

Rationale for Sanction

This proposal asks that the Minnesota State High School League sanction a Boys' volleyball season to begin in the Spring of 2021.

The proposal has been brought before the Administrative Regions for the past two school years (2017-2018, 2018-2019) in an attempt to move it forward to the Representative Assembly for consideration, but has failed each year to gain acceptance from the required 9 regions necessary to move it forward.

In asking for sanction in this third year, it is important for the Regions to understand that this proposal has strong support from communities across the seven county metro, as well as from outstate schools from Austin to Rochester, and schools as far north as Proctor, Cloquet and the entire Duluth area. The interest, in the short two years that the market has been tested with a high school club league, has been nothing short of jaw dropping. In the first year over 400 boys played for 22 high schools, and in the second year, over 50 schools had boys' programs with 800+ players involved.

As a result of the explosion in interest, in the spring of 2019, the first ever Boys' State Tournament was held with Andover winning the title and St. Paul Harding placing second. The tournament was covered by the metro media and gained a headline in the Mpls Tribune.

The reason for the explosive growth is that once boys are introduced to the sport they love it. It is an athletically explosive game that fits the competitive arena of today's High School League sanctioned sports.

Rational for a Spring Season

1. The interest in Boys' volleyball is sweeping the nation. It currently is one of the fastest growing sports for boys. There are currently 24 states with high school programs, the most recent sanction coming from Colorado, who will add it for the 2019-2020 Spring Season. Ohio will follow soon.

Of the 24 states, 22 have sanctioned a Spring season. The major reason for this is that the NCAA and NAIA college seasons for men are in the spring and thus states offering boys high school volleyball have followed that lead. There are two states, Wisconsin and New York, that sanction seasons in the fall, but the reason is that they have had boys sanctioned high school volleyball for several decades and added it long before it gained traction in the NCAA or NAIA college organizations. States currently in the process of looking at a high school sanction are committed to a Spring season.

2. In the 2018-2019 school year there were 50 Minnesota high schools involved in the spring high school club volleyball season. Most of the boys playing were not involved in other spring sports. In other words, we know the sport is viable as a spring season and will provide opportunity to athletes not currently taking part in the schools other athletic spring offerings.

3. The only way a Minnesota High School boys' volleyball season will work realistically is if it is held in the spring. Here is why. The momentum for the sport has surged in the last two seasons in part because of a tremendous amount of work from organizers to school administrators, to coaches, to administrators of the club teams and administrators of the club league.

Almost all of the people involved, from directors, to coaches, to officials, are people who are involved with girls' volleyball in the fall season. They all love volleyball and are excited to help develop the boys game and the boys season, but if the sport was offered in the fall instead of the spring, none of those people would be available. As an example, in talking with several athletic directors this fall, they have said that there is presently a huge shortage of officials for the girls' schedule. Imagine that issue if the boys season was also in the fall. Again, it has already been shown that the spring works, both in number of athletes who want to play, as well as available people to fill all the roles necessary for the sport to succeed.

4. Having the boys play in the spring and the girls' play in the fall also assures a cooperative environment in our high schools. In that scenario, boys will support the girls in their season and the girls will support the boys in theirs. Already in the past two seasons, we have noticed that there are more male spectators at the girls fall matches, as well as boys serving as line judges, student managers, etc., for the girls teams. The same was true for girl's involvement in the spring. Putting the boys in the fall would create a competitive culture between the two sports in terms of media coverage, gym use, and a myriad of other issues.

5. Gym use in the spring season is difficult in March, we know, due to the pressure from outdoor sports. However, the 50 schools now involved were able to make it work for the past two seasons. The boys are very willing to practice late during the time that inclement weather causes outdoor sports to be inside. In the past two club seasons this has involved about two to three weeks in March. Once programs are outside, gym use should no longer be an issue in any Minnesota school, and there should be no further gym conflicts in the competitive weeks of the Boys' season.

The bottom line is that it is no longer possible to ignore the surging interest in sanctioning a boys' volleyball spring season in Minnesota high Schools. In two short years the spring club season has been characterized as a phenomenon and an explosion, and numerous articles and media have called attention to boys high school volleyball, calling it a sport whose time has come.

Though the High School club season is enjoying a huge expansion since its inception, it is no surprise that the boys playing and families involved want it to be part of the MSHSL's sanctioned sports along with the girls' equivalent. All of us know that student involvement in activities in our schools plays a crucial role in the social development of adolescents. Most of you voting know that from personal experience. It is time to give the hundreds of boys playing volleyball that chance. We are asking for you to vote yes to move this proposal to the Representative Assembly for consideration. We know that in some of our schools there are factors that will make it difficult to form a program at this time, but your yes vote will insure that the 50+ schools and 800+ boys will have a new opportunity to be involved in their high school. And that is a big deal.

So, we hope our Administrative Regions will recognize the potential of this boys' sport and give it a chance to earn its way to recognition as a MSHSL sanctioned sport.