

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 19, 1999

TO: Ron Copple
WSYSA President

FROM: Wain Jackson
WSYSA V-P Competition

SUBJECT: Girls High School Soccer

The purpose of this memo is to report the Ad-Hoc Committee's findings and recommendations relative to reducing or eliminating the conflict between WSYSA's fall leagues and the girls' High School soccer program.

Background:

Over the course of the past year, WSYSA has received many letters, faxes and e-mails requesting WSYSA to move its girls season to the spring, thus avoiding the conflict with the girls High School soccer program, which is also currently a fall sport.

The problems of playing WSYSA's league(s) in the fall and running them concurrent with the High School girls soccer program is obvious to all. There is the potential for injury, fatigue (little time for recovery), burnout. Furthermore, academics suffer because the student athlete has little or no time to study. The list goes on and on.

Unfortunately, there is no simple solution to this problem. The Washington State Youth League (WSYL) Committee has looked into resolving this conflict. I have challenged other WSYSA Committee chairs to address this problem as well. And we have discussed this issue at several WSYSA Board of Directors meetings.

At our Board of Directors Retreat at Port Ludlow in May 14-16, you facilitated a session addressing this problem. The following is what we learned:

Analysis of WSYSA Moving Girls Program To Spring for U-15 and Older Only

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Eliminates Conflict with High School	Impacts Track & Field
Alleviates “overplay”	Impacts other High School spring sports
Girls season would end closer to Regionals	Grass fields are trashed after winter
Lessens competition for referees in the fall	Many fields are not available in early spring
Allows for college scouts to see more girls	Could impact club tryouts
Frees up fields in the fall	Forces State Cup format change
	Does not solve the problem for all High School players, as some do not play in the WSYSA state league
	Increases competition for refs in the spring
	Creates potential problems with state league players attempting to play in fall Rec. & District leagues

When we concluded that session it appeared to us that perhaps the most promising solution was to see if WSYSA could persuade WIAA to move their girls High School soccer program to the spring.

To that end, an ad-hoc committee was formed to be chaired by the WSYSA V-P of Competition. Each District was to appoint one member to this committee. And we would ask WIAA to send a representative as well.

The ad-hoc committee has met several times over the past 6-8 weeks. They have also done a lot of “leg work” researching this issue.

The following is our report.

Statement of the Problem:

The problem, simply stated, is that currently WSYSA’s competitive leagues and WIAA (High School) girls play in the fall. Both WSYSA and WIAA recognize the danger and harm this poses to the student athlete. We believe that the potential for injury and liability needs to be addressed and remedied from the perspective of what is really best for the student athlete?

Calendars:

First, let’s take a look at our two calendars. Please reference the chart on the following page.

Calendar Comparison

WIAA Current:

<u>Fall Sports</u>	<u>Winter Sports</u>	<u>Spring Sports</u>
Football	Basketball (Boys & Girls)	Boys Baseball
Cross Country (Boys & Girls)	Girls Gymnastics	Girls Softball
Golf (Boys & Girls)	Boys Swimming	Track (Boys & Girls)
Girls Soccer	Boys Wrestling	Boys Soccer
Girls Swimming		
Girls Volleyball		
Boys Tennis		

WSYSA:

←----- Fall Leagues -----→ ←----- State Cups -----→ ←----- No Activities -----→

WIAA Proposed:

<u>Fall Sports</u>	<u>Winter Sports</u>	<u>Spring Sports</u>
Football	Basketball (Boys & Girls)	Boys Baseball
Cross Country (Boys & Girls)	Girls Swimming	Girls Softball
Golf (Boys & Girls)	Boys Wrestling	Track (Boys & Girls)
Girls Soccer		Boys Soccer
Girls Gymnastics		
Girls Volleyball		
Boys Swimming		
Boys Tennis		

Obviously, WSYSA is looking at these calendars from a “soccer” perspective. Our programs have evolved over the years. They appear on our calendar where they do because that is where they fit the best (in conjunction with our other soccer programs such as ODP, LPT, State Cup, etc.). If WSYSA simply moves our girls program to the spring, we find that we create more problems than we solve.

The other obvious point that the calendar comparison illustrates, is that boys do not have this problem. In fact, WSYSA’s and WIAA’s soccer programs really compliment each other. We submit that this goal needs to be realized for our girls as well.

One final point on the WIAA calendar. When looking at the sports that are available to both genders through WIAA, soccer is the only “spectator sport” where the boys and girls play in different seasons. (We recognize that the boys and girls swimming seasons are different.)

Survey of Other States High School Soccer Programs:

Here’s what the ad-hoc committee was able to learn about how other states run their High School soccer programs. (Please reference the chart on the following page.)

This tells us that over 70% of the states responding to the survey run their boys and girls soccer programs in the same season. And only two other states (Tennessee and Utah) run their soccer seasons the same as Washington.

And if one looks at Oregon, the state that most closely parallels Washington State in both climate and geography, they run their high school soccer program for both boys and girls in the fall. (Oregon Youth Soccer Association plays their State Cup in the spring thus avoiding the conflict that we have in Washington State. And, FYI, Oregon plays their U-15 and older leagues in the spring before their State Cups.)

STATE ASSOCIATIONS THAT SPONSOR SOCCER
45 States Sanction Soccer

SPRING BOYS & GIRLS (8)

Alabama
Arkansas
Georgia
Nebraska
Oklahoma
Texas
Virginia
Wyoming

WINTER BOYS & GIRLS (5)

Arizona
Florida
Hawaii
Louisiana
Mississippi

FALL BOYS & GIRLS (20)

Connecticut
Washington D.C.
Indiana
Kentucky
Main
Maryland
Mass.
Minnesota
Montana
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
Vermont
West Virginia

BOYS FALL, GIRLS SPRING (9)

Colorado
Delaware
Illinois
Kansas
Michigan
Missouri
North Carolina
North Dakota
Wisconsin

BOYS SPRING, GIRLS FALL (2)

Tennessee
Utah

BOYS FALL & SP., GIRLS SP. (1)

Iowa

Total of States in which boys and girls are in the same season = 33

Total of States in which boys and girls are in separate seasons = 12

PROPOSAL:

It is this committee's strong recommendation that WIAA move the girls High School soccer season to the spring and that they play both the boys and girls seasons concurrently.

Discussion and Rationale:

What is in the best interest of the student athlete?

1. *Clubs develop athletes and give them the necessary skillsets to play a varsity sport.*

It is a rare exception when a student can try out for a sport, and make the varsity team, if they have never played the sport before. Like many other varsity sports, soccer is basically a year-round activity at the club level. WSYSA's and WIAA's soccer programs should compliment each other (as they do with the boys) and not conflict.

2. *College coaches need to see our girl student athletes.*

Collegiate soccer is a fall sport (both men and women). After interviewing numerous college coaches at this year's Far West Regional Soccer Tournament, they unanimously state that they don't have the time to look at high school players during the fall. They are too busy coaching their college teams and working with their AD's in securing next season's schedules, etc.. Since boys play their High School soccer season in the spring, the college coaches do have the opportunity to scout the high schools.

3. *In theory, there are more "upper level" soccer officials available in the spring.*

Since college does not have a spring season, the officials who are normally assigned college (includes Community College) are now available to officiate High School soccer matches. Good officials facilitate good matches. Most top level officials are available in the spring time.

4. *Many student athletes perceive that their fall semester is more academically challenging than their spring semester.*

In our ad-hoc committee's informal poll, many of the girls we spoke to told us that fall was hard for them. The reasons given were "in the fall I'm starting a new grade," "fall is when I have to take my pre-requisite classes," and "I feel that my teachers like to try out new things in the fall because they have been off all summer learning new things."

Benefits:

1. *There is a potential for additional "gate receipts" if boys and girls varsity matches were scheduled back-to-back.*

This past spring at the WSYSA State Cup Finals, we scheduled the boys and girls championship games back-to-back. At Sparks Stadium in Puyallup, WA, gate receipts doubled over the previous year (same venue, however boys finals were the first weekend and the girls finals were the second weekend). Boys and girls could share transportation (like what is currently being done with basketball and track). Basically, by having the boys and girls play on the same day would draw out the local soccer community.

2. *In areas of the state where student athletes must “pay-to-play,” this proposal would help minorities and low income families by helping smooth out costs.*

Ideally, both WSYSA and WIAA would like to attract the best student athletes into our soccer programs. Unfortunately, sometimes money is a discriminator. It is currently a financial hardship for the female athlete to pay her club dues and pay to play soccer for her High School. The male student athlete does not have this hardship.

3. *This proposal would give our more gifted girls an opportunity to participate in the United States Olympic Development Program (ODP).*

Our women athletes just won their second World Cup in 8 years. Michelle Akers is a product of Washington soccer. Amy Allman, the Women’s Assistant coach at the University of Washington, was the goalkeeper on the 1991 Women’s World Cup team. Washington State has the female athletes. Unfortunately, the way our current soccer programs are structured, it is very difficult for our girls to develop and “be all that they can be.”

4. *WSYSA can work more closely with WIAA to help market and promote the student athlete.*

If one of the goals of athletics programs is to help our children get athletic scholarships to college, then we need to “showcase” our student athletes to college coaches. They attend our State Cup Finals, Regionals and Youth National Championships.

One way that we could possibly help, is in the programs, we could list the name of the high school the player attends. College coaches would then become more aware of which high schools have these better players ... and perhaps there are more players as good or better back on these girls high school teams. Just a thought.

Conclusion:

In summary, soccer coaches at the collegiate level know that players are developed through the clubs. And most High Schools coaches would probably agree that the High School athlete doesn’t start playing his/her sport in High School. The player has learned how to play a sport through the youth and club programs.

In Washington state, there are minimal conflicts with boys soccer. They can play for their clubs in the fall, play in our State Cup Tournament in the winter, and play for their High Schools in the spring. The college coaches are free in the spring to scout players. WSYSA’s and WIAA’s soccer programs really do compliment each other.

Girls, on the other hand, are not afforded the same opportunity as boys. Since High School girls play in the fall, many coaches (both high school and club) are telling their student athletes that they cannot participate in both programs. If the athlete chooses to play High School soccer, then they don't benefit from the year-round developmental programs offered by the clubs. Furthermore, they don't get seen by the college coaches!

And if they play for their clubs, they miss out on a very important High School experience.

WSYSA is respectfully requesting that WIAA consider moving girls soccer to the spring season. We submit that this is what is in the overall best interest of the student athlete.

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