
*NCHSAA Board of Directors' Action taken between Winter 2025 Meeting and
Spring 2026 Meeting*

- A. In preparation for the first winter sports playoffs at the end of January, staff encountered some challenges, especially when planning for Swimming and Diving and requested Board input on the following two recommendations:
1. The Board approved a \$5.00 diving only ticket for state finals and a \$10.00 ticket for regional swim/dive. In as much as regional diving is being held in the west at Greensboro Aquatic Center and in the east at Pullen Aquatic Center the day before the swimming regionals, we feel that offering a diving only ticket for \$5.00 instead of \$10 is prudent and reasonable for regional diving. Staff is asking for this allowance.
 2. The Board approved that all NCHSAA playoff events should have a cash option. It is to be noted the Legislative Bill that was introduced passed the House but never made it out of a Senate committee. We were trying to get ahead of the legislation as we thought it would pass. Now, in light of some unforeseen circumstances with certain PSUs/schools not being allowed to handle a cash option on our behalf, even though these entities are serving as hosts for NCHSAA playoff events, staff is requesting that the Board approve some flexibility to say that “ a cash option will be available at winter and spring NCHSAA playoffs when feasible”.

The Board approved a \$5.00 regional diving ticket price: 16-0-3

The Board approved flexibility for the staff with the cash option requirement at NCHSAA playoffs: 13-3-3.

On January 27, 2026 at 7:00pm, the Board of Directors convened via zoom for an emergency meeting to discuss several items.

B. Present Board members included: President Stephen Gainey, Past-President Chris Blanton, Henry Rice, Dana Ayers, Paige Badgett, Erica Turner, Eddie Doll, Stefanie Phillips, Allen Plaster, Matthew Cheeseman, Bryan Tyson, Sam Jones; Don Phipps joined while the meeting was in progress. Affiliate Board members present included Brad Alford and Roy Turner with Elbert Lassiter joining the meeting later. NCHSAA Staff members present included Commissioner Que Tucker, Karen DeHart, Rhonda Dreibelbis and Alfie Wheeler. It was determined that a quorum was met.

Board members not present: Vice President Mark Garrett, Andy McCormick, Larry Williford, John Williams, Jamie King, and Brett Lamb. Affiliate members not present were Joe Franks and Wendell Hall.

Commissioner Tucker opened by sharing that the recent water main break at the NCHSAA office had been repaired and cost approximately \$7,300.00, an unbudgeted expense in the 2025-2026 operating budget.

Next, discussion ensued regarding the Dual Team Wrestling seeding and playoff schedule in light of recent inclement weather, school closings/delays and their resulting impact on teams' ability to practice and get their matches in prior to seeding scheduled to take place on January 29 followed by the 1st/2nd round playoffs on January 31 and 3rd/regional rounds on February 4, followed by state championships on Saturday, February 7. The Board discussed moving seeding back on day to January 30th and likewise pushing the 1st/2nd round to February 3, the 3rd/regional round to February 5th, and maintaining the state championships in Greensboro on Saturday, February 7, 2026. This would allow teams the ability to wrestle January 28 and 29 before submitting their qualifiers by 11:59pm on January 30. Matthew Cheeseman made a motion in support of these revised schedule changes for Dual Team Wrestling, Ericia Turner seconded and the Board approved unanimously.

The discussion then turned to regional swimming and diving. The original schedule called for regional diving on Thursday, January 29 at Greensboro Aquatic Center and Pullen Aquatic Center and regional swimming on January 30-31 at three sites (Mecklenburg Aquatic Center, Greensboro Aquatic Center, and Triangle Aquatic Center). The issue at hand is that staff has received word from some schools that their respective PSU will not allow them to travel this weekend due to potential impending weather.

The Board discussed in depth including potential to move regional events to the next week. However, staff indicated that we've had the facilities contracted and locked in for a year and there isn't much flexibility as facilities typically book out events well in advance. Key is to not penalize the student-athletes. Wheeler mentioned that all divers could advance to state diving if the Board elected to cancel regional diving. Discussion ensued regarding number of qualifiers going to state finals in diving and swimming. One option would be to advance top 32 (16 east, 16 west) in individual events and top 24 (12 east, 12 west) for relays and run timed finals, eliminating the prelims. This would allow for one class of swimming to happen in the morning session and one class of swimming in the evening session for each of the three (3) dates already scheduled, February 5-7.

More discussion occurred surrounding facility capacity issues and ticketing. The conversation then turned to determining the deadline to determine what will happen with swimming regionals. The Board opted to act on diving regionals at this time and discuss swimming later. President Gainey asked for a motion to cancel regional diving and advance all qualifiers to state finals to dive.

Rice made the motion and Plaster seconded. All Board members voted in favor of cancelling diving regionals.

Conversation then turned to swimming regionals and ultimately, it was decided that the Board would reconvene on January 28 at 5:00pm to make a decision and staff would bring forth a plan for regional swimming/state swimming.

In the meantime, staff will craft communications to send to wrestling coaches regarding Dual Team reporting deadline and playoff timeline and alert diving coaches to the cancellation of regional diving. Staff will also monitor the weather forecast to see if there are any changes. Wheeler is to conform with facility regarding capacity for spectators and athletes.

The final item of discussion centered on a ball proposal from Spaulding for the basketball and softball, in light of the demise of the Wilson Sporting Goods' partnership. DeHart shared the proposal and indicated that Spaulding would provide game balls for use at the basketball regional and state competition for this school year along with nominal cash. Blanton mentioned that perhaps since the basketball season is almost half over, it might not be good to switch

game balls now if teams have been thinking they would be playing with the previous ball we have used (WSG). Commissioner Tucker indicated that if the Board feels that this rushing things since the season has begun, we (staff) can find a way to have the balls to use at regional and state. She indicated that she would forward the contract to the Board for their review and asked them to share their thoughts via email and/or on the zoom call tomorrow. Don Phipps asked that the basketball coaches on the Board weigh in on this.

Dr. Gainey closed out the meeting at 9:00pm.

On January 28, 2026 at 5:00pm, the Board of Directors convened via zoom for a follow-up meeting to discuss regional/state swimming.

Present Board members included: President Stephen Gainey, Past-President Chris Blanton, Henry Rice, Dana Ayers, Paige Badgett, Erica Turner, Eddie Doll, Stefanie Phillips, Allen Plaster, Matthew Cheeseman, Bryan Tyson, Andy McCormick, Sam Jones; Don Phipps joined while the meeting was in progress. Affiliate Board members present included Brad Alford and Roy Turner with Elbert Lassiter joining the meeting later. NCHSAA Staff members present included Commissioner Que Tucker, Karen DeHart, Rhonda Dreibelbis, Brandon Moree, and Alfie Wheeler.

Board members not present: Vice President Mark Garrett, Larry Williford, John Williams, Jamie King, and Brett Lamb. Affiliate members not present were Joe Franks and Wendell Hall.

Board and staff discussed potential schedules. Due to forecasted weather and potential travel restrictions from Schools and PSUs, the NCHSAA Board of Directors have determined that the Regional Swimming Championships scheduled for this weekend are cancelled. Qualifiers to state finals was determined as the following based on qualifying times used to get into regionals as follows:

Only individuals and relay teams that had previously qualified for regional competition in that respective event(s) will be considered for advancement to the state meet.

Qualification to the Swimming State Championships from the East and West Regional Entries:

- The top 12 individuals from the east and the top 12 individuals from the west
- The top 8 relay teams from the East and the top 8 relay teams from the west
- The next fastest regional entry times not already qualified will advance regardless of region until up to a maximum of 32 Individual and 24 relay teams
- An additional heat will only be added if there are more than 32 automatic times from the regional meet entries or ties for 32nd place

Individuals who qualify or relay teams that qualify, but are not intending to participate in an event at the State Championship, must notify Brian Wells {swimbwells@gmail.com} by **NOON** on Sunday, February 1, 2026. No additional adjustments will be made after the Noon deadline.

NOTE: If the student-athlete scratching is one of the top 12 individual qualifiers or 8 relay teams from a region, then the next individual or relay team in line from that region will be offered the opportunity to fill the position. If the individual or relay team is one of the at-large qualifiers, then the next fastest qualifier across all regions will be offered the opportunity to fill the position.

Substitutions for relay participants who qualify to the state meet are allowed, as usual.

If a team wishes to scratch a swimmer who is in 2 individual events from an individual event to allow the swimmer to swim 3 relays at the State Meet, they must be scratched by the deadline Noon on Sunday deadline. After that they are in the 2 individual events and would only be allowed to swim on 2 relays for the team.

Format: Timed Finals

Scoring: The State Championships will be scored using NFHS 16 place scoring.

On February 2, 2026, in light of inclement weather resulting in many schools/PSUs operating remotely or outright closed, Commissioner Tucker requested that the Board of Directors vote on staff-proposed alternative schedules for multiple winter playoffs/championships.

The Executive Committee met the evening of 2/3/26 to consider recommendations for Board review and action. In an effort to protect instructional time, consideration included the safety of athletes relative to the lack of practice, and the ongoing possibilities that schools may still be closed Thursday, 2/5, and possibly even Friday, 2/6, of this week. Thus, the following recommendations need your review and vote:

#1Swimming & Diving:

- Postpone all events scheduled for Wednesday - Saturday, February 4 -7
- Conduct all swimming and diving Wednesday - Saturday, February 11 - 14

#2 Indoor Track & Field:

- Report qualifiers Saturday, February 7, 9PM (moved from February 5, 2026)
- Conduct 1A/2A, Wednesday morning, February 11(moved from afternoon 2/10/26)
- Conduct 3A, Wednesday afternoon, February 11(moved from morning 2/11/26)
- Conduct 6A, Thursday morning, February 12 (moved from afternoon 2/11/26)
- Conduct 4A, Thursday afternoon, February 12 (moved from morning 2/12/26)
- Conduct 7A, Wednesday morning, February 18 (moved from afternoon 2/12/26)
- Conduct 5A, Wednesday afternoon, February 18 (moved from morning 2/13/26)
- Conduct 8A, Thursday morning, February 19 (moved from afternoon 2/13/26)

#3 Men's Dual Team Wrestling:

- Postpone all wrestling this week and weekend
- Conduct Rounds 1 and 2 February 10, 11 or 12 (moved to 2/3/26 by Board action earlier this week)

- Conduct Rounds 3 and 4 February 16, 17 or 18 (moved to 2/5/26 by Board action earlier this week)
- Conduct the State Finals in Greensboro on Sunday afternoon, February 22 (originally scheduled for Saturday, February 7, 2026)
- No changes to men's individual regionals and state championships

#4 Women's Wrestling:

- Postpone the Regionals (individual wrestling) scheduled for Friday and Saturday, February 6 – 7, 2026
- Conduct the women's regional wrestling February 10 - 12 (flexibility allowed based on availability of host sites)

#5 Basketball. The basketball handbook rules currently allow four games to be played in any two weeks of the season, provided one in on a non-school day. To help with scheduling, waive the non-school day portion of the rule to allow flexibility by the school and the PSU in scheduling, if necessary.

Board Votes:

The Board approved postponing all swimming and diving events scheduled for Wednesday - Saturday, February 4 -7 and to conduct all swimming and diving state championships on Wednesday - Saturday, February 11 – 14, 2026. Vote: 19-0

The Board approved:

- reporting indoor track and field qualifiers on Saturday, February 7, 9PM (moved from February 5, 2026)
- conducting 1A/2A indoor track and field on Wednesday morning, February 11 (moved from afternoon 2/10/26)
- conducting 3A indoor track and field on Wednesday afternoon, February 11 (moved from morning 2/11/26)
- conducting 6A indoor track and field on Thursday morning, February 12 (moved from afternoon 2/11/26)
- conducting 4A indoor track and field on Thursday afternoon, February 12 (moved from morning 2/12/26)
- conducting 7A indoor track and field on Wednesday morning, February 18 (moved from afternoon 2/12/26)
- conducting 5A indoor track and field on Wednesday afternoon, February 18 (moved from morning 2/13/26)
- conducting 8A indoor track and field on Thursday morning, February 19 (moved from afternoon 2/13/26)

Vote: 19-0

The Board approved postponing all wrestling this week and weekend as follows:

- Conduct Rounds 1 and 2 February 10, 11 or 12 (moved to 2/3/26 by Board action earlier this week)
- Conduct Rounds 3 and 4 February 16, 17 or 18 (moved to 2/5/26 by Board action earlier this week)
- Conduct the State Finals in Greensboro on Sunday afternoon, February 22 (originally scheduled for Saturday, February 7, 2026)
- No changes to men's individual regionals and state championships

Vote: 19-0

In women's wrestling, the Board approved to postpone the Regionals (individual wrestling) scheduled for Friday and Saturday, February 6 – 7, 2026 and to conduct the women's regional wrestling February 10 - 12 (flexibility allowed based on availability of host sites). Vote: 19-0

The basketball handbook rules currently allow four games to be played in any two weeks of the season, provided one in on a non-school day. To help with scheduling, the Board approved waiving the non-school day portion of the rule to allow flexibility by the school and the PSU in scheduling, if necessary. Vote: 19-0

On February 4, 2026, the Commissioner requested that the full Board of Directors vote on another action item related to Dual Team Wrestling. The Dual Team Wrestling Championships were part of approved changes announced on Tuesday, 2/3/26, morning. Late Tuesday the Advisory Board for Wrestling Coaches submitted another request which the Executive Committee met the evening of 2/4/26 to review. **Note:** No change in either option to Feb.19-21 INDIVIDUAL State Championships in Greensboro. Their requested options were as follows:

Option 1: First choice

February 10-12: Rounds 1-2 at highest seed

February 16-17: Round 3-Quarterfinals, Round 4-Semifinals, and Finals-- Take the eight remaining schools from Round 2 in each classification and they would find one that is centrally located and not hosting basketball, to wrestle through the state finals.

Note: While, it is three rounds, only the final two schools in each class are affected for the championship. It eliminates the Sunday competition, extra weigh in, and still allows for at least two days to practice and recover before individual states.

Option 2:

February 10-12: Rounds 1-2 at highest seed

February 16-17: Quarterfinals, Semifinals at highest seed

February 24-25: Finals (Site TBD)

Note: This option does extend the season into the next week (week after the individual state championships), but it is only 2-3 days longer than the current format, it eliminates the Sunday competition and only involves 16 schools. Final's location can be a central host or higher seed in each classification.

Here is what was previously approved by the Board:

Feb. 10, 11, or 12	Duals--Rd. 1 and 2
Feb. 16-18	Duals--Rd. 3 and 4
Feb. 19-21	INDIVIDUAL State Championships (Greensboro)
Feb. 22 (Sun)	Dual State Championships (while still in Greensboro)

After reviewing the proposals, the Executive Committee voted to accept their request for Option 1. The full Board reviewed and voted to affirm the Executive Committee's vote. Vote: 19-0-1

On February 5, 2026, the Commissioner requested an action item from the Board relative to playoff ticket prices for Dual Team Wrestling.

Due to the 3rd, 4th (Regional) and Championship Rounds of Dual Team Wrestling now being on the same day, we are suggesting an adjustment to the ticket prices. Currently, the pricing is as follows:

*1st, 2nd, (3rd if applicable) Rounds = \$10

*Regional Semi and Regional Final = \$12

*State Championship = \$15

With the change you approved, the Regional Semi, Regional Final and State Championship are now being wrestled on the same day; therefore, we are recommending one ticket for the Regional Semi, Regional Final and the Championship. Why this request? To avoid the need to charge a spectator two ticket prices on the same day. To do so would mean clearing the gym after the two regional rounds and then charge the championship amount as shown above.

The Board voted to approve staff recommendations regarding Dual Team ticket prices for the following: *Regional Semi, Regional Final, Championship Ticket = \$15* Vote: 17-0-2

Friday, February 27, 2026, the NCHSAA Board of Directors met virtually to discuss allowing teams to practice on a Sunday. This was requested by several coaches across the state because the Regional Semifinals are scheduled on Monday March 2. Since the third-round games are on Saturday, February 28, there would be no opportunity for a practice.

After discussion, a motion was made by Henry Rice and seconded by Bryan Tyson, as follows:

To waive Rule 2.2.6 (Sunday Participation) and allow third round winning teams classified as 1A through 7A to conduct basketball practice on Sunday, March 1. Practices must be limited to a maximum duration of two (2) hours and may only occur within the designated window of 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- *This exception applies only to 1A-7A member schools.*
- *Schools in the 8A classification are not permitted to practice on Sunday, March 1, due to their semifinal contests taking place on Saturday, February 28.*

The motion passed 15-0. (Absent members were Jamie King, Andy McCormick, John Williams, Don Phipps)

On March 26, 2026, the NCHSAA Board of Directors met virtually. Members present included: Chris Blanton, Mark Garrett, Henry Rice, Bryan Tyson, Jamie King, Stephen Gainey, Brett Lamb, Larry Williford, Eddie Doll, Dana Ayers, Allen Plaster, Sam Jones, Andy McCormick and Stefanie Phipps. Absent were: Paige Badgett, Don Phipps, John Milner-Williams, Matthew Cheeseman, and Ericia Turner

Affiliate members in attendance included Brad Alford, Elbert Lassiter and Joe Franks. Absent were Wendell Hall and Roy Turner.

NCHSAA staff members present included Que Tucker, Rhonda Dreibelbis, Alfie Wheeler and Karen DeHart.

Dr. Gainey started the meeting at 6:32 p.m. and asked Commissioner Tucker for an update regarding flag football. Tucker stated that the timing was perfect since the Flag Football Committee recently met. She provided historical background regarding various surveys conducted through the NCHSAA staff beginning in 2024 in multiple attempts to ascertain which member schools were fielding girls flag football squads. She shared that CMS had taken the lead in establishing squads since the Carolina Panthers are in Charlotte and have been championing the effort statewide. Soon after, Wake County followed suit. Since then, schools have been adding it to their offerings. She further indicated that at one point during the survey process, the Association staff sent a survey at about the same time as the Panthers and a Wake County school, causing confusion and hence, people failed to complete the Association-led survey effort. Therefore, the NCHSAA staff, in an attempt to reconcile data, pulled data from the eligibility summary documents that member schools are supposed to compete seasonally as part of a NFHS nationwide data collection effort.

Tucker shared data coming out of eligibility summaries for 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years as well as the Carolina Panthers' recent survey results. Eligibility summary for 2024-2025 indicate that 100 of 442 schools said they played flag football which equates to 22.6% while 2025-2026 data indicates that 112 of 446 schools played which equates to 25.1%. In 2025-2026 data, 68 indicate they played in the fall, 19 played in the winter, and 25 played in the spring. Meanwhile, the Panthers' data suggests that 138 of 446 schools played (=30.9%). This means there is a discrepancy of 26 schools who were reported in the Panthers' data but not in the eligibility summaries in Dragonfly. The Flag Football Committee discussed possible rationale for the discrepancy and members noted that if a school did not start playing flag football before the eligibility summaries were due and didn't know for sure if they would field a team, they likely failed to go back into Dragonfly to update their eligibility summary data. Committee members expressed that they feel that the Panthers' data is "spot on", namely because grant funding is attached. Staff then asked if Panthers knew for sure after awarding grant funding whether the school actually fielded a team.

The Flag Football Committee then made a recommendation that flag football be sanctioned starting in 2026-2027 in the fall sports season, play 18-24 games (season limitation), weekly and daily limitations. It should be noted that the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recommended no more than 18 games per season in their recent meeting on March 23, 2026. Staff then asked about the Panther's grant funding and the impact on sanctioning flag football. A Committee member contacted Riley Fields and according to Riley, if flag football is sanctioned in 2026-2027, funding from the Panthers would go away with the exception of schools starting

flag football in 2026-2027; these schools would receive some sort of grant funds but perhaps not at the same level as schools received in previous years.

Tucker then reminded the Board of Directors of the path taken with regards to women's wrestling, noting that it began as a joint venture between the NCHSAA and the NC Chapter of USA Wrestling with an Invitational event prior to NCHSAA fully assuming ownership. Ayers expressed concern regarding finances as budgets have been done for the 2026-2027 school year and she questioned how to add flag football with such a short timeline. Garrett noted the same concern, adding that delaying sanctioning by a year would allow schools to get it set up. Tyson interjected that he would like to see it sanctioned for the 2026-2027 school year but recognizes that many people (schools) would not have planned or budgeted for it so he understands the delayed approach. He finished by asking if staff could do more research on the 26 school discrepancy by calling the schools to see if they did in fact field a team.

The conversation then switched to boy's volleyball. A recommendation has been submitted to sanction boy's volleyball in 2026-2027 for a championship hosted in the spring of 2027. Data taken from the Dragonfly eligibility summaries indicates that in 2024-2025, 109 of 442 schools reported boy's volleyball (=24.6%) while 106 of 446 (23.7%) reported fielding a boy's volleyball team in 2025-2026. Data provided by the boy's volleyball group indicates that 119 of 446 (26.68%) fielded teams so there is a discrepancy in data for boy's volleyball.

Andy McCormick made a note that for some schools, relative to Title IX, the NCHSAA would need to sanction flag football before it can sanction boy's volleyball.

Open discussion ensued and Sam Jones pointed out that the Panthers' name carries clout and the Association, once it does sanction flag football, should partner with the Panthers and suggested that the Panthers could redirect funds to sponsor the flag football championships.

Further discussion ensued regarding the previous sanctioning formula (either 50% of a classification OR 25% of the whole membership offer the sport) and noted that flag football met the 50% rule in 2024-2025 and shouldn't be penalized because the formula changed in 2025-2026. Dr. Gainey expressed concern that he wouldn't want to sanction flag football and not do so in an organized and thoughtful manner. Tyson mentioned that if it was sanctioned for 2027-2028, schools could simply keep playing it the way they are now. Then discussion shifted to a potential hybrid season with tri/quad matches. Tucker closed out the discussion indicating that an FAQ sheet had been developed and would be forthcoming to the Board for review.

The next discussion related to the adopted ball proposal that the Board recently received outlining the various game balls as created by Teall Properties Group, the NCHSAA new business development arm. Tucker indicated that the staff needs direction from the Board regarding whether they can move to the contract stage, noting that schools are anxious as they typically order product in April/May for the coming school year and this will be a shift away from Wilson Sporting Goods, as they effectively terminated the existing agreement with MOU/law constraints on the NCHSAA. She indicated that if there are no concerns, staff recommends that we'd like to go to the contract phase and involve legal counsel in the process. Board members discussed various ball manufacturers, likes/dislikes, and then opted to vote for the adopted ball as a package rather than by sport. Dr. Gainey made a motion to accept the proposal and authorize staff to move into the contract phase. Williford seconded and the motion passed 11-0 (note that Stefanie and Chris were absent during this vote).

Dr. Gainey then thanked Commissioner Tucker for her service in acknowledgement of her recent retirement announcement. Staff were asked to drop off the call at 7:50 p.m.