



Getting To A Fair State Wrestling Tournament

*Coaches Association Proposal Uses Basic Principles Of Fairness
And Existing NYSPHSAA Practices
To Make State Wrestling Tournament More Fair*

Basic Principles Of Fairness

- 1. No one gains entry to the state tournament without wrestling at least a few matches in a qualifying tournament.** Every year thousands of wrestlers work and compete to get to the state tournament. The injustice of allowing *Easy Passes* (1 or 2 bouts) or worse yet *Free Passes* (forfeits) to the state tournament must end.
- 2. Wrestlers from sections with less than eight teams should qualify in a neighboring section.** Merging smaller sections or sending contestants to compete in a neighboring section to qualify for or compete in playoffs for state championships is already an established practice for other NYSPHSAA sports – most notably football
- 3. In order for a sectional tournament to be sanctioned as a qualifier for the state tournament it must have a minimum of 8 teams in the section.** The 8-team minimum standard already exists. Currently, when determining at-large entries, sectional tournaments with less than 8 teams are considered less competitive so wrestlers from the larger, more competitive sections receive bonus points to compensate.
- 4. Larger sections should be allocated more entries than smaller sections.** This proposal gives each wrestler in the state at least a similar chance of qualifying for the state tournament. Entries are determined using multiples of 16: 8-16 schools = 1 entry; 17-32 school = 2 entries; 33-48 = 3 entries; 49-64 = 4 entries.
- 5. Placement in qualifying tournament should determine entries before criteria.** Currently, the single-entry system with at-large entries allows a wrestler who finished third to advance to the state tournament while the second place finisher is denied entry. This proposal makes that possibility much less likely.
- 6. Retain at-large entries to capture deserving wrestlers who were left out due to the extreme differences among sections.** This proposal works with the existing sectional alignment that has huge differences in the number of competitors per section. At-large entries provides a safety net to catch those deserving athletes left out due to the unfair sectional alignment.
- 7. Make periodic adjustments to the allocation of entries.** The number of schools in each section changes over the years. To maintain fairness, the allocation of entries should change as well. In this proposal, 18-20 entries distributed among nine NYSPHSAA sections, achieves a sense of proportionality and two at-large entries are used to pick-up additional deserving wrestlers. Division I is a full 24-man bracket to accommodate entries from the PSAL and CHSAA. In Division II, proportionality is accomplished with 20 entries.
- 8. Make the state tournament about the wrestlers and the schools they represent – not the section.** Sectional teams and sectional team scoring represents a system that has been an obstacle to reform for decades. Unlike other sports in New York State and every other state championship in the country, the system promotes sectional teams over school teams. It is the excuse used to justify how wrestlers gain entry to the state tournament with little or no qualifying competitions.
- 9. Wear school uniforms and have a high school team tournament champion.** No need to spend money on identifying and promoting sections in a state tournament that will keep team scores by school and crown a high school team tournament champion.

Division I

<u>Section</u>	<u>Entries</u>
Section 1	2
Section 2	2
¹ Section 3	2
Section 4	2
Section 5	2
Section 6	2
Section 8	3
Section 9	2
Section 11	3
² PSAL	1
CHSAA	1
At-Large	<u>2</u>
Total Entries	24

1. Section X's 4 large schools are merged with Section III large schools
2. PSAL's 1 small school is merged with PSAL large schools

Division II

<u>Section</u>	<u>Entries</u>
Section 1	1
Section 2	3
Section 3	3
Section 4	2
Section 5	4
Section 6	2
Section 8	1
Section 9	1
Section 11	1
At-Large	<u>2</u>
Total Entries	20

3. Section VII's 5 small schools are merged with Section II
4. Section X's 2 small schools are merged with Section III

- Using '07 results, 113 of the 120 at-large entries would have received automatic bids under this proposal and the remaining 7 would have been captured within the 30 at-large entries allowed each division.
- Over 100 sectional finalists from larger sections who were denied entry to the state tournament would qualify under this proposal
- The tournament can be accomplished within the current two-day structure by adjusting the time schedule.

Historical Background

For more than forty years, countless numbers of high school wrestlers in New York State have been unfairly denied the opportunity to compete in the premier event of their sport. This injustice is due largely to a system that puts organizational convenience and sectional prerogatives ahead of the best interests of athletes and sport. There can be no other explanation for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association's dogged fight to maintain a system where one athlete gains entry to the state tournament without winning a single qualifying bout while another athlete from a neighboring section must compete in and win multiple bouts to qualify for the same state tournament.

The New York State Wrestling Coaches' Association is dedicated to reforming this unjust system. One part of the Coaches' Association campaign for reform has been to offer NYSPHSAA proposed tournament changes for their consideration.

In 2002, NYSWCA developed a proposal for a proportionally based multiple-entry state wrestling tournament to address the obvious geographical discrimination. The proposal was for a 32 man bracket designed to fit within the single division format that existed at the time. Each of the 11 sections plus the PSAL and CHSAA got one entry and the remaining 19 entries were to be allocated based on the number of schools with wrestling in each section.

NYSPHSAA rejected the multiple-entry proposal and in 2003 adopted a state tournament format with two divisions. Divisions were based on school enrollments with each section sending a single entry to the tournament. The new format brought a welcome increase in the number of participants but failed to address the fundamental unfairness of sending a single entry from these wildly unequal sections.

With NYSPHSAA's decision to make the two-division format permanent in 2004, the coaches association revised their multiple-entry proposal to fit within the new structure. Again, under the coaches association plan, each section got their customary one entry with the remaining entries in a 24 man bracket distributed among sections based on the number of schools with wrestling. More than 200 coaches voiced their support the NYSWCA proposal.

The Coaches Association's revised multiple-entry proposal was rejected without a hearing based largely on the reported unofficial negative reaction of the NYSPHSAA Executive Committee and staff. As a result, Assemblyman Joe Morelle who for years had been encouraging NYSPHSAA to reform the state tournament, wrote the Fairness In Competition Act. The legislation would require proportionally based multiple-entry tournament as a matter of state law.

No doubt the battle over the legislation and ultimately its passage by the NYS Assembly helped create a wider and deeper recognition of the problem. NYSPHSAA's wrestling committee was granted permission to develop a plan to fill in the byes – the empty spaces – on the existing 16-man state tournament bracket. That plan became the “wildcard” or “at large” system that was used for the 2007 state tournament.