

NJSIAA Hall of Fame / Awards Luncheon – On Sunday, March 24 at The Westin Princeton Forrestal Village, the association will induct the following five former student-athletes, one coach and one longtime contributor into the NJSIAA HOF:

- o Mark DeRosa, Football/Baseball Player from Bergen Catholic HS
- o Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, Track & Field Athlete from Union Catholic HS
- o Greg Olsen, Football Player from Wayne Hills HS
- o Keturah Orji, Track & Field (triple jump) Athlete from Mount Olive HS
- o Michael O’Koren, Basketball Player from Hudson Catholic HS
- o Ben Candelino, Basketball Coach at St. Mary of the Assumption HS and Elizabeth HS
- o Kim DeGraw-Cole, Contributor, NJSIAA Director & former Southern HS Athletic Director

The following people will also be honored at the event with service awards:

- o Ken Margolin and Anthony Brito – Franklin HS
- o Maria Nolan – Immaculate Heart Academy & NJSCA
- o Sister Percylee Hart - Union Catholic HS & NJSIAA Controversies Committee

And the Award of Honor will be presented to Howie O’Neil, longtime wrestling tournament director.

Six-month Polling Results – In January, the membership was polled on two pieces of legislation passed by the Executive Committee in the Spring of 2023. The first piece of legislation clarified the 50% participation rule for ice hockey, fencing and swimming while the second piece of legislation increased the limit of potential fines that can be issued by the Controversies Committee. Both ballots were approved by the membership, with over 70% responding in favor.

Program Review Committee

8 members of the Program Review Committee met virtually on Monday, 2/12. The three proposals below were reviewed and unanimously endorsed.

Gymnastics – Tournament Regulations – Voice Vote – There has been an increase of approximately 16% in the number of qualifiers for the balance beam since the 2021-2022 school year. Traditionally, the balance beam has the highest number of qualifiers of the four events and takes the longest of all events to perform. The increasing number of qualifiers indicates a need to review the qualifying score to ensure NJSIAA is hosting competitive and efficient sectional meets. The NJSIAA Gymnastics Committee recommended that the qualifying score to participate in the NJSIAA sectional meets be increased from 8.2 to 8.3 for the balance beam. This recommendation has also been supported by the NJ Girls Gymnastics Coaches Association.

A motion was made by Al Abdelaziz, seconded by Dave Ryden, to increase the qualifying score to participate in the NJSIAA sectional meets from 8.2 to 8.3 for the balance beam. Motion carried unanimously.

Baseball/Softball – Rule Modifications – Voice Vote – Two rule modifications were proposed. The first rule, proposed by NJSIAA staff with support of the baseball and softball committees, will allow free defensive substitutions during sub-varsity level competition. NFHS rules prohibit free substitutions during a varsity game. This modification allows for extra playing time by adding an extra hitter and will allow coaches to freely switch defensive positions without impacting the batting line up. The purpose of this modification is to increase participation and allow coaches to better evaluate players for the varsity level.

The second modification pushed forward by NJSIAA staff, is to adopt (not mandate) the use of the double first base for any level of baseball and softball by school choice. The NFHS rule regarding the double first base is permitted by state adoption. This modification has been in the NFHS books for several years. More and more schools have been installing these bases which has necessitated this

modification. In the past, schools would have to request a waiver to play on fields that have these bases. Although there is a safety component to these bases, we do not want to require member schools to replace their bases.

A motion was made by Al Abdelaziz, seconded by Jeff Pierro, to 1-allow free defensive substitutions in baseball and softball during sub-varsity level competition and 2-adopt (not mandate) the use of the double first base for any level of baseball and softball by school choice. Motion carried unanimously.

Football – Tournament Regulations – Voice Vote – First Ms. Maguire thanked Brendan McGovern and Dave Ryden for being members of the Football Leagues & Conferences Committee. On behalf of the Football Committee and the Football Leagues and Conferences Committee, NJSIAA staff recommended the following updates to the football tournament regulations.

Non-Public Multiplier

The non-public multiplier will no longer be applied to power points but will provide an increased percentage of a multiplier's Strength Index (SI) for a loss. In addition, the non-public multiplier schools will be placed into four categories – A through D. For a loss, a school receives 50% of the opponent's SI. For a loss against a multiplier school, a school can receive up to 80% of the opponent's SI depending on which category the multiplier school is in. If a non-public multiplier loses to a non-multiplier school during the season, then they will move down a category or no longer be considered a multiplier school.

This will allow leagues and conferences to have an incentive to assist with scheduling their regular season, but also allows fluidity during the course of a season to ensure multiplier schools are accurately identified.

The full multiplier proposal was provided:

Point Differential/Running Clock Rule

Currently, when the score differential reaches 33 points or more during the second half of a game, a running clock will be in place. If the score drops below 25 points, normal timing rules will resume. The recommendation is to remove reference to normal timing rules and only allow the clock to stop for scores, timeouts, penalties or injuries – regardless of the score differential. The rule is applicable to all levels of play in both the regular season and state tournament. Recently, concerns have been raised during the running clock period – specifically with unsportsmanlike behavior.

The new rule will be as follows:

For all levels of play, during both the regular season and NJSIAA state tournament games, if the score differential reaches 33 points or more in the 2nd half, the clock will stop only for a score, time out, penalty or injury. ~~If the score differential drops below 25 points, normal timing rules will again be in effect.~~

Games Per Nine Days, Per 24-Hour Period Rule

NJSIAA rules do not allow a player to participate in more than one scheduled game during a twenty-four (24) hour period. It is the committee's recommendation to modify this rule to not allow a player to participate in more than five (5) quarters on consecutive days. This will allow flexibility for players to participate in a Friday night varsity game while also being available to participate in a Thursday or Saturday sub-varsity game. In addition, the use of five (5) quarters is in line with participation limits across other sports which are based on quarters, or halves, and not hours. This recommendation has been reviewed and endorsed by the NJSIAA Sports Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC). However, NJSIAA SMAC recommends that this rule be approved under a two-year pilot program to solicit feedback and data before supporting full adoption.

The new rule will to be approved for a two-year pilot program is as follows:

A player may not participate in more than five (5) quarters on consecutive days.

Non-Public Classifications

Due to declining participation in the Non-Public B state tournament, the Committee recommends changes to the current classifications to increase participation in the Non-Public B state tournament. The classifications currently divide all schools equally into Non-Public A and Non-Public B, with any remainders being placed in Non-Public B. NJSIAA proposes that non-public schools with an enrollment equivalent to a public Group V, Group IV or Group III be classified as Non-Public A and non-public schools with an enrollment equivalent to public Group II and Group I be classified as Non-Public B. Based on the current year classifications, this will increase the number of schools classified as Non-Public B while keeping the enrollment differentials in line with the public-school classifications.

Season Dates – 2024 – 2025 School Year

Below is a list of regular season start dates and state tournament dates:

Week 0 – Thursday, August 29, 2024 (all levels)

Week 1 – Thursday, September 5, 2024

Public – First Round – Friday, November 1, 2024, or Saturday, November 2, 2024

Non-Public First Round – Friday, November 8, 2024, or Saturday, November 9, 2024

State Championships – Friday, November 29, 2024 – Sunday, December 1, 2024 *

State Championships – Thanksgiving Day team – Wednesday, December 4, 2024

*Dependent on facility availability at Met Life Stadium and Rutgers University.

A motion was made by Joe Ursino, seconded by Dave Ryden, to approve the proposed football tournament regulation changes for the 2024-2025 season. Motion carried unanimously.

Chief Compliance Officer Update (Paul Popadiuk)

Eligibility Update – Mr. Popadiuk sent out multiple reminders to schools to submit their spring eligibility waivers by Friday, 2/16. The committee meets later this month.

Disqualifications – Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Last week, there was an increase in the number of disqualifications due to unsportsmanlike conduct. Multiple teams are now ineligible for the boys and girls basketball state tournament. Mr. Popadiuk cannot stress enough how important it is for Athletic Directors to make sure their coaches train their players to stay on the bench when altercations happen. There were three bench-clearing incidents in one day. The association will continue to work with the leagues and conferences until this becomes part of the fabric of what we should be doing as athletes and coaches.

International Committee Update – Mr. Popadiuk thanked the following people for serving on the International Committee: Dr. Birnbohm, Judy Finch-Johnson, Russell Petrocelli, Dr. Rossi, Dr. Salvo and Steve Shohfi. The committee has been meeting since December and will meet again next week. There may be a proposal in the April meeting addressing concerns regarding NJSIAA's international student rules.

Chief Operating Officer Update (Tony Maselli)

Swimming & Diving Update – The swim tournament is currently competing at the sectional round, which is taking place at four different locations.

Ice Hockey Update – Seeding for the tournament was finalized today. The Prudential Center is excited to host the finals.

Power Points Update – This was tabled until the April meeting since Mr. Maselli felt it would be better discussed at an in-person meeting, rather than a virtual meeting, since it will affect 80% of NJSIAA's sports.

BeNice Program Update – This program was rolled out a few weeks ago. Mr. Maselli has only heard positive feedback about it from school personnel. People seem to be appreciative of the initiative and other states are reaching out to learn more about it and see how it's going.

Al Stumpf

Basketball Update – The tournament was seeded yesterday and will begin next week. Mr. Stumpf thanked Steven Jenkins for stepping up and hosting two days of semifinal games for the tournament.

Fencing Update – The Sweet 16 round begins today, the State Finals will take place on 2/29 at Morris Hills HS, and the individual state tournament will take place on 3/2 at Hunterdon Central HS.

Unified Basketball and Unified Bowling Update – The Unified B Basketball Championships round will take place at Union City HS on 2/17. The A Group is currently playing down to the semifinalist rounds. Finals for the A group will take place at Rutgers on 3/9.

The Unified Bowling championships will take place at Bowlero on 2/27.

Derryk Sellers

Bowling Update – The team tournament is advancing. Mr. Sellers thanked Athletic Directors and Sectional Directors for helping coaches through the process.

Winter Track Update – The State Group Meets will take place this weekend. Mr. Sellers expressed pride in this tournament. He feels it features NJ's world-class athletes and amazing young people.

NJSCA Wrestling Clinic – May 3, 2024 – Princeton University – After a two-year hiatus, Mr. Sellers is excited to host this clinic at Princeton University on 5/3.

Finance Committee Update – Jason Corley

Approval of Monthly Checks – The January 8, 2024 through February 12, 2024 checkbook was approved by the finance committee and all checks were approved per policy before they were disbursed. Gregory Troxell made a motion, seconded by Barry Walker, to approve the January 8, 2024 through February 12, 2024 check registers. Motion carried unanimously.

Report of Counsel (Steven Goodell, Esq.) – Mr. Goodell briefed the committee on the following three legal matters:

1. The Controversies Committee met on 1/25 to hear an appeal by Atlantic City HS who requested a waiver of the rule disqualifying their basketball team from the state tournament. After four hours of testimony, the appeal was denied. The school does not plan to appeal the decision, but they wish to further discuss issues regarding this situation.

2. On 1/30, there was a Leagues and Conferences hearing to determine if Lakeland HS and West Milford HS should be released from their commitment to the Big North Conference. The two schools petitioned the conference for release, but were denied, so they appealed the decision to NJSIAA's Leagues and Conferences Committee. Judy Finch Johnson served as Chair of the committee for the hearing. Both schools are founding members of the conference since 2009 and are Group 2 schools with declining enrollments so they feel they are a better fit somewhere else.

The L&C Committee determined that both schools should stay in the Big North Conference. The committee found that the two schools did not provide enough substantial reason why they should be released so the request was denied. A written decision will be sent to all parties by the end of the week.

3. In the fall, Plainfield HS complained that their football game versus Montgomery HS was plagued with biased officiating. The complaints were sent to the Division of Civil Rights and Ms. Maguire hired David Hesse, former Commissioner of Education, to do an independent investigation of the incident. After interviewing all parties involved and reviewing game film, Mr. Hesse wrote a comprehensive report based on his findings. Ms. Maguire adopted that report as her own and released the decision to all parties and the Division of Civil Rights. A press release was sent yesterday summarizing the report. The five main points of the report are below.

1- There was no evidence that substantiated explicit or implicit bias in the fouls called or on-field decisions. Most of the calls could be substantiated. The calls that couldn't be factually substantiated cut against both teams.

2- On the other hand, the evidence supported the concerns of the quality of officiating. Also, the language used by the official in the usage of the word "boy" referring to the ballperson was considered a microaggression. Going forward all officials will address a ballperson by their name or be advised that they shouldn't be addressed as "ball boy" or "ball girl" or use the term "boy". This change will also be reflected in the NJFOA Six Officials Mechanics Manual. The Implicit Bias Training will also further address the importance of appropriate language.

3 – Although the game was poorly managed and there were questionable calls, there was no disparity in how celebrations were treated or how communications were delivered to either team.

4- The report affirmed the decision of the officials' disqualifications.

5- It is concerning that the officials were publicly identified in the media before an internal investigation took place. This is a violation of the NJSIAA Sportsmanship Rule. It is unsportsmanlike conduct for any school or athletic staff member to be publicly critical of any game official, opponent, or opposing coaches/players. Schools must know when a complaint is filed, it will be treated seriously, and the complaint will be automatically reported to the DCR.

Old Business / New Business – none

Adjournment – A motion was made by Russell Petrocelli, seconded by Judy Finch-Johnson, at 11:56 am, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Maguire
Executive Director

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