

NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Meeting of the Board of Directors – Agenda Item Submission

Name: Andrew Tuttle, President

School/LEA/Conference/Group: NC High School Tennis Coaches Association

Proposal – An amendment to restore the 16-entry bracket at the state individual tournaments.

We propose that the state individual championships, in both singles and doubles, be conducted as sixteen-entry draws.

If this proposal is adopted, then four players (or four doubles teams) would advance to the state tournament from each regional tournament.

Exception: if this proposal is adopted, and if the 1A championship is conducted as a separate tournament, then the 1A tournament would consist of two regionals (East and West), with four contestants from each regional qualifying for the state tournament, which would have an eight-entry draw.

Rationale -

Historically, state individual championships have been conducted as 16-entry draws. This historic and traditional format was changed last year as part of the 8-classification realignment.

The move to an eight-entry state tournament was one of the most unpopular changes made in NC high school tennis in recent history.

- In our 2025 Realignment Survey, conducted in the winter of 2025, coaches voted in favor of a 16-entry state tournament by a margin of 74-11.
- In our fall 2025 Postseason Survey, conducted in November 2025, after the women's tournament had been conducted with an 8-entry draw, coaches asked for a return to a 16-entry tournament bracket by a margin of 72-24.
- Desire for a return to a 16-entry tournament was expressed by numerous coaches in the open-ended comments, including on questions that had little or nothing to do with the state individual tournaments.

The change to an 8-entry bracket was justified on the basis that it allowed the same number of student-athletes to participate as before. That is, 8 classifications, with 8 entries each, equals 64 entries, just as four classifications of 16 entries each.

This justification, we believe, is unconvincing, in that it attempts to perpetuate an exceptionally unfair status quo.

The chart below shows the proportion of student-athletes who participated in the state tournaments or meets in the various individual sports during the 2023-24 sports seasons.

2023-2024 State Tournament Participants – Men							
	1A	2A	3A	4A	Total	Students Participating	% of Student-Athletes In State Tournament
Tennis	24	48	48	48	168	3833	4.38%
Wrestling	112	224	224	224	784	9885	7.93%
Cross Country	145	139	162	162	608	5821	10.44%
Golf	96	94	95	97	382	3278	11.65%
Outdoor Track	467	465	473	469	1874	15932	11.76%
Indoor Track	442		365	546	1353	7331	18.46%
Swimming and Diving	484		485	503	1472	3338	44.10%
2023-2024 State Tournament Participants – Women							
	1A	2A	3A	4A	Total	Students Participating	% of Student-Athletes In State Tournament
Tennis	24	48	48	48	168	4318	3.89%
Wrestling	192				192	1432	13.41%
Cross Country	137	137	141	176	591	4279	13.81%
Outdoor Track	456	459	478	469	1862	11409	16.32%
Golf	88		94	92	274	1573	17.42%
Indoor Track	402		358	490	1250	5912	21.14%
Swimming and Diving	491		491	504	1486	4487	33.12%

As you can see, by a large margin, tennis has the lowest percentage of its participants who receive the opportunity to participate in the state tournament.

Moreover, in many of these sports, the 2025 realignment resulted in more athletes participating in state tournaments or events, while, in tennis, our numbers remained basically the same.

Thus, we assert that returning to a 16-entry draw will bring tennis participation in the state individual tournament more in line with the participation levels in other individual sports.

To be clear, we do not really care how many track athletes or swimmers get to participate in their state-level events. All we care about is that the maximum number of tennis players get a similar opportunity.

That number is governed by the logistical limits of a two-day tennis tournament. Two matches per day is all we can ask our players to play. Thus, a two-day tournament is a four-round tournament, with room for sixteen entries.

In other words, the numbers on the chart above were driven, not by a conscious desire to be unfair to tennis, but by the simple limitations of a two-day tournament.

That changed in 2025, when the state reduced the fields to eight entrants each. Under this format, we accommodated only half of the number of participants that the structural limitations described above would allow.

This resulted in an extremely inefficient use of court space and time at the state tournaments. By mid-morning on Friday, sites had multiple empty courts ... courts that the NCHSAA had paid for.

And, yes, we can run two state tournaments of 16-entries each at the same site, so long as we have at least twelve courts at our disposal. Last fall, we conducted two regionals each at three 12-court sites, and, in each case, the tournaments went smoothly.

We have at least 12 courts at Burlington, Millbrook, and Cary Tennis Park. And, frankly, after the first round, we only need eight.

At Holly Springs, there are eight courts available, which is sufficient to host the combined 1A/2A championships, with a combined 16-entry bracket. It is also sufficient to host a 2A tournament with 16 entries, and a 1A tournament with 8 entries.

So, can we return to the 16-entry brackets, logistically?

Absolutely!! And, it's a better use of the money we are spending to rent these facilities!

(See the attached appendix for exactly how that would work.)

Returning the state tournament to sixteen entries will allow more student-athletes to participate than has historically been the case. We see this as a benefit, and a not a problem.

Making the state tournament is an inspiring and motivating experience that encourages hard work and skill development, not just for the athlete, but for teammates as well. "If Sally can make the state tournament this season, maybe I can make it next year."

We also believe this will encourage schools to continue to support their programs, by giving more schools a tangible accomplishment to celebrate. This will help schools feel that their programs are successful, and worthy of support, which will ultimately help us grow our overall participation numbers.

Budget Impact -

Last fall, the rental expense across the four state championship sites was approximately \$3,000. Two of those sites charge the NCHSAA a flat rate for the weekend, so no additional cost is incurred. One of those sites did not charge a fee at all.

We will not need additional sites, and we expect any increase in rental cost to be minimal, if any at all.

Educational Impact -

More kids will participate, and as such, more kids will miss school on the Friday of the state tournament.

Gender Impact -

The provisions would apply to both the men's and the women's seasons.

Effective Date -

The proposal would take effect for the 2026-2027 sports seasons.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix

Proposed State Tournament Schedules

Background

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that it is possible to run eight individual championships, with sixteen entries in each classification (except a separate 1A tournament, if contested as such) using the same sites and the same time frame as is currently the case.

Format and Schedule

Two classifications can hold their tournaments simultaneously at a given site.

7A/8A at Millbrook Exchange Park

Sixteen courts are needed for the first round on Friday morning, and thereafter, only eight courts are required.

Schedule:

Friday

- 9:00am – Play begins ... eight singles matches in 7A and eight in 8A. Sixteen courts required.
- 9:30am – Arrival time for players in the 7A doubles. Begin play as soon as courts are available.
- 10:00am – Arrival time for players in 8A doubles. Begin play as soon as courts are available (after all 7A doubles matches have been placed on court).
- 1:00pm (or 12:00 noon, if desired) – Second-round singles matches begin (assuming rest periods have been satisfied) – Eight courts required.
- 2:00pm – Arrival time for second-round doubles matches, play begins as courts become available (assuming rest periods have been satisfied). – Eight courts required.

Saturday

- 9:00am – Singles and doubles semifinals in both classifications. Eight courts required
- Break for lunch.
- 1:00am – Arrival time for finals. On the court, assuming appropriate rest from morning match. Four courts required.

5A/6A at Cary Tennis Park

Same schedule as the 7A/8A at Millbrook Exchange.

3A/4A at Burlington Tennis Center

Twelve courts are available at the facility.

Schedule:

Friday

- 9:00am – Play begins ... eight first-round singles matches in 3A and four in 4A (or vice versa).
- 9:30am – Arrival time for players in the four remaining first-round (4A) matches.
- 10:00am – Arrival time for first four first-round doubles matches (3A).
- 10:15am – Arrival time for second four first-round doubles matches (3A)
- 10:30am – Arrival time for first four first-round doubles matches (4A)
- 10:45am – Arrival time for second four first-round matches (4A).
- 1:00pm – Second-round singles (3A and 4A), plus four-second round (3A) doubles (assuming adequate rest from morning match).
- 1:30pm – Arrival time for remaining (4A) second-round doubles matches.

Saturday

- 9:00am – Singles and doubles semifinals in both classifications. Eight courts required
- Break for lunch.
- 1:00am – Arrival time for finals. On the court, assuming appropriate rest from morning match. Four courts required.

1A/2A at North Main Athletic Complex – Holly Springs

Eight courts are available at the site, which is sufficient to conduct the 1A/2A tournament, whether the classifications are combined or not.

Combined tournament

Friday

- 9:00am – Singles first round
- 10:00am – Arrival time for first round doubles matches.
- 1:00pm – Second-round singles and doubles, assuming adequate rest period satisfied. Eight courts required.

Saturday

- 9:00am - Singles and doubles semifinals. Four courts required.
- Break for lunch.
- 1:00am - Arrival time for finals. On the court, assuming appropriate rest from morning match. Two courts required.

Separate championships

For a scenario with separate 1A and 2A classifications, assuming a 16-entry 2A draw and an 8-entry 1A draw.

Friday

- 9:00am – Play begins ... first-round singles (2A).
- 9:30am – Arrival time for 1A first-round singles.
- 10:00am – Arrival time for first four first-round (2A) doubles matches.
- 10:30am – Arrival time for remaining first-round (2A) doubles matches.
- 11:00am – Arrival time for first-round doubles (1A).
- 1:00pm – Arrival time for second-round singles (1A and 2A), and two second-round doubles matches (2A).
- 1:30pm – Arrival time for remaining second-round doubles (2A).
- 2:00pm – Arrival time for second-round doubles (1A).

Saturday

- 9:00am - Singles and doubles semifinals (2A), plus singles and doubles finals (1A). Six courts required
- Break for lunch.
- 1:00am - Arrival time for finals (2A). On the court, assuming appropriate rest from morning match. Two courts required.

Final Notes

In all of these scenarios, a single tournament director would be needed at each site to make court assignments and run the event, just like a USTA tournament with multiple age groups. The director would need to identify a check-in desk, and have and have someone present at the desk at all times.

If a coaches meeting is desired, it could take place on Thursday night, on Zoom.

This format provides a major advantage over the current practice, especially on Friday, in that there is a clear morning and afternoon session on each day. There is not the pressure to get kids back on the court as soon as possible. Winners get a decent break between matches, and know when their next round is scheduled for play. Players can go get lunch, and properly recuperate from the previous round.

Conclusion

It is entirely possible, and perhaps advantageous, to play two classifications of 16 entries per bracket, using the sites we already have.

It is not necessary to reduce the tournament fields to eight participants because of limited facilities or court time. The sites to which we already have access are sufficient to run the tournaments contemplated in our individual tournament proposal.

Moreover, because we are renting at least some of these sites on a flat rate basis, conducting a 16-entry bracket is a better, more efficient use of the court time and space we are already paying for.