



Dear Coach,

We are still trying to piece together what happened at the NYSPHSAA's wrestling committee's private meeting on May 23rd. Here's what we have heard from various sources so far.

### **What Happened**

There was in fact a discussion about changes in future state tournaments. From what we can gather, the Hoyt proposal to adopt a multiple entry philosophy (with the details to be worked out later) and the NYSWCA Two-Division Multiple-Entry Tournament proposal were part of that discussion but no action was taken on either proposal.

In the end, there was a vote to expand the number of entries to 16 in each division by "filling-in" the byes (4 in Div 1 and 5 in Div 2) on the current 16-man bracket. Sections 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 voted in favor while 1, 5, and 8 voted against, Section 11 was absent. A subcommittee will determine various options on how to fill those byes with "wildcards" for the state committee to consider at their October meeting.

### **Why Is This Happening**

No doubt, you are wondering why is this happening like this. While we can't say for sure, we have noticed a few things that we believe contribute to the committee's inability to adopt a state tournament format so many of us feel would help our student-athletes and the sport.

First and most obvious is the fact that the sectional wrestling coordinators come from semi-independent sections that contain as few as 5 to as many as 79 schools. Among that diverse group, there are some who see their responsibility to the section as equal to or greater than their responsibility to the athletes and the sport they represent.

Second, the way the committee operates is not conducive to making decisions. There are voting members and non-voting members - all of whom get to contribute to the conversation about a given issue. When they vote the committee voting structure is terribly unequal. The vote by the section with 5 schools has the same weight as the vote by the section with 79 schools. Actual votes, unfair as they are, are seldom taken - they prefer to make decisions by discussion and consensus. It is very difficult to reach a consensus on such difficult issues among a group representing such diverse sections that meets for a couple of hours 3 or 4 times a year.

Third, members of the committee continue to get mixed signals from the NYSPHSAA. While members are told the NYSPHSAA hierarchy will likely approve a tournament format the wrestling committee agrees to - others opposed to the multiple-entry plans say their opposition is based on their understanding that such plans would never ultimately be approved by the NYSPHSAA.

Fourth, the rules and practices of the NYSPHSAA regarding sectional boundaries, intersectional competition, length of regular season vs. length of playoff season and expanding the size and length of tournaments severely limits the committee's ability to adopt a multiple-entry plan that is as fair and competitive as possible.

### **What Next**

The NYSWCA intends to continue the fight both inside and outside the process. Our preference is that the NYSPHSAA adopt, on their own, a true multiple-entry state tournament format that achieves the twin goals of fairness and excellence. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly clear that we can not rely on that process alone to get the job done.

While the NYSPHSAA wrestling committee may not have been impressed with the 172 coaches who signed on in support of the NYSWCA Two-Division Multiple-Entry proposal, other policymakers were. The coaches association is at this time consulting with Assemblyman Joe Morelle, author of the "Fairness In Competition" bill currently under review by the New York State Assembly Committee on Education. Despite a campaign by the NYSPHSAA to kill the legislation, the bill has attracted twenty Members of the Assembly as sponsors. The legislation is sponsored in the Senate by Senator Tom Libous who is best known in the wrestling community as the person most responsible for bringing back Binghamton University's Division I wrestling program.

We have developed a four-part plan aimed at bringing a fair and competitive state wrestling tournament to New York's High School Wrestlers.

Part one is to strengthen the NYSWCA by increasing our membership and keeping you all informed and armed with as much information as possible.

Part two is to expand our campaign to the entire wrestling community and general public. Parts three and four are to press the case for a real multiple-entry state tournament format with the NYSPHSAA and at the same time work for the passage of Assemblyman Morelle's Fairness in Competition legislation.

We hope, with your help, to continue this fight on behalf of the wrestlers we coach and the sport we all love.

As always, questions, comments and suggestions are welcome.

Dick