

MINUTES OF THE IHSA FOOTBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
April 19, 2018

The IHSA Football Advisory Committee met at the IHSA Office in Bloomington, Illinois, on April 19, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. Committee members present were Bob Pieper, Northbrook (Glenbrook North); Andy Lutzenkirchen, Naperville (Central); Josh Jostes, Maroa (M.-Forsyth); Jeremy Adolphson, Monmouth (M.-Roseville); Brian Short, Breese (Central); and Sam Knox, IHSA. Troy McAllister, Chicago (Phillips); Travis Heinz, Forreston; Dennis Doyle, Official-Joliet; were absent.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

1. The committee discussed the results of the survey it sent to football-playing schools in December. The survey was aimed at finding a remedy to the conference realignment issue that affects schools in many areas of the state. The survey asked schools about their preferences regarding potential playoff changes that might bring a resolution to the conference realignment issue. The survey options were: retain the current 32-team bracket; a 48-team bracket; a 56-team bracket; or a 64-team bracket.
560 schools received the survey. 424 schools completed it (76% response rate).
2. The survey results didn't reveal a clear-cut choice as to which playoff option schools think is the best alternative to solve the conference realignment issue. Of the four choices, the survey showed that schools prefer to keep the current 32-team playoff bracket.
3. That led the committee to consider a regular-season scheduling option in which the IHSA office would assign schools to 8-team or 9-team districts. Schools would be placed in districts based on enrollment and geography. District assignments would remain the same for a two-year period. Every two years, districts assignments could change based on the changing enrollments of the football playing schools.
There would be eight districts in each class. District standings would determine which teams qualify for the playoffs. The top four teams in each district would qualify for a 32-team bracket in each class. Teams would still play a 9-game schedule and would have complete flexibility to schedule one non-district game (in 9-team districts) or two non-district games (in 8-team districts). Non-district games would not be factors in playoff qualification.

4. In a playoff bracket using the district format, teams would be placed in the 32-team bracket based on their district standings.

For example: #1 from district A vs. #4 from district D
#2 from district B vs. #3 from district C

In a bracket like this, teams would not face a team from their own district until at least the third round of the playoffs.

5. After thoughtful discussion about a district format, the committee felt that it is the best option to remedy the conference realignment issue. Committee members considered these benefits of the district format: Schools would continue to play a 9-game regular season and would have to qualify for a 32-team playoff bracket. Only district standings would determine which teams qualify for the playoffs. Schools could schedule non-district games without concern that a non-district loss could potentially eliminate their team from the playoffs. Schools would know their football classification the entire season. Schools could retain membership in geographically-based conferences for all other sports.
6. The next step for the committee is to develop a formal proposal that details the district format and share it with member schools for consideration during the IHSA by-law amendment process in November.
7. The committee discussed the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee's recommendation regarding player limitations. Committee members expressed concerns about the recommendation and the effects the recommendation might have on player participation and game schedules.
8. The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.