

Minutes of the 2018-19 IHSA Chess Advisory Committee Meeting April 5, 2019

The IHSA Chess Advisory Committee meeting was held at the IHSA Office in Bloomington, Illinois, on Friday, April 5, 2019, beginning at 10:00 am. Committee members present were Tournament Director Chris Merli; Hector Hernandez, Chicago (St. Ignatius); Joel Penne, Sterling (H.S.); Jim Fox, Naperville (Neuqua Valley); Mike Campbell, Northbrook (Glenbrook North); and James Hasty, Bismarck (B.-Henning). Scott Johnson, IHSA Assistant Executive Director, chaired the meeting.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommended the following changes to the Terms and Conditions:

1. State final pairings (V-E-5)

Recommendation: Requires that the first round of the state tournament be paired immediately prior to the start of competition.

Rationale: Several withdrawals occurred between the sectional and state final in both 2018 and 2019 and this trend will probably continue. In both years the first round was re-paired. Waiting until after check-in to create the pairings is easy and will eliminate the confusion associated with a re-pair. It will also allow scoresheets to be printed more quickly.

Approved by Consent

2. State final roster (VI-A-3)

Recommendation: Requires that coaches declare their 12 participating players and strength order for the state final tournament by midnight on Friday of Week 31 (prior to the state final seeding meeting).

Rationale: This change will allow the Seeding Committee to see which players a team is bringing to the state tournament. (In the future the committee may discuss moving this deadline up even further and require coaches to declare a single set of 12 players and a single strength order for both the sectional and state final tournaments.)

Approved by Consent

3. Tie-break penalties (VII-A-4)

Recommendation: Specifies that if a sectional tournament cannot be completed prior to the state final seeding meeting, the seeding committee shall determine which teams advance to the state tournament from that sectional, using the sectional seeds as a guideline.

Rationale: Given that weather is always a concern in late January and early February, a backup plan is needed in case one or more sectionals cannot be completed.

Approved by Consent

4. Tournament Participation (VIII-C-4a)

Recommendation: Removes a section that is obsolete.

Rationale: Now that players are allowed to compete on more than one board, this section no longer applies.

Approved by Consent

5. Tie-break penalties (VIII-G-2)

Recommendation: Reduces the tie-break penalties used in sectional tournaments to one-fourth the value of tie-break penalties used in the state final tournament.

Rationale: Because fewer rounds are played during sectional tournaments than the state tournament, the standard tie-break penalties have a much larger impact on ranking. This change makes them roughly proportional.

Approved by Consent

6. Official scoresheet (VIII-H-3)

Recommendation: Requires that the match scoresheet remain on the table next to Board 1.

Rationale: In recent years the scoresheet has sometimes been picked up by a player or coach and placed next to the last remaining game on the table. This could be considered kibitzing, since it encourages a player to take note of the team score.

Approved by Consent

7. Uniforms (IX-H-2)

Recommendation: Spells out the penalties for uniform violations.

Rationale: Although the uniform rule is several years old, the penalty for violation has never been stated explicitly. This removes any ambiguity. The new language reads "A player may be penalized once per day of competition. A team may be penalized for up to five minor violations per day. Willful refusal to comply with the uniform rule shall constitute unsportsmanlike conduct and may be penalized by team disqualification."

Approved by Consent

8. Team awards (X-B-2)

Recommendation: Adds medallions for the members of the teams that finish with six wins and do not earn a trophy (i.e., teams that finish in fourth, fifth, sixth, and occasionally seventh place).

Rationale: Individual medallions were removed this year. This change would increase the number of medallions while also reinforcing the idea that the IHSA tournament is a team tournament.

Died for Lack of Motion

RULES RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommended the following change to the Chess Rule Book:

1. Distracting behavior (Rule 17-8-2)

Recommendation: Removes language that "a player whose turn it is to move cannot be considered as distracting or annoying an opponent."

Rationale: The rule is contradicted by other rules.

Approved by Consent

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Manual check of pairings.** The program used to pair the tournament is mysterious and in the later rounds has sometimes generated pairings that are suboptimal and had a direct effect on the placement of the top teams. This year's pairings protest happened just prior to the start of the final round and took about 25 minutes to resolve. Chris Merli, pairings chief, agrees that a manual check of the top pairings needs to be instituted to avoid these problems, and he will set up a system that will facilitate this check for future tournaments.

Approved by Consent

2. **Submission of lineups in advance in order to reduce check-in bottleneck.** The new "strength order" concept worked fine in competition this year but led to some confusing scoresheets as names frequently had to be crossed out and overwritten. The Chesscalate mobile app can be changed to allow the submission of lineups prior to the pairing of a particular round, so that the scoresheet can be printed with the intended lineup (the lineup may still be changed by crossing out). This change, along with requiring coaches to declare their 12 players and strength order (T&C change #2) well ahead of time, would practically eliminate the bottleneck that occurs at check-in time.

Approved by Consent

3. ICCA awards as a bridge to expanded classes. Every year the Illinois Chess Coaches Association (ICCA) hands out awards to teams that do not win one of the IHSA trophies or plaques. These awards are based on the final results of the IHSA tournament and are given to the highest-ranking team in each of five different classes, divided equally by school enrollment. These awards have been associated with the IHSA tournament for many years. At one point they were handed out after the IHSA awards but, at the request of the IHSA administrator, in a different room. In 2003 that separation was removed and the ICCA awards ceremony followed the IHSA awards in the same room. As the IHSA awards ceremony got longer and longer (because of additional individual medals), attendance for the ICCA awards dwindled, and a couple of years ago, the ICCA decided to forgo the ceremony and simply mail the awards. While interest in a multiclass system in chess remains high ([see the discussion below](#)), the suggestion was made that it might be possible to affirm the importance of the ICCA awards by handing them out prior to the IHSA awards. This does not require an unreasonable amount of time now that there are no individual awards. It might also encourage more teams to stay around for the IHSA awards and ultimately, the state championship presentation, which would occur last.

Died for Lack of Motion

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Committee discussed multiclass possibilities. Joel Penne of Sterling, a committee member, and Chris Aderhold of Glenbard East both submitted various possible structures for multiclass play. The concern is that "small schools" with chess programs, and there are about two dozen that fit into that category, have little chance to advance to the state meet, and that even medium-sized schools are unlikely to crack the traditional group at the top that is dominated by large suburban high schools.

The Committee Chair suggested that Joel work with the ICCA and other coaches to develop a single plan that could be presented to the IHSA at a future date. It was reinforced that getting the backing of a large number of coaches, from a variety of school enrollments, provided the best path toward the adoption of any multiclass proposal. As with similar drives in the past, the committee is aware that the IHSA has a policy regarding the expansion of classes. The committee is also aware that exceptions have been made to the policy (cheer and dance being the most notable).

Marty Hickman once said "there's no reason for high school not to have a chess program." But as an activity, chess takes a back seat to sports in our schools, and it needs help to foster growth, especially at smaller schools. In those schools, the loss of a single, dedicated coach is usually the end of the line for the program. If the tournaments can be restructured to keep those programs healthy, it can only be a good thing.

In addition:

The Committee reviewed a few incidents that occurred during the sectionals and state finals.

The Committee reconfirmed its commitment to work with the Illinois Chess Coaches Association to create some sort of steward training curriculum for next year.

The Committee reviewed different proposals for seeding the sectional and state tournaments.

The Committee discussed future locations for the state final tournament. The current contract with the Peoria Civic Center runs out after the 2020 tournament.

The Committee discussed the possible restoration of individual medals and ultimately affirmed the status quo.

The Committee discussed and rejected a proposal to return to restricting certain matches between teams from the same conference.

The Committee discussed and rejected a proposal to return to the state tournament seeding procedure of grouping the bottom half of the field in groups of 16.

The Committee responded negatively to the general idea of moving the tournament to March or April sometime in the future.

FINAL BUSINESS

The Committee thanked Hector Hernandez for three years of service.

The next meeting of the IHSA Chess Advisory Committee will be held on Friday, March 20, 2020.