



Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association

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To whom it may concern:

The Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association began hosting its first Girls Wrestling State Championship in February 2015. The tournament features 10 weight classes with an 8 person bracket in each weight class. This was the culmination of six years of discussion and planning for how TSSAA could best incorporate a Girls Wrestling Championship into the existing wrestling championship schedule. The girls championship is held in conjunction with the boys championship at the same location on the third week in February each year.

The TSSAA began discussing the idea of a Girls Wrestling championship at the urging of its Wrestling Advisory Committee in 2007. The committee first suggested that TSSAA host a dual meet for girls teams at the TSSAA State Dual Meet Championship. While there were a number of girls interested in wrestling across the state, it was apparent that there were not many schools with enough girls to produce full teams for a dual meet championship. Therefore, the wrestling advisory committee recommended that a state-wide individual tournament for girls be hosted by TSSAA.

In 2009 approximately 65 girls participated in the first TSSAA Girls Wrestling Invitational held in conjunction with the TSSAA State Wrestling Championships. Although there were a number of byes in the brackets for the 10 weight classes, the tournament was very well received and sparked interest in the wrestling community. Two girls wrestling coaches were immediately added to the TSSAA Wrestling Advisory Committee. The advisory committee felt that the fastest way to an official championship was to create the format that would be in place in the event that the TSSAA sanctioned the sport. Coaches from the Girls Wrestling community organized into two geographic regions and began holding qualifying tournaments for the TSSAA Girls Wrestling Invitational tournament. The top four individuals from each region advanced to the state invitational. Under this format, the numbers of girls participating in the Girls Wrestling Invitational continued to grow. Finally, in the spring of 2014, the TSSAA Legislative Council approved Girls Wrestling as a sanctioned championship event. Since the qualifying format was already in place, there was very little additional planning needed for TSSAA staff.

Approximately 300 girls participated in Girls Wrestling in Tennessee during the 2015-2016 school year. The emergence of the Girls Wrestling championships in Tennessee has led to an increase in the number of girls participating in the sport while decreasing the frequency of girls competing against boys. We have found that there are not many competitors, coaches, parents, or fans that see many positives in girls wrestling boys. Providing a separate state championship for girls has encouraged more schools to offer wrestling. We anticipate the number of girls participating in this sport will continue to grow and, as a result, more lives will be impacted in a positive way. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the process of implementation in Tennessee in greater detail with anyone who has an interest in sanctioning Girls Wrestling in their state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Reeves". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Mark Reeves

Assistant Executive Director

Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association