

IHSA Esports Advisory Committee Meeting

May 1, 2024

12:30 p.m.

The IHSA Esports Advisory Committee met on May 1, 2024, in an online setting from various communities across Illinois, beginning at 12:30 p.m. Committee members present were: Patrick Davey, Chicago (Lane); James Keathley, Elgin (H.S.); Ellie Bell, Minooka; Jarrod Rackauskas, Normal (Community West); Tom Hawkins, Galesburg (H.S.); and Brock Frazier, Metropolis (Massac Co.). Absent from the meeting was: Brian Clausen, Bartonville (Limestone). Also in attendance were Dan Le, IHSA Assistant Executive Director; and Dan Truffa, 2024 Esports State Finals Tournament Manager.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Add *EA Sports Madden NFL* to the IHSA state series. Competition would be played on the PlayStation.

VIII: TOURNAMENT RULES, A. Events

Schools may enter participants in the following contests:

2. Individual Game: two individual entries
 - a. Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Singles
 - b. EA Sports FC
 - c. EA Sports Madden NFL

Rationale: *EA Sports Madden NFL* is a popular game title that is being played in tournaments at local, collegiate, and professional levels. Adding the *EA Sports Madden NFL* franchise to the IHSA state series would provide another opportunity for more students to participate in interscholastic esports and would be a second sports game that has been absent since *NBA 2K* was dropped from the state series.

Note: Pending approval of this addition to the IHSA state series game offerings, rules will be developed by the esports advisory committee at its next meeting scheduled for September. The current thought is that the structure of an *EA Sports Madden NFL* tournament would mirror the *EA Sports FC* tournament.

Recommendation #2: Add two universal substitute positions to Participants section of the List of Participants form. Any student listed as a universal substitute may replace any student currently listed on a game roster in the List of Participants.

VIII: TOURNAMENT RULES, B. Student Entries

1. A student may only be entered in one competition for the state series. No duplicate entries allowed.
2. Schools may list up to two (2) students as universal substitutes in the List of Participants.
 - a. Before the first-level tournament has started competition, a universal substitute may 1) replace any student listed on the roster of an event in the List of Participants or 2) fill a vacant roster position for a team game.
 - b. Each universal substitute may only be entered into one event for the state series. A universal substitute entered into an event becomes an official participant of that event for the remainder of the state series.

- c. A student who is replaced by a universal substitute is removed from the state series.
- d. After the List of Participants deadline, only the roster changes according to the parameters outlined in part (a) are permitted.

Rationale: The state series has experienced a high volume of withdrawals in the week leading up to the sectional tournaments due to academic ineligibility and schedule conflicts with spring sports among other circumstances that arise after the List of Participants deadline. Currently, schools are permitted to list alternates in all team games. Permitting schools to list up to two universal substitutes would provide coaches with additional flexibility to replace individual students, who are no longer available to participate in the sectional, and reduce the number of lineup changes currently experienced before the first-level tournament, which is currently the sectional.

Recommendation #3: Add language to denote that all Sectional tournament brackets will be drawn and posted on the Wednesday prior to the Sectional date.

VIII. TOURNAMENT RULES, K. Tournament Assignments and Seeding

1. Bracket assignments for the first-level tournament in each game of the state series will be a random draw. For individual games, participants from the same school will be assigned to opposite halves of the bracket. First-level tournament brackets will be drawn and posted publicly on the Wednesday before the first-level tournament of the state series.

Rationale: Currently, there is not a defined date for when sectional brackets should be drawn and posted online. Designating a uniform date for all sectionals would reduce inconsistencies across the state as some schools are able to see their brackets before schools in other sectionals.

COMPETITION RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation: Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, PlayStation competitions in the IHSA state series will be competed on the PlayStation 5 instead of the PlayStation 4.

Rationale: PlayStation 5s are more accessible now than the time when they were initially released for purchase. Upgrading to the PlayStation 5 will result in updated technology, higher quality, and more available functions. This would impact *EA Sports FC* and pending approval, *EA Sports Madden NFL*.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

1. The committee shared reflections on the 2024 IHSA state series. The feedback was overall positive as the sectional tournaments and state finals ran smoothly with only a few issues. The committee acknowledged the length of the tournaments and discussed options to speed up competition, such as continuous play during the lunch hour, increasing the number of playing stations for each game, and presenting awards as events finish similar to track & field competitions. The committee also noted an increased number of spectators and cheering at this year's event.
2. The committee reviewed state series participation numbers in consideration for a regional level of competition. Overall, there was an increase in schools and participants from 2023 to 2024.

Specifically, there was a considerable increase in teams participating in *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* and *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Crew Battle* at the sectionals. No action was taken. The committee recognized which sectionals saw the greatest number of participants and discussed using this data to better balance the number of participants across all sectionals in the future and keep sectionals manageable for host schools.

3. The committee discussed other game titles to potentially add to the state series. The conversation focused mainly on *EA Sports Madden NFL* and *Pokémon Unite*. *EA Sports Madden NFL* was the only game recommended to be added at this time.
4. The committee discussed overall team awards in the state series. The committee recognized that the number of events, individual games versus team games, and participation numbers all factored into determining an appropriate scoring system that will require further analysis, discussion, and long-term planning.
5. The committee discussed creating a coaches' survey to obtain information on preferences for game titles and gaming platforms in the IHSA state series.
6. Dan Truffa presented feedback on the appeals process from the state finals. The committee discussed the process and when is the appropriate time to appeal. The committee agreed to table the discussion to reflect further on the process.
7. Dan Le provided an update on communications between IHSA and IHSEA as well as a suggestion for coaches' education opportunities as more schools and newer coaches are becoming involved with interscholastic esports.
8. Dan Le thanked and recognized outgoing committee members, Jarrod Rackauskas of Normal (Community West) and Tom Hawkins of Galesburg (H.S.).

Next Meeting: Thursday, September 5, 2024