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## Individual Tennis Tournament Proposal

### 1. Overview

This proposal outlines the structure and organization of the Individual Tennis Tournament for the new classifications, beginning in Fall 2025. The tournament will include classifications for 1A and 8A schools, following existing processes, while offering a streamlined format for 2A to 7A classifications. The tournament is designed to be inclusive, competitive, and efficient, ensuring minimal disruption to current practices while addressing specific challenges.

### 2. Issues with the Current Process and Format

Currently, entrants to the individual regional tournaments are determined by the conferences, and each conference receives a certain number of bids based on the number of schools in the conference that are fielding tennis teams.

This process creates two issues, both of which create substantial hardship and unfairness for some schools.

- **The “Problem of the Fractions”**. The formula for distributing regional berths (even the amended formula being used this year) hardly ever yields a round number, meaning that some conferences benefit from “rounding up” while other conferences suffer from “rounding down”. Moreover, when two or more conferences are identical in number, and there’s only one spot remaining, a choice must be made by random draw as to which conference receives that final available berth.
- **The “One-Berth Problem”**. When a conference has only one or two schools of a given classification, it is common for that conference to receive only one berth at the regional tournament. This means that only three members of a given team have a chance to participate in the individual tournament, whereas, for most other schools, all six starters have a chance to play in a conference tournament, advance to the regional tournament, and, from there, advance to the state tournament. Students should not be disadvantaged in this way for something beyond their control ... the geographical location of their school and the conference to which it is assigned by the NCHSAA. Every school, regardless of location or conference affiliation, should be allowed to send two singles entries and two doubles teams to the initial stage of the individual tournament.

We also assert that, with the 2025-26 realignment into eight classifications, we will have more split conferences, and thus, more schools that are “singletons” (the only school in a given classification in its conference), and more schools which are one of two in a given classification in its conference.

In other words, the 2025-26 realignment will exacerbate the two problems described above, making them an issue for a larger number of schools than is currently the case.

### 3. Tournament Structure

#### 1A and 8A Classifications:

- **1A Classification:**
  - **Regions:** Two regions (East and West) will be formed based on historical data, with approximately 16 schools per region.
  - **Participants:** Each school will send two singles players and two doubles teams to their respective regional tournaments.
  - **Advancement:** The four semi-finalists from each region will advance to the 1A Individual State Tournament.
  - **Matchups:** The state tournament will follow a seeded format where 1st in the West plays 4th in the East, 2nd in the West plays 3rd in the East, and so forth.
- **8A Classification:**
  - **Regions:** Four regions—West, Midwest, Mideast, and East—each comprising 8 teams.
  - **Participants:** Each school will send two singles players and two doubles teams to regional tournaments.
  - **Advancement:** The four semi-finalists from each region will advance to the 8A Individual State Tournament.

#### 2A to 7A Classifications:

- **Week 9: Regional Qualifiers**
  - **Format:** A one-day event consisting of 8 regional qualifiers, with 2 regional qualifiers per region. Schools will be assigned to a regional qualifier based on geography, such that approximately one half of the schools will play in each of a region's qualifier.
  - **Entries:** We would expect 5-7 schools in each regional qualifier, creating 10-14 entries in singles and in doubles.
  - **Advancement:** The top 8 singles players and top 8 doubles teams from each regional qualifier will advance to the regional tournaments.
  - **Seeding Process:**
    - Coaches will meet ahead of time to vote on the top 8 players, who will receive byes if applicable..
      - Example: If 10 players are vying for regional berths, the top six seeds would receive byes, the 7th and 8th seeds would each play one of the remaining two players in qualifying matches to determine the final two participants in the regional.
    - The seeding meeting will be conducted via Zoom or Google Meet on a predetermined, non-negotiable date.
    - Players receiving byes, and thus, automatically qualifying for the regional by virtue of the coaches' voting, would not be required to attend the regional qualifier.

- **Week 10: Regionals**
  - **Format:** The regional tournaments, composed of 16 entries each in singles and doubles, will follow the current format, with winners advancing to the state tournament.
- **Week 11: State Tournament**
  - **Format:** The state tournament will also adhere to the current format, ensuring consistency and fairness across all classifications.

#### 4. Advantages

- **Minimal Change:** This proposal requires minimal changes to the current tournament format, ensuring a smooth implementation.
- **Balanced Representation:** The approach addresses the one-bid berth conference issue by providing a more balanced and equitable pathway for all participants.
- **Efficiency:** The use of Zoom for regional qualifier seeding meetings streamlines the process, allowing for timely and organized tournament preparation.

#### 5. Disadvantages

- **Seeding Process:** Conducting seeding meetings via Zoom may pose logistical challenges, requiring strict adherence to scheduled times to ensure smooth coordination.

#### 6. Impact on Conference Tournaments

- Conference tournaments will no longer determine which student-athletes qualify to participate in the regional tournaments.
- Time is reserved on Monday through Wednesday of Week 9 for those conferences which choose to conduct a season-ending tournament. There are a variety of reasons to do so:
  - To crown an individual conference champion in singles and doubles.
  - To celebrate all-conference teams and regular season champions.
  - To allow coaches to meet, all in one place at one time, to discuss conference business and make plans for future seasons.
- Because conference tournaments will no longer determine who qualifies for individual regional play, these tournaments can be pure single-elimination events. Multiple rounds of consolation play will not be necessary to identify a third, fifth, or sixth qualifier for the regional tournament.

## 7. Example Scenario for the Current Year

If this proposal were in effect during the current 2024 Women's Tennis season, the schedule would be as follows:

- **Saturday, October 5th (9:00am)** - Zoom meeting for seeding of regional qualifiers. Date and time are non-negotiable.
- **Week 9**
  - **Thursday, October 10th** - Regional qualifiers, two per region, with 5-8 schools per event. One round of play.
- **Week 10**
  - **Monday, October 14th** - Dual-team tournament - 1st round
  - **Wednesday, October 16th** - Dual-team tournament - 2nd round
  - **Friday-Saturday, October 18th-19th** - Individual tournament regionals
- **Week 11**
  - **Monday, October 21st** - Dual-team tournament - 3rd round
  - **Wednesday, October 23rd** - Dual-team tournament - 4th round
  - **Friday-Saturday, October 25th-26th** - State Individual tournament
- **Week 12**
  - **Tuesday, October 29th** - Dual-team tournament - Semifinals
  - **Saturday, November 2nd** - Dual-team tournament - Finals