

NEW JERSEY STATE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
1161 Route 130 North Robbinsville, NJ 08691

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
December 11, 2024

Roll Call - The meeting of the Executive Committee, held on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at the NJSIAA Administration Building in Robbinsville, New Jersey, was called to order by the President, Russell Petrocelli, at 11:07 am. A moment of silence was held for Carl Rickershauser, longtime contributor of the association who served as State Rules Interpreter for Cross Country and Track & Field, and the two Hudson Catholic football coaches who tragically lost their lives over the weekend in a car accident.

The following members were present: Alaa Abdelaziz, Mohammed Abdelaziz, Jeff Baldino, Dr. Carol Birnbohm, Jeremy Braverman, Carl Buffalino, Kevin Carroll, Tony Cattani, Maria Crowley, Judy Finch-Johnson, Barry Fitzgerald, John Fraraccio, Michael Gallo, Natalie Gorman, Dr. Kimberly Guccio, Steven Jenkins, Kurt Karcich, Howard Krieger, Dr. Michael Kuchar, Jason Miller, Dr. Anne Mucci, Senator Paul Sarlo, Steve Shohfi, Sheryl Smith, Jeffrey Steele, Dr. Gregory Troxell, Joseph Ursino, Tammy Wagner, Barry Walker, Tripp Welborne, Cynthia Wilks, Assemblyman Wimberly, and Sjoquelyn Winstead. Also present: Colleen Maguire, Executive Director; Paul Popadiuk, Chief Compliance Officer; Tony Maselli, Chief Operating Officer; Al Stumpf, Derryk Sellers, and Sandy Mamary, Assistant Directors; Steven P. Goodell, Esq., NJSIAA Counsel. The following members of the press were in attendance: Jake Aferiat, *NJ Advance Media*. Also present: Kevin Ruth, NJAIS Executive Director; Dr. John Griffith, Head of Ranney School, and Dr. Steven Loy, Head of Rutgers Prep.

Approval of Minutes - A motion was made by Judy Finch Johnson, seconded by Carl Buffalino, to accept the minutes of the November 13, 2024 Executive Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Legislative Update (Steven Goodell for Paul Anzano) – Since Mr. Anzano was unable to attend today’s meeting, Mr. Goodell gave a report on his behalf. Bill S1239, which requires NJSIAA to require a criminal history records check for any person to serve as an official at athletic events sanctioned by the association, has been voted out of committee. The association doesn’t support this bill and thinks it unnecessary because NJSIAA already does its own background checks on every official and the process for getting background checks under this bill is less efficient than the process the association already has in place. Under current NJSIAA policy, no official can be registered and officiate until they pass their background check. Senator Sarlo has not had a chance to speak with the bill’s sponsor yet, but will, especially because there’s a cost implication to this bill. This bill stemmed from the need for background checks in youth sports/travel games, but since the association already has a system in place, it’s not necessary for NJSIAA.

Executive Director Update – Colleen Maguire

Carl Rickershauser – Ms. Maguire shared some words about Carl Rickershauser, long-time XC and Track State Rules Interpreter who recently passed away. When Don Danser, former NJSIAA XC and Track Assistant Director passed away suddenly in June 2015, Carl was the first call. He showed up with Ed Colona the next day and helped clean out the office and keep everything moving for the start of the next season. Carl was a long-time educator and long-time official who spent his entire career dedicated to students. He was a proud mentor to so many administrators in and around South Jersey and to many

in the cross country and track & field community. It is hard to find a nicer person. His friendship, his guidance and his wisdom will be sorely missed. NJSIAA was lucky to have had his service for so many years.

Fall State Championships Summary – A summary of state champions by sport was distributed. Ms. Maguire thanked Mr. Stumpf, Mr. Sellers, Ms. Mamary and Mr. Maselli and all members of NJSIAA tournament staff for a successful fall sports season. She expressed gratitude for their leadership and the teamwork necessary to host so many state tournament events in such a short period of time. This includes Executive Committee member Maureen Dzwil, who is the association's field hockey state assignor and NFHS Field Hockey Committee Section 1/Officials Representative. Ms. Maguire congratulated the Executive Committee members whose teams won a state championship. (Russell Petrocelli, DePaul (Football - Non-Public B); Brendan McGovern, Bergen Catholic (Football – Non-Public A); Kevin Carroll, Waldwick (B Soccer); Carol Birnbohm and Barry Fitzgerald, Shawnee (Group 3 B/G Soccer/G Tennis, Cherokee – B XC). It was also nice seeing committee members on the sidelines of these championship events.

Disqualifications – Fall Update – A fall disqualification summary report was provided. There was an overall 12.5% increase in student-athlete driven disqualifications (17.7% increase in football and 13.7% increase in boy's soccer). This report will be provided to officers in tomorrow's Leagues and Conferences monthly meeting. Some conferences saw a 30%+ increase. The association will continue to focus on sportsmanship awareness/training locally and brainstorm ideas and resources to help Leagues and Conferences address negative trends.

Sportsmanship /Spectator Code of Conduct Update – NJSIAA has budgeted monies for use by Leagues and Conferences for sportsmanship events and to help with promoting spectator code of conduct policies. 10 Leagues and Conferences have received stipends of \$3K each to help host sportsmanship events for their student-athletes. 5 Leagues and Conferences have received grants of approximately \$200/school to help promote and provide signage or other materials for the spectator code of conduct policies. To date, \$60K has been provided to support this initiative.

Wrestling Update – For boys wrestling, all district and region host sites have been confirmed and the district alignment with host sites are posted on NJSIAA's website. For girls wrestling, the association is still looking to secure a host for the south region event. All other region sites have been confirmed. NJSIAA is grateful to the many schools who host these tournaments as they are large scale and require a lot of resources, but they are a ton of fun for the student-athletes. Rutgers will host the boys team tournament championships on Sunday, February 16 and Boardwalk Hall will host the individual tournament championships from Thursday, March 6, through Saturday, March 8.

NJSIAA Hall of Fame – Class of 2025 – A memo was provided, announcing the Class of 2025. On Sunday March 23, the following 5 student-athletes and 2 coaches will be inducted into the NJSIAA HOF at the Westin at Forrestal Village in Princeton: Anthony Ashnault (South Plainfield, wrestling), Josh Evans (Irvington. football/track & field), Carol Lewis (Willingboro, track & field), Francesca Russo (Wayne Valley, fencing), Nick Vena (Morristown, track & field), Deanna Knobloch (Moorestown HS girls lacrosse coach) and Ken Frank (Toms River HS South baseball coach).

Advisory Committee Proposal –The Advisory Committee will meet today, at 1:00pm, to review one proposal from NJSIAA staff. The proposal is seeking to adopt a competitive balance formula to be applied to public school classifications. Specific to public schools, it would initially be applied to football, boys basketball and girls basketball. The proposal draws from similar formulas currently in use by other state associations. While attending NFHS meetings it is very evident that many states are all dealing with the same issues. Ms. Maguire is always looking to learn what solutions may or may not be viable for NJ.

Ms. Maguire thanked current Executive Committee members, Carol Birnbohm, Jorge Diaz, Judy Finch-Johnson, Michael Rossi and Greg Troxell for serving on the committee that helped to formulate this

proposal. The committee met on several occasions since last spring to discuss survey feedback and different options to address concerns. The committee's oversight and feedback has been invaluable, and Ms. Maguire is grateful for their support. She also commended Paul Popadiuk for doing a ton of leg work in pulling together data and soliciting enrollment information from member schools. Mr. Popadiuk and Ms. Maguire have met individually with five conferences to solicit feedback on the proposal, and more meetings are scheduled for after the holiday break. If the proposal is endorsed by the Advisory Committee later this afternoon, then the committee chair, Dave Frazier, will attend the January Executive Committee meeting to present the proposal for approval. Ms. Maguire encouraged all committee members to read the entirety of the proposal prior to the January meeting and to contact either her or Mr. Popadiuk directly with any questions or feedback before the next meeting

Chief Compliance Officer Update (Paul Popadiuk)

Eligibility Updates - Special EAC Hearing – An emergency hearing was scheduled for after today's meeting. A student would like to participate in sports under the NJSIAA's homeschool guidelines, and is appealing the NJSIAA's determination that he does not qualify as a homeschooled student, but rather is considered a private school student since he is enrolled full-time in an online school.

Transfer Rule Outreach – Mr. Popadiuk and Ms. Maguire have been in communications with the South Carolina Association and Tennessee Association since they are both experiencing issues with the bona fide change of address and their transfer policy. Both states like the changes NJSIAA made to its transfer rule and are looking to learn more about it so they can apply it in their state.

GMC Leadership Conference – Mr. Popadiuk enjoyed attending this conference last week. Each school invited a few winter sport athletes to listen to a panel presentation on leadership. The students were then broken into smaller groups for leadership and life skills training to bring back to their teammates.

Chief Operating Officer Update (Tony Maselli)

Ice Hockey Update – The season has begun, and teams are already playing some games. The finals are scheduled for 3/10 at the Prudential Center.

Individual State Tournaments – Independent Entries – Mr. Maselli distributed a memo with NJSIAA's new streamlined policy for independent entries for the association's individual state tournaments. This summer, Mr. Maselli conducted an in-depth review of the procedures governing individual sports to ensure consistency and fairness for independent athletes. He found that the procedures for managing independent athletes varied significantly across the 10 sports that provide individual championships. To address these discrepancies, he developed a simplified and uniform approach that can be applied consistently to all 10 sports which are outlined below and will be part of all sport tournament regulations.

Independent Athletes

An Independent athlete is a student enrolled in a NJSIAA member school that does not sponsor a particular sports program and would like to enter a state individual tournament. Independent athletes are permitted, provided the school follows all independent entry requirements listed in the tournament regulations for their sport. In addition to the sports-specific tournament entry regulations, the following general procedures for all schools of independent athletes must be followed.

Independent Athlete Procedures

1. All independent athletes must be accompanied by a certified faculty member (chaperone), or a coach approved by the schools administration.

2. The independent athlete will be disqualified if they are not accompanied by a certified faculty member (chaperone), or a coach approved by the schools administration.
3. The chaperone must have with them written authority from the school's administration and remain with the athlete throughout all contests.
4. Independent athletes will not be able to check-in to the event with a parent, a coach/chaperone must be present at the time of check-in.
5. Any properly appointed "coach" will be subject to all out-of-season practice rules.
6. The school district must be able to certify the independent athlete has met the required six (6) practices.
7. The school district must be able to certify the independent athlete has a completed physical on file.
8. The penalty for failure to comply will be the disqualification of the athlete.
9. If you compete on a co-ed team, you cannot be an independent athlete. You will have to follow the tournament regulations on how to qualify as an individual.

Clarifications:

1. Independents will not qualify for team scoring.
2. Any sport that has a qualifying component will have unlimited entries (no max).
3. Any sport that does not have a qualifying component will have maximum entries.
4. For winter and spring track, independents may choose as many events that are permitted.

The following sports are the only ones that allow independent athletes:

1. **Bowling:** Must qualify for the Individual championships. (no max)
2. **Cross Country:** No qualification, competitors will be placed in a sectional meet, and they must advance from there. (Max of 2 per gender)
3. **Fencing:** No qualification, competitors will be placed in a district meet, and they must advance from there. (Max of 3 per gender)
4. **Golf:** Must qualify for the sectionals and they must advance from there. (no max)
5. **Gymnastics:** Must qualify for the Individual championships (no max)
6. **Swimming:** Must qualify for the Individual championships (no max)
7. **Tennis:** Singles only - Must qualify for the Individual championships (no max)
8. **Track-Indoor:** No qualification, competitors will be placed in a sectional meet, and they must advance from there. (Max of 3 per gender)
9. **Track-Outdoor:** No qualification, competitors will be placed in a sectional meet, and they must advance from there. (Max of 5 per gender)
10. **Wrestling:** No qualification, competitors will be placed in a district (boys) or region (girls), and they must advance from there. (Max of 4 per gender)

Maximum number of Independents per sport

- Cross Country: 30% of 5 participants = 2 independent athletes permitted
- Indoor Track & Field: 30% of 10 events = 3 independent athletes permitted
- Outdoor track & Field: 30% of 18 events = 5 independent athletes permitted
- Fencing: 30% of 9 participants = 3 independent athletes permitted
- Wrestling: 30% 14 events = 4 independent athletes permitted

Contest Results – Reporting Concerns – Every home team is responsible for entering varsity scores after a contest. Unfortunately, there's been an increase in the number of schools not doing this which causes issues with power points and parent phone calls. Schools were sent a message, reminding them that they will be fined \$150 if they don't enter scores. The money received for these fines is put towards scholarships at NJSIAA's annual scholar athlete program. An invoice is sent directly to the business office if there's a violation but there's usually warnings before a fine is issued.

Sport Committee Proposals – A new system for end of the year sport committee proposals just rolled out, which should help organize and vet proposals.

Al Stumpf, Assistant Director Update

Basketball Update – Some schools have already played their first games. The season is well underway.

Fencing Update – The Entry Form for the tournament will be open from 1/1/25 – 1/10/25. There were two district tournament site changes. Districts 3 & 4 moved from North Hunterdon HS to Voorhees HS, while Districts 5 & 6 will take place at West Windsor South HS (originally at Montgomery HS).

Unified Basketball Update – The tournament will be set up differently this year and will run like the boys and girls tournament with two 16-team brackets. Teams will play down to the semi-final rounds. The finals will be played at Rutgers – one on Saturday; the other on Sunday, before the boys and girls championships.

NGWSD Nomination Deadline – Forms for the annual NJSIAA National Girls and Women Sports Day celebration is due 12/13. The deadline is earlier than past years, but Rutgers is requesting the guest count earlier this year. Late entries will not be accepted. The event will take place on 1/12/25 at halftime of the Rutgers-Nebraska girls basketball game at Rutgers.

Derryk Sellers, Assistant Director Update

Bowling Update – The season is well underway.

Winter Track Update – Some changes have been made to the Relays Tournament. Groups 1 and 2 will now compete together, while Groups 3 and 4 will compete on different days.

NJSCA October Coaches Clinics – The volleyball clinic took place on 12/7 at Riverside HS. Coaches there requested a rotation in location each year so next year this will be hosted at a site in the northern part of the state. So far, 110 tennis coaches have signed up for the Tennis Clinic, which takes place on 1/10 at the new tennis indoor facility at Princeton University.

NJSCA Hall of Fame / Awards Luncheon – This event will be held on 1/12/25.

Sandy Mamary, Assistant Director Update

Swimming and Diving Update – The season has started. Ms. Mamary has been fielding many questions about lifeguards being present at practices and coaching credentials. No changes have been made to the rules of previous years.

Finance Committee Update – Russell Petrocelli

Approval of Monthly Checks – The November 12, 2024 through December 9, 2024 checkbook was approved by the finance committee and all checks were approved per policy before they were disbursed. Kurt Karcich made a motion, seconded by Mo Abdelaziz, to approve the November 12, 2024 through December 9, 2024 check registers. Motion carried unanimously.

Report of Counsel (Steven P. Goodell) – No new updates to report.

NJ Association of Independent Schools (NJ AIS) – Internal Student Policy Presentation – Last year the Executive Committee adopted a new International Student Policy. Some member schools with dual membership in the NJSIAA and NJ AIS have concerns with the new policy so Kevin Ruth, NJ AIS Executive Director, along with Head of Ranney School, Dr. John Griffith, and Dr. Steven Loy, Head of Rutgers Prep came to present their issues to the committee.

Mr. Ruth discussed how the initial proposal to NJSIAA Bylaws, Article 5, Section 4, Eligibility Requirements was intended to address the recruitment of international athletes and provide a level playing field to all schools. NJ AIS is in alignment with and supports the intention, but the proposal has had unintended effects on NJ AIS schools. As a compromise, Mr. Ruth asks that the committee modify the proposal to allow full-paying international students (meaning they do not receive any type of financial aid) the ability to play varsity sports for more than one year, just like domestic full-paying students can.

Discussion took place and questions were answered. Some committee members expressed this modification felt like discrimination to those who cannot afford full tuition – it would favor the rich. Mr. Ruth admitted this was discussed when they were brainstorming, but if the true concern is inappropriate use of scholarship money to bring in student athletes, this supports the initiative but helps students not receiving scholarship money. If approved, schools can provide transparency that a student is paying their own way with no financial assistance.

Dr. Griffith spoke on behalf of Ranney School. No international students from his school receive financial aid. 95% are from China and pay their own way. Since they are paying, they want the full experience which they are denied with this new rule. No more than 8 to 10% of the school's 350 high school students are international players and most are JV players and are not D1 prospects.

Last, Dr. Steven Loy, Head of Rutgers Prep spoke. His school is just like the Ranney School - most international students are from China and pay their own way. The collegiate recruited athletes will go someplace else where they would receive a scholarship. All three representatives asked why a D1 prospect would pay full tuition when they can get a full ride somewhere else. The international students at his school are novice athletes and could easily be the 6th or 7th runner on the Varsity level. This new rule creates an uncomfortable situation that prohibits students from participating fully and takes away their opportunity to be part of the community. Questions were asked about how the association would know if a student pays full tuition. Mr. Loy answered that there are robust systems in the admissions department with a financial aid intake prior to school starting that has plenty of documentation. Mr. Loy was questioned about his school's success since some of Rutgers Prep sport programs do have state championship titles, and this success can be used as a recruiting tool. Dr. Loy explained that while some teams have been competitive, some such as cross country, softball and swimming are not and could use more participants. Also, there are no international students on the girls basketball roster.

Discussion ended. Mr. Goodell advised that there would be no decisions made today and that the committee may continue to consider the matter in the future.

Old Business / New Business – none

Adjournment - There being no further business, a motion was made by Al Abdelaziz, seconded by Mo Abdelaziz at 12:08 pm, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Maguire
Executive Director

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