for both boys and girls programs. Most schools share equipment. How will decisions be made regarding the tent or med kit? Would schools be required, under Title IX, to buy more equipment?

### **TITLE IX**

If a coach decides to go with the boys team to their sectional, leaving the girls team in the hands of an assistant or parent volunteer, that coach is not meeting the obligations necessary under Title IX. If the same coach constantly travels with the girls, instead of the boys, an equity issue is also at play. I seriously question if a school with one head coach for both boys and girls could be Title IX compliant under the current model.

### **TRAVEL EXPENSES**

Having the boys go to one sectional and the girls go to another creates a burden on the school regarding travel expenses. Multiple buses or vans will be needed, instead of just one. In some cases, small schools might not have multiple buses or vans available, creating the burden of having to rent a vehicle.

## **SECTIONAL HOSTING**

Teams might be extremely reluctant to host if their squads are split amongst division classifications. For example, at Menomonie we almost always host a sectional meet. If our boys are moved down and our girls remain in D1, we will not host.

## **PARENTS, SIBLINGS, SPECTATORS AND FANS**

We have parents who have multiple children on the team. They would not get to watch their children race. Instead, they would have to pick a sibling and watch them, while not being able to watch their other child. Again, this creates a burden on families. Our fans and spectators also wish to watch both boys and girls teams.

## **NOT ALL SPORTS ARE THE SAME**

While it is appreciated that the WIAA wants standards for sports, and those standards should be similar, not all sports are the same. Basketball programs don't have the same coach for boys and girls teams, don't travel together, don't have the same sectional sites and the state meets for boys and girls are not at the same time on the same day. Cross country is unique. A sectional is made up of both boys and girls teams seeking to advance to state as well as individual qualifiers. There are four distinct groups at a sectional who advance - boys teams, girls teams, boys individuals and girls individuals. With basketball, volleyball, baseball and other bracketed tournament sports, there is only a team, and one gender. To put cross country into the competitive balance model is to ignore the reality of our sport.

## **SECTIONAL PLACEMENT**

It will be extremely, extremely difficult to move teams of one gender to another sectional without having to move teams around significantly and, in some cases, perhaps having to split teams to accommodate those teams that are moving up. Since there is no geographic representation regarding which teams move down (just enrollment), the entire sectional system will be affected if only a few teams move up or down. It's easy, in theory, to move a team into a sectional, but who is moved out? If a girls team is moved in, then is a girls team moved out? What about their boys team? How will this be managed? Where do these teams go? Moving one team over creates a ripple and cascading effect on all sectionals.

## **CONCLUSION**

The competitive balance formula for bracketed tournament sports may, indeed, be a good idea. Cross country is not a bracketed tournament sport. Cross country sectionals have boys and girls racing together at the same meet on the same day, usually with the same coaches. No other sport has this. Also, no other state separates boys and girls cross country based on a tournament performance factor. Due to the unique circumstances of our sport, and the potential for a serious burden placed on teams that are forced to split, the WIAA should exclude cross country from the competitive balance formula and maintain classification based solely on enrollment.

# PROPOSAL TO REMOVE CROSS COUNTRY FROM THE COMPETITIVE BALANCE SYSTEM

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Craig Olson, Menomonie High School

# Intro

Menomonie High School Girls Coach

Small D1 - about 970 students

We have separate boys and girls programs at Menomonie, with separate boys and girls head coaches, but our programs rely on one another at meets for purposes of coaching, transportation, equipment and a host of other issues. We have team meals together, brothers and sisters on the team, our parents manage our concessions area together and we are highly cooperative. Basically, we just work-out separately.

# Our sport is CO-ED

FOUR things happen at our sectionals that have implications for state qualifying.

- Girls Teams

- Girls Individuals

- Boys Teams

- Boys Individuals

## Competitive Balance - A Primer

The competitive balance formulas were developed by committee.

The formulas will take effect in 2024-25 (next year).

These formulas may be awesome for other sports. This may be the best thing ever for basketball and football. All of the coaches in my HS love this.

My thesis is that this is a mistake for XC, and that it may be fine for those other sports but XC should stay out of this.

# Formulas

Formulas for Competitive Balance are as follows:

-4 points for a state title

-3 points for state runner-up

-2 points for 3rd or 4th place at state OR a sectional title

-1 point for qualifying for state

If a team accumulates 6 points over a 3 year period they move up a division.

[Formulas and points here](#)



# The following teams advance based on points

## Boys Teams Moving Up

- McDonnell (6 pts) up to D2
- Pacelli (7 pts) up to D2
- Kohler (8 pts) up to D2
- Shorewood (8 pts) up to D1
- Notre Dame (8 pts) up to D1
- Lakeside Lutheran (8 pts) up to D1
- Winneconne (7 pts) up to D1

## Girls Teams Moving Up

- Phillips (7 pts) up to D2
- Lancaster (6 pts) up to D2
- Lourdes (6 pts) up to D2
- Boscobel (6 pts) up to D2
- Xavier (10 pts) up to D1
- Dodgeville MP (9 pts) up to D1
- Notre Dame (6 pts) up to D1

So...

- One team advances a classification (division) with both boys and girls - Notre Dame
- Two other girls teams advance to D1, while their boys teams are D2
- Three other boys teams advance to D1, while their girls are D2
- Four girls teams advance to D2, while their boys are D3
- Three boys teams advance to D2, while their girls are D3

## Who moves down?

Teams will move down a division as other teams move-up, but this is based on enrollment. No team with performance points can move down (like WFB girls). But since more boys teams are moving up to D1, while more girls teams move-up to D2, it's unlikely that teams that move down a division will have both boys and girls move down. Some teams might only have one squad (boys) move down, while another squad (girls) stay in the higher division.

# We're going to see teams split amongst divisions.

We might see as many as 15 teams in our state in which the girls are at one sectional while the boys are at another based on competitive equity points and movement.

We might see many more schools have one team (boys or girls) move out of a sectional to make way for these teams, especially since the teams moving up are not geographically congruent.

If a girls team moves up into a sectional, a girls team will have to move out. So... a domino effect could occur. A girls team moves over, then another, then another...

# REMEMBER!!!!!! We're CO-ED

FOUR things happen at our sectionals that have implications for state qualifying.

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## Split Squad #1

- Question. How many schools in the state have the same head coach for boys and girls?
- Slightly over 75%. But it's likely that many of the 25% that have separate head coaches serve as co-head coaches and rely on one another.
- How many schools can support girls going one way and boys another? We don't know.

**THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!!**

## Split Squad Question #2

--Question. If a team has boys in D2 and girls are in D3, how is the head coach supposed to manage this?

-Answer from competitive balance committee member: **“An assistant coach or parent volunteer will have to take one team while the head coach takes another”**

## Assistant Coach or Parent Volunteer?

- This is insulting, and clearly from people who don't know our sport. "It's just running, isn't it?"
- Can you imagine this being the case in any other sport?
- What goes into coaching at an XC event? Course preview, bibs and packets, coaches meeting, race plans, advocacy if there is a problem, understanding rules, communication pre and mid race, checking scoring after... Parent volunteer?
- Can volunteers access emergency medical info on students? What about HIPPA and FERPA?



## Split Squad Question #3

-Since nearly all teams are co-ed, how does a split squad decide who gets the tent, or the spike kit, or where the head coach goes, or manage extra transportation costs?

-Answer from competitive balance committee member: “Schools will have to start to invest more in XC and figure out how to manage this.”

## Split Squad Question #4

-Can teams maintain their obligations under Title IX if they have to split squad and they only have one tent, one spike kit, one head coach???

-Answer from competitive balance committee member: “Schools will have to be careful to maintain their Title IX compliance and should talk to their ADs to figure this out”

## Split Squad Question #5

-What other states do this? Did you look at other states to see if any use this kind of formula for XC?

-Answer from competitive balance committee member: “No. We looked at one or two other states only and didn’t really look at XC. Ohio was our model.” (Ohio only uses competitive balance for bracketed team sports, by the way, not XC).

## What do other states do?

I checked every other state athletic association to see if they have a competitive balance formula, if XC is part of it and if XC teams are split by gender - with boys in one division and girls in another. I wanted to know if this is done anywhere else, and how it looks, and how it's managed...

[Results here](#)

# Other States

-29 states have enrollment as the only factor for classification

-8 states have some competitive balance formula, but only 2 include XC and none of these separate boys or girls (California is really strange, and I can't figure out New Hampshire...).

-5 states have reverse multiplier for SES (so poor schools can bump down), and none of those states separate boys and girls XC.

-7 states have private school multipliers, and none separate boys and girls XC based on division..

-Many states prohibit boys and girls from competing in different divisions for the same sport.

-Only one state has competitive balance that would require boys and girls to potentially separate in XC. That's us. In Wisconsin. The only state.

## Question #6

-Will teams that didn't move up or down have to split squad to make way for teams that move into the division? For example, the bylaws state that a D1 sectional has 12 teams. What happens if a girls team moves up in an area? Will another girls team be moved out? If so, does the boys team stay? How will this be determined?

-Answer "The WIAA has some very talented people that will determine sectionals and make sure that there is minimal impact"

# Sectionals Issues

-This could have a profound effect on sectional placements and assignments, especially in D1

-As an example, Xavier girls are moving up to D1. Xavier is in Appleton. Appleton schools were in the SPASH sectional, with Neenah and Kaukauna (2nd and 3rd place in D1). Which boys team moves in? Winneconne? Then who do you move out? SPASH? Does SPASH go to DeForest? Does SPASH go over to Menomonie (with Hudson)? And who hosts?

-If one girls team moves out, to make way for Xavier, then which team? Do the Rapids girls have to go to DeForest while the boys stay at SPASH? Then we have more split squads.

## Sectional Issues #2

This makes sectional balancing waaaaaay worse.

What happens to D1? A lot of very good teams moving in, and they may not make it to state, but their top runners will.

What does D3 look like without some of those great schools? Are we going to see teams that have no business being at state qualifying in D3, while some amazing athletes in D1 don't get to go?

Are we going to see even more disparity between sectionals in all divisions?



## Who's gonna host?

If you had your boys in one sectional and your girls were at home, would you host? We host a lot at MHS. We have a course on campus, plenty of parking, a fieldhouse for team camps (and in case of bad weather), a spectator friendly course, but if our boys were in a different sectional we aren't hosting. It's not practical.

# Commentary

-What about us coaches? What if you had to split your boys and girls for a sectional race?

-Most of our kids, and most of our teams, are not going to state. Sectionals will be the last race for quite a few of our runners - their last race ever. We want to be there in that moment. We want to support and cheer and hug and cry. We want to enjoy this with our athletes. We want to coach! I don't want to take those moments away from my fellow coaches, just as I don't want them taken away from me.

-Ask yourself if any other sport would be OK with "an assistant coach or parent volunteer" taking the team?

We are a CO-ED sport, and competitive balance threatens this.

Do you want to miss these moments?



## REMINDER

We. Are. A. Co-Ed. Sport.

Our student athletes, parents and coaches deserve to compete and spectate and coach alongside one another at sectionals, in the same division, just as they do all year.

# Call the Question

A. State	B. Competitive Equity?	C. Cross Country too?	D. Notes:
Alaska	No	No	
Arizona	No	No	Had a competitive balance formula, went back to enrollment only, but now has a "open" division in BB and FB.
Delaware	No	No	
Florida	No	No	<a href="#">Proposal for football only</a> , but does reserve class 1A for public rural schools less tha 600
Hawaii	No	No	
Idaho	No	No	
Kansas	No	No	Proposal to move private schools up if they win 5 state titles failed
Kentucky	No	No	All sports, except FB, XC and track, have only one division.
Louisiana	No	No	Separate state championships for public and private schools
Maine	No	No	Enrollment only, but schools can petition to move-up. <b>Requirement that boys and girls are in the same class for each sport.</b>
Maryland	No	No	
Massachusetts	No	No	
Michigan	No	No	Schools can move-up a division
Mississippi	No	No	Only 12 private schools, most compete in the Midsouth Association of Independent Schools
Montana	No	No	
Nebraska	No	No	Schools can "opt-up", and this isn't uncommon in XC
New Jersey	No	No	Separate private and public school leagues, Meet of Champions after state meets.
New Mexico	No	No	<i>Schools that fail to complete seasons and/or fulfill contracts in any sport may be placed on probationary status in that sport and must petition the Director and the Board of Directors to be eligible for post-season play the succeeding year. Schools must fulfill financial obligations as set by the Director prior to having their status restored.</i>
New York	No	No	Separate public and "independent" associations.
North Carolina	No	No	State Legislature threatened to take-over the NCHSAA after a multiplier was proposed based on enrollment, free and reduced lunch and success.
North Dakota	No	No	2 divisions, all schools over 325 are in Class A
Rhode Island	No	No	
South Carolina	No	No	In progress - six proposals were suggested last week <a href="#">Link here</a>
South Dakota	No	No	
Texas	No	No	Considering going to 7 divisions to alleviate discrepancy with enrollment sizes
Utah	No	No	Schools can move down a division if they have 50% free and reduced lunch. <a href="#">Link here. p. 20.</a>
Vermont	No	No	Can move up with approval of the VPA, can't move down unless there is extreme hardship
Virginia	No	No	Six divisions all sports
Wyoming	No	No	Teams that opt to move-down are ineligible for playoffs
California	Yes	Variable	7 divisions, many regions, some sections use competitive equity... not sure, confusing - huge state, different sectional associations...
Colorado	Yes	No	Socioeconomic status, participation rate, enrollment trend, competitive history... cross country is not separated
Indiana	Yes	No	Success advance system used. All sports move up based on postseason performance.
Iowa	Yes	No	Football only?
Nevada	Yes	Yes	Point system to move teams up or down. "Success Factor" - no boys and girls teams move up or down separately
New Hampshire	Yes	Unknown	Point system based on tournament success
Ohio	Yes	No	Team Sports only - Basketball, Baseball, Football, Softball, Volleyball, Soccer - based on formula
Pennsylvania	Yes	No	Competitive balance based on points and number of transfers
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	

Minnesota	Yes - Multiplier based on SES	Yes	Reverse multiplier based on free / reduced lunch to move down a division
Oklahoma	Yes - Multiplier based on SES	Yes	Multiplier to move down a division based on free/reduced lunch population
Oregon	Yes - Multiplier based on SES	Yes	Multiplier to move down a division based on free/reduced lunch population
Washington	Yes - Multiplier based on SES	Yes	Four divisions, all sports. All sports, based on modifier for free/reduced lunch. <a href="#">Link here, p. 7</a>
West Virginia	Yes - Multiplier based on SES	No	<a href="#">Competitive balance</a> based on enrollment, location of city, location of city in relation to a county seat, socioeconomics of district
Tennessee	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	1.8 multiplier for privates, 2.0 for privates that offer aid. Competitive Equity in process...
Alabama	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	1.35 multiplier for all private schools, no effect on public schools
Arkansas	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	Applies to private schools only - 7 divisions, all sports; 10 points to move up, privates must play up one division...
Connecticut	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	2.0 multiplier for basketball private schools. Point system based on tournament success.
Georgia	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	Multiplier for private schools and out of district enrollments - <a href="#">considering private school only state championships</a>
Illinois	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	1.65 multiplier - lawsuit, member schools voted, it passed. Success advancement system added to privates only.
Missouri	Yes - Multiplier for private	Yes	1.35 multiplier to private schools, an additional 2.0 multiplier for single sex schools.