Will a Terrible Decision by the OHSAA Continue for a 4th Year?

Written by Jim Lowther
Tuesday, 29 March 2016 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 29 March 2016 13:51

At the 2013 OATCCC Track & Field Clinic Brenda Murray (Administrative Associate -Technology and Special Projects for the OHSAA) and again at the Cross Country Clinic in 2014, Dale Gabor (OHSAA cross country/track representative) both said a few small school superintendents in 2012 were behind the push for combined enrollment to be used for cross country; even though in 2011 the president of the Ohio Cross Country and Track & Field Coaches Association said he and the members of the association were against combined enrollment. "It is quite clear though that our membership finds the idea of using a single divisional assignment for a school not in the best interest of the student-athletes and their coaches in the sport of cross country. Moving programs out of their natural division creates competitive advantages/disadvantages and does not solve the problem."

Thus, Cross Country is the only sport where the OHSAA add both the boys and girls enrollment of the bottom three grades of a school and divide by 2 to determine a school divisional assignment. All other OHSAA sports use single gender enrollment to determine a sport divisional assignment.

Dozens of schools and hundreds of athletes have been denied the opportunity to compete in their normal division resulting in schools which should be in a higher division winning post season competitions while the school which should be in their normal division missing out on this honor. Hundreds of athletes have also been denied the opportunity to compete in their normal division allowing athletes who should be in a higher division advancing in post season competition and winning awards at the expense of athletes that should be in their normal division.

About a dozen plus people (coaches, ADs, principals, superintendents and track/CC board members) met with Dale Gabor last January in the OHSAA office. Most talked about the problems with combined enrollment. Many of the Track and Cross Country board members think combined enrollment has caused more issues/problems than the one it tried to solve.
In the discussion the issue about coaching came up and many thought that coaching should be a local school board issue not a State issue.

The issue of “Fair and Equitable” the foundation of the OHSAA Mission Statement came up: such as the 64 boys schools with more boys that were in Division II while another school with fewer boys was forced to move to Division I because of their large girls enrollment. Two girls schools moved down from DI to DII because of fewer boys while one school with more boys than girls, their girls team was forced to move to DII. Thus a traditional "Normal" D III school was forced to compete against traditional "Normal" DI schools in the District.

The economy was mentioned as a reason for combined enrollment, but it was pointed out basketball increased the number of games they could play during this time as well as schools could still play preseason/exhibition games. So the question was asked how could a person use finance as an issue to send a few school's program to different site for one event.

After 3.5 hours Dale Gabor said this is good but nothing can be done until next year and when another meeting is scheduled in April. This is basically what Mr. Gabor said sixteen months ago at the Coaches Cross Country Clinic. How can the OHSAA allow an issue to continue when dozen of schools and hundreds of athletes are negatively affected by moving their program out of their normal division when combined enrollment is not used for any other sport.

Last fall charter and community school students were counted towards their home school enrollment. However, after the fall sports season started, the charter school students were removed from their local school's enrollment after a firestorm of city school coaches and administrators.

If the OHSAA can change the above issue in just a few weeks- How can it take more than three years to correct a problem which has negatively affected dozens of schools and hundreds of cross country athletes? Is this Fair and Equitable?

Other articles dealing with OHSAA issues affecting Cross Country and Track & Field:
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http://runohio.com/index.php/features/888-cross-country-clinic-combined-enrollment

http://runohio.com/index.php/features/1105-why-does-ohio-require-nine-athletes-for-a-track-and-field-team-when-other-states-only-require-one-

High School Cross Country Issues -

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OATCCC letter to the OHSAA Board of Directors

High-school cross country: New rule stirs competition debate
http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/sports/2013/07/17/new-rule-stirs-competition-debate.html

New high school cross country division breakdown draws criticism
http://www.timesreporter.com/newsnow/x1533292438/New-high-school-cross-country-division-breakdown-draws-criticism

Issues with Combined Enrollment for Cross Country

www.runohio.com