



Wrestling Matters

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Fairness In Competition Bills Re-Introduced In State Legislature

NYSPHSAA Wildcards Helps Most Obvious Victims Of Unfair Format

But Too Many Deserving Wrestlers Still Left Home

Assemblyman Joe Morelle and Senator Tom Libous have re-introduced legislation that would require a proportionally based multiple-entry state wrestling tournament. The bill (A6062/S2147), known as the Fairness In Competition Act, is intended to reform the current state tournament format that sends one entry from each section to the state championship regardless of the number of schools in the section.

Under the current NYSPHSAA state tournament format, wrestlers from one part of the state can actually advance to the state tournament by winning just a single bout or – worse yet - by forfeit. Meanwhile, wrestlers from another part of the state must win a qualifying tournament with as many as fifty other competitors to advance to the same state championship event.

Most recently, in the 2007 State Tournament, 19 wrestlers were admitted to the championship event by way of forfeit and 10 other wrestlers qualified by winning just one bout. Meanwhile, despite the recent addition of wildcard entries, dozens of sectional finalists who fought their way through two qualifying tournaments over two weekends were still left out of the state tournament.

Clearly the addition of wildcards (a.k.a. at large entries) is a positive step forward, but it does not fix what is wrong with the state tournament format. No amount of wildcards can make up for such a huge difference in the level of competitiveness at qualifying events. Wildcards do help the most obvious victims of an unfair tournament format and prove beyond a shadow of doubt that multiple-entry is the correct, and long overdue, format.

Look at what happened with the addition of 120 wildcard entries in the 2007 state tournament:

- Thirty-nine wildcards placed in the tournament's top six
- Eight were finalists
- Two won state titles
- In two final's bouts, both competitors were from the same section

Sadly, as these results indicate, over the 44 year history of the NYSPHSAA State Wrestling Tournament, thousands of athletes were denied the opportunity to compete and hundreds of likely medal winners never had the chance to make it to the awards stand because of the unfair tournament format.

The subcommittee of the NYSPHSAA wrestling committee, chaired by Jeff Culty, worked very hard to develop a system that attempts to bring some fairness to a state qualifying process that is inherently unfair. As a result of their work, some additional deserving wrestlers were included in the state tournament and the quality of the tournament improved. The fact remains however that despite the addition of "at large" entries, the NYS Wrestling Tournament stands out as a fundamentally unfair tournament that does not afford all the state's competitors at least a similar opportunity to compete.

The Fairness In Competition Act was first introduced in 2005. It passed the New York State Assembly by a vote of 81-45 during the last legislative session but the State Senate adjourned before acting on the legislation.