



Wrestling Matters

September 21, 2008

Wrestling Committee Votes September 22 On State Regional Proposal

True Multiple-Entry Proposal Would Level Playing Field

On Monday September 22, the NYSPHSAA Wrestling Committee will have the opportunity to recommend to the NYSPHSAA Executive Committee a New York State Wrestling Tournament that is fair to its competitors and enhances the sport. The committee will essentially decide between a true State Wrestling Tournament that gives every wrestler a similar chance to compete in the tournament or the continuation of the existing State Intersectional Tournament format.

New York's Intersectional Tournament format has been in place since 1963 and the basic organizing principle of the Tournament today remains essentially the same as it did in 1963. Each section – regardless of the number of schools in the section – sends a representative to compete against the other sections. Sectional uniforms are worn rather than school uniforms and the tournament is scored by sectional performance not by school. New York is the only state in the country that conducts the culminating event of the wrestling season in this fashion. While the rest of the country is dedicated to a format that treats its competitors fairly and enhances the sport, New York State has been dedicated to a format that also considers the interests of its member sections – often at the expense of fairness to its athletes and the advancement of the sport.

The proposal in front of the state wrestling committee would change the current intersectional format to a true state tournament format by instituting state regional tournaments as part of the state's play-off system. Modeled after the highly successful Pennsylvania system, sections would qualify multiple entries for the state regional tournaments based on the number of schools in the section. The state regional tournaments would then qualify multiple entries to the state finals tournament – again based on the number of schools in the region. Unlike the current system, this true multiple-entry format would give every wrestler at least a similar chance to compete in the state tournament through head-to-head competition - the core value of the sport.

What's been standing in the way of moving the State Regional Tournament Proposal forward? First and foremost, it's the intersectional mentality. Too often policy decisions are affected by a loyalty and commitment to the advancement or protection of the section – not the student-athletes or the sport. Oftentimes, in the committee's deliberations and votes – it's how the proposal affects the section rather how the proposal fairly gets the state's best wrestlers to the state finals tournament. Does it really matter that one section places ahead of another section? Is it right that an athlete advances to New York wrestling's equivalent of the "sweet sixteen" with little or no competition while others must survive and win a gauntlet of qualifying bouts?

The NYSPHSAA Wrestling Committee can't make it up to all those athletes who were denied a fair chance to compete in the New York State Wrestling Championships in the past but on Monday they can take a giant step toward making sure it doesn't keep happening.