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Title: Sectional Equity: Team State Qualification and Incomplete Teams

WCCCA Representative: Glen Gardiner, District 7

I have discussed this issue at length with the WCCCA Executive Committee, and the Executive Committee agrees that inconsistency of complete teams at WIAA State Sectional meets creates inequitable sectionals and an inequitable opportunity for athletes in any given sectional to qualify for state as a team.

Topic:

Balancing complete and incomplete teams at sectional meets in order to ensure a more equitable opportunity for team qualification to the state meet.

Proposal:

This proposal advocates the use of historical data to ensure that at least 75% of teams in all sectionals in all divisions shall be complete. This proposal advocates that the WIAA use two years of historical data. Teams that have not fielded a complete team at the WIAA sectional meet in consecutive years shall be defined as historically incomplete. Teams shall be assigned by geography to the nearest sectional, and each sectional shall have no more than 25% of its assigned teams as incomplete in the two preceding years. No sectional meet shall be composed of more than 25% historically incomplete teams.

Rationale:

Unique Nature of Cross Country Team Qualification

Cross country is unique in that team state qualification is directly affected by the number of complete teams in a sectional meet. Whereas other sports utilize regional competition, subsectional competition, or other qualifying criteria (such as conference record) to determine the makeup of sectionals and therefore nearly always have full sectional competitions, in cross country, all programs are assigned to sectionals without regard to whether or not those programs intend to or are capable of competing as a team for qualification to the state meet. Unlike gymnastics and swimming, the other two sports in which there is direct assignment to sectionals without qualification, cross country is distinct in both the volume of teams competing (422 boys and 421 girls teams versus 114 boys swimming teams and 139 girls swimming teams and 79 gymnastics teams eligible for state team competition) and in the scoring of the sport, where team score and state qualification is dependent upon number of teams and competitors in the meet.

Inequity Among Cross Country Sectionals

In 2022, percentage chance for cross country team qualification based on number of complete and incomplete teams at sectionals ranged from 11.1% (boys division three sectional four) to 50% (girls division one sectional nine). This disparity is inequitable. Even within divisions and genders, the disparity in opportunity is significant. In 2022, the most complete boys division three cross country sectional (four) had eighteen complete teams and four incomplete teams. Athletes on the starting line in these races had an 11.1% chance of qualifying for the state meet as a team. Athletes in the least complete boys division three sectional (three) had eleven complete teams and ten incomplete teams. Athletes in these sectionals had an 18.2% chance of qualifying for the state meet as a team. The division one girls sectionals demonstrated an even greater disparity. Three division one sectionals fielded complete twelve team races. Athletes in these races had a 16.7% chance of qualifying for the state meet as a team. Athletes in the least complete sectional had four complete teams and seven incomplete teams. Athletes on the starting line in this race had a 50% chance of qualifying for state as a team. Again, this disparity in opportunity is inequitable.

Solution

Under this system, taking into account variety of sizes of sectionals within a division and the level to which those sectionals would be complete (75-100%), percent chance for qualification for would be:

- 16.7%-22.2% (5.5% difference) for division one;
- 15.3%-18.2% (2.9% difference) for division two; and
- 11.7%-13.3% (1.6% difference) for division three.

Sectional assignments that fail to take into consideration the unique nature of cross country scoring, state qualification, and the consistent imbalance of complete teams at sectionals continue to perpetuate an inequitable system that does not appropriately serve the competing athletes. Adoption of this proposal will preserve geography as the driver of sectional assignments and will create a more equitable system wherein teams earn qualification to the state championship meet.

Benefits:

Balancing incomplete and complete teams across WIAA sectionals for each division and gender will ensure an equitable chance for all athletes competing to earn team qualification for the state meet. Perceived disparities in strength of sectionals will be addressed without evaluating strength of program or seeding teams.

Financial Ramifications:

None.

What data have you gathered?

Variation in percentage chance of qualification based on sectional assignment for each division in 2021 and 2022 is presented in the table below.

Division / Gender / Year	Lowest Percentage Chance of Qualification	Highest Percentage Chance of Qualification	Percentage Difference Chance of Qualification Based on Sectional Assignment
D1 Boys 2021	16.7%	22.2%	5.5%
D1 Boys 2022	16.7%	28.6%	11.9%
D1 Girls 2021	16.7%	40%	23.3%
D1 Girls 2022	16.7%	50%	33.3%
D2 Boys 2021	13.3%	22.2%	8.9%
D2 Boys 2022	13.3%	20%	6.7%
D2 Girls 2021	13.3%	22.2%	8.9%
D2 Girls 2022	14.3%	22.2%	7.9%
D3 Boys 2021	13.3%	20%	6.7%
D3 Boys 2022	11.1%	18.2%	7.1%
D3 Girls 2021	13.3%	22.2%	8.9%
D3 Girls 2022	11.1%	22.2%	11.1%