

CROSS COUNTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING December 2, 2020

A meeting of the Cross Country Advisory Committee was held virtually on Wednesday, December 2, 2020. Committee members present were Nate Boock, Ballard – CHAIRMAN (2021); Kevin Kearney, South Winneshiek (2020); Travis Nuss, Southeast Valley (2021); Abby Schmitz, Waukee (2021); Kelli Kersten, Logan-Magnolia (2023); Ben Robison, Clear Creek-Amana (2023); Katie Tesch, Ridge View (2022) and Bill Neal, Iowa City – OFFICIAL (2021). Also present were Jared Chizek, IHSAA, and Gary Ross, IGSAU.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Boock at 10:00 AM. The committee was introduced and informed of the role of advisory committee by the state office staff members.

(MM-S) Schmitz-Nuss to approve the December 4, 2019 advisory committee minutes.
Motion carried unanimously.

The committee first discussion topic was COVID-19 and the protocols put into place throughout the season. Kearney shared that in northeast Iowa, many ran races as they would have in a regular year but they eliminated the awards ceremony at the end of the meet. Schmitz talked about 4As limiting competition to varsity only and/or limiting sub-varsity entries and the scramble to find sub-varsity opportunities throughout the season. Boock mentioned he prohibited spectators from attending his home invite. From the conversation, it appeared there were very few races that involved 16 or more teams prior to conference and state qualifying meets as most meets were between 8 to 12 teams. To echo Kearney's earlier comments, some believe schools will eliminate award ceremonies until the postseason in 2021.

The regular season was discussed. Most of the discussion was still related to COVID-19 adjustments. With the elimination or limitation of sub-varsity runners at events, many events allowed ten competitors in the varsity race. Feedback around the state was mixed on this practice. Tesch was the only committee member that indicated her squads participated in a scrimmage this fall. More schools are charging a parking fee or individual admission to help cover the expense of chip timing.

State qualifying was next on the agenda. Ross and Chizek thanked the committee for its input early in the season in regards to the postseason and COVID-19 risk minimization. In addition, prior to the meeting, Ross had sent results from survey of all cross country coaches that was referenced throughout the meeting. Most of the discussion was spent on modified qualifying meet schedule of 3A and 4A teams running on Wednesday and 1A and 2A teams running on Thursday. As a result, no two class meets were scheduled. In addition Class 1A increased from five sites to eight and the top two teams and top ten individuals qualified for the state meet. Robison and Schmitz shared their experience with the schedule change as their teams were the ones affected with the move. Both were supportive. The two were nervous in terms of routine, training, etc. of keeping the qualifying meet on Wednesday if the state meet reverted back to Saturday. Chizek shared participation numbers in the 1A meets comparing them to the 2019 numbers. On the boys side of things, the most complete teams at a site was 15, while 102 competitors was the largest in terms of individuals (compared to the smallest meet being 18 teams and 142 individuals in 2019). On the girls side of things, the most complete teams at a site

was 13, while 87 competitors was the largest in terms of individuals (compared to the smallest meet being 11 teams and 106 individuals in 2019). Tesch and Kearney talked about the distribution of full teams and asked for individual state qualifier numbers compared to 2019. Both boys and girls had five more individual qualifiers compared to 2019, in addition to the one additional team.

The group discussed the team assignments and the distribution of IATC ranked teams and believed the teams were divided as well as they could have been. Schmitz shared an idea she had received from another coach about splitting boys and girls from the same school onto two different nights at different locations to better split the teams. There was no support from the committee on this idea particularly due to the idea of increased transportation costs to schools, shared coaches particularly in cases of inclement weather, and team assignments being made late in the season and not in the preseason as they were 10+ years ago.

Prior to any recommendations being made, the committee discussed the state meet. The group overwhelmingly supported the two day meet; specifically, the group believed the environment was less chaotic as there was only one class there at a time allowing athletes, coaches, fans to move freely and not to have to wait in line for concessions, restrooms or merchandise. In addition, the traffic flow in and out of the park was very fluid and coaches shared parents were less nervous/concerned about how to enter the event. The committee acknowledges the concern of the meet being on the same day as early round football playoff games and Fort Dodge needing to find new volunteers to pull off the Friday meet.

From a state meet officiating standpoint, Neal would like to see the starting area be limited to participants only and not allow non-participating teammates in the area due to limited space and congestion when teams are attempting to conduct run outs.

The committee discussed the state meet experience. Ideas of ways to enhance the experience include: videoboard with live results and/or splits, live stream of the meet, different/additional awards for participants, additional trophies for teams.

Schmitz did share a classification idea to the group. Chizek shared the classification committee is scheduled to meet on Friday, December 4.

Boock asked for recommendations to be made and to be taken the joint committee. The following recommendations were made.

(MM-S) Kearney-Schmitz to run the Class 3A and 4A state qualifying meets on Wednesday and to run the Class 1A and 2A state qualifying meets on Thursday. Motion carried unanimously.

(MM-S) Kearney-Tesch to run the Class 3A and 4A state meet on Friday and to run the Class 1A and 2A state meet on Saturday with a time schedule to be determined at a later date. Motion carried unanimously.

(MM-S) Kearney-Tesch to increase the number of Class 1A state qualifying meet sites to eight and to have the top 2 teams and top 10 individuals qualify for the state meet. Motion carried unanimously.

The date for the 2021 Cross Country Advisory Meeting will be December 1, 2021, at the IGHSAU office in West Des Moines.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Chizek