

IHSAA changes rules for baseball, golf

Written by Bill Seals

Wednesday, 30 October 2013 16:40 -

BOONE - In an effort to give the best teams an advantage during future state baseball tournaments at Des Moines' Principal Park, the Iowa High School Athletic Association will no longer utilize coin flips to determine home and visiting teams. Instead, the highest-seeded teams will have the choice of being the home team or visiting squad.

The ruling came Wednesday morning at the IHSAA monthly board meeting in Boone. Roger Barr, the head of the Baseball Advisory Committee, made the recommendation to the board.

"We felt that it was rewarding the highest-seeded team for their hard work during the season," said Barr. "We think that should be carried through.

"We don't play the highest-seeded teams all the time at home (in early postseason rounds), especially in our smaller classes, because we use facilities that are the best to be playing the games on. This is an accolade for them to have the choice to be home or visitor."

Indirectly, the move also makes logistical sense in that it could speed up state tournament games and makes it easier for fans to find their team's seating section.

"The higher-seeded teams win a majority of the games," said IHSAA Executive Director Rick Wulkow. "When you're on time schedules like at the state tournament, and you have the one game going on and the 10-run rule isn't in effect, we're shortening the games by a half-inning to keep things moving.

"Another positive is that our ushers and everybody know ahead of time what dugout the teams are going to be in. Coming in, they can direct the fans without having to go look at a chart or ask one of us," said Wulkow. "We always know where the home teams are going to be. I think it will run a lot smoother."

The IHSAA board also approved another one of Barr's recommendations at Wednesday's meeting. Acting as the head of the Golf Advisory Committee, Barr put a measure in front of the

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board that would allow coaches more time to spend with players at postseason golf events.

Under the new proposal, golf coaches will be allowed much more time to coach their players than in the past.

"It permits the designated head coach to coach a player up until the ball is on the green," Barr said. "Once a ball is on the green, the coach can have no communication with a player until all the players in the group have holed out. One exception is a coach must not enter a bunker while providing advice."

In previous years, coaches were forced to take a hands-off approach with their players once their round of golf had begun. This was to the dismay of some parents, who preferred coaches spend more time with players.

"It gives our coaches a chance to coach," Barr said. "I know our coaches really feel this way. One of the coaches came up to me after the fall meet and said he had two parents approach him and ask why he never talked to their kid.

"But the coach couldn't say a word to (the player) because they had already put their balls in play. With this rule, we provide our coaches an opportunity to coach."

Allowing coaches more freedom at postseason meets aligns more closely with what other states and organizations are doing, said Barr. Ohio, Michigan, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri and Kansas high school associations allow coaches to speak with players throughout golf meets. The USGA and NCAA also do not have rules that prohibit this practice.

In other news, the IHSAA Board of Directors approved the 2014 Sectional and District Wrestling assignments put before them by Alan Beste, the head of the Wrestling Advisory Committee.

Class 3A District 2 will include Cedar Falls, Jefferson, Kennedy, Washington, Linn-Mar,

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Waterloo East, Waterloo West and Xavier. Jefferson will host the district meet.

Class 3A District 7 includes Iowa City High, Iowa City West, Marshalltown, Newton, Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, Pella and Prairie. Newton is set to host the district meet.

Class 2A Sectional 5 includes Clear Creek-Amana, Marion, Mount Vernon, Solon, Tipton and Williamsburg.

Sectional tournaments at all sites are scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 8, 2014, with district tournaments scheduled for the following Saturday, Feb. 15.

"We have taken into account geography, strength of teams based on past performance, returning qualifiers, and number of wrestlers who were body-comp assessed last year to give us an idea of how many full teams we can expect," said Beste.

"If we've sent somebody a long way for a sectional, we've tried to keep them close for a district in 1A and 2A. We're really comfortable with the way this came together this year and I think this is a pretty good map."