

NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Meeting of the Board of Directors – Agenda Item Submission

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

Proposal – An amendment to the handbook language clarifying the regional seeding process.

We propose that paragraph 4.11.4(f), which describes the seeding at the regional tournaments, be amended as follows:

The current language is to be deleted entirely.

~~(f) Seeding and Pairings – Will be done under the direction of the tournament director, as determined by the regional seeding instructions posted on the NCHSAA tennis web-page. All coaches should attend the seeding meetings at the respective Pre-Regionals/Regionals. Seeding meetings for top 4 places must be held during the week of the Regional tournament and results will be posted on the NCHSAA website.~~

~~(1) Criterion 1 – Head to head competition during the season; and,~~

~~(2) Criterion 2 – Records (not state USTA rankings) will be used for seeding players.~~

The following language is to be inserted in its place.

(f) Seeding and Pairings

(1) Pre-regional

(i.) On the Saturday morning prior to the pre-regional, the event director shall conduct a seeding meeting.

(A.) Unless otherwise agreed to unanimously by the coaches involved, the seeding meeting shall be scheduled for 9:00am and shall be conducted online.

(B.) All coaches are expected to participate, and shall be prepared to submit their entries in singles and doubles. In the event a coach cannot attend the seeding meeting, it is the coach's responsibility to communicate with the event director, and to submit his/her entries in advance.

(C.) As a group, the coaches shall seed the field, with the number of seeds equaling the number of berths assigned to that pre-regional. *(For instance, if the pre-regional is assigned seven regional berths, then the coaches would seed seven entries.)*

(1.) Coaches shall use the “all factors” method described in the USTA Friend at Court in order to seed the field, with the coaches present serving as the Seeding Committee.

(2.) Coaches may reference any relevant results, rankings, or ratings in making the case for a player or doubles team to be seeded, and may weigh the data presented as they deem appropriate.

(3.) Coaches shall seed the field by vote, and such votes shall be cast independently. Coaches may not enter into pre-arranged agreements to support particular entries.

(ii.) Once the seeds are determined, the event director shall assess whether any entries are entitled to byes. *(For instance, in a pre-regional with twelve entries and seven seeds, the top two seeds would receive byes, and the five unseeded players would be drawn against the players seeded 3 through 7.)*

(A.) Players or doubles teams seeded highly enough to receive byes will advance directly to the regional tournament, and do not have to attend the pre-regional.

(iii.) On the day of the pre-regional, prior to play, the coaches shall convene to conduct the pre-regional draw.

(A.) At that meeting, the unseeded players and doubles teams will be drawn, randomly, to play the seeded entries who did not receive byes, with the exception that teammates shall not be drawn to play each other in the pre-regional round.

(iv.) Play shall begin as soon as the draw has been completed.

(A.) A single round shall be played.

(B.) To the extent possible, the event director shall allow those players traveling the farthest to and from the event site to play the first matches.

(C.) The match format in both singles and doubles shall be best two-of-three tiebreak sets (win six games with a lead of two, 7-point tiebreak at 6-all). The third set is played in full.

(D.) The winners of these matches will advance to the regional tournament.

(2) Regional

(i.) There shall be a maximum of sixteen entries in singles and doubles at the regional tournaments. A player or doubles team may qualify for the regional tournament:

(A.) by being one of the two entries from his/her school, in those regionals with eight or fewer teams participating, or

(B.) by being one of the highly seeded entries from his/her pre-regional, and receiving a bye at that event, or

(C.) by winning a match at the pre-regional.

(ii.) At each regional tournament, there shall be a coaches' meeting at least one hour before the beginning of play on the first day of the tournament. At the meeting, the coaches shall:

(A.) vote on recommendations for the next year's tournament director and site.

(B.) vote on four seeds in each event, serving collectively as the Seeding Committee, and using the "all factors" method found in the USTA Friend at Court.

(1.) Coaches may reference any relevant results, rankings, or ratings in making the case for a player or doubles team to be seeded, and may weigh the data presented as they deem appropriate.

(2.) Coaches shall seed the field by vote, and such votes shall be cast independently. Coaches may not enter into pre-arranged agreements to support particular entries.

(C.) conduct the draw for the two events, using the method described on the NCHSAA website, and instructions provided by the NCHSAA administrator to the regional directors.

(1.) The #3 seed shall be placed on line 12 of the bracket, to play the #2 seed in the semifinals, unless such placement should result in teammates playing one another in the semifinal round.

(2.) Likewise, the #4 seed shall be placed on line 5 of the bracket, to play the #1 seed in the semifinals, unless such placement should result in teammates playing one another in the semifinal round.

(D.) discuss any logistical issues associated with the tournament, including the plan for inclement weather.

(iii.) Play shall begin as soon as the coaches' meeting is adjourned.

(A.) The tournament director shall assign matches to courts in accordance with USTA regulations, which state that "scheduling should balance fairness to the players and the need to assure that the tournament is completed on time. This involves making maximum use of available courts, minimizing "dead time" between matches, and assuring appropriate rest for competitors."

(1.) In the first round, all singles matches shall be scheduled first, followed by doubles matches on available courts or as courts become vacant as singles matches conclude.

(2.) In the second round, matches shall be scheduled and placed on court in the order that the expiration of the required rest periods dictate.

(3.) Semifinals and finals shall follow the same pattern, unless there are sufficient courts available to play all matches in the same round simultaneously.

(4.) The tournament director shall assign matches to courts "so that players in the same section of the draw will start all matches in each round at about the same time", in accordance with USTA regulations.

(iv.) Two rounds shall be played on Friday, and two rounds shall be played on Saturday.

(A.) Winners in singles are entitled to one hour of rest following their first match of that day, (or two hours if they win in three sets), should that time be requested.

(B.) Winners in doubles are entitled to one hour of rest following their first match of that day, should that time be requested.

Rationale -

The primary purpose of this amendment is to clarify and codify how the pre-regional and regional seeding and draw will be conducted.

We see lots of variation in terms of how regional seeding takes place.

- In some regionals, a 5th and 6th seed are voted upon and placed in favorable positions in the bracket.
- In some regionals, it is permitted to mention a player's UTR or WTN rating, and in others, it is not.

- In some regionals, the “coin flip” to place the #3 and #4 seeds is observed, (as set forth in the USTA regulations), and in others, the #4 seed is automatically slotted to play the top seed.

We believe that all regionals should be conducted in the same manner, consistently, across the state, regardless of the preferences of individual coaches or tournament directors.

The current bylaw language leaves much to be desired. In fact, that language does not even specify that the coaches vote on the seeds!

Taking the current language literally, one could argue that the players should be ranked by overall record, and then, that list adjusted to reflect any head-to-head results recorded during the season. No voting required.

This is, of course, not what we do, but it illustrates the inadequacy of the current language.

Our proposed language is much more comprehensive than the single paragraph in the current handbook. This illustrates the many and varied issues that the current handbook does not address.

We also intend this amendment to settle two perennial questions that routinely show up in our surveys.

First, there is the question of how recently developed rating systems, such as UTR and WTN, can be used.

The current language originated in an era prior to the advent of these rating systems, when the only other metric beside high school match results was a player’s USTA ranking and tournament results, and that in a world where the USTA charged junior players for USTA membership. Banning the use of USTA results in seeding was an attempt to forestall “pay to play”, and to treat players fairly whether they had access to USTA programming or not.

All of that has changed in the last decade or so.

- The advent of UTR and WTN gives us a rating system that includes high school results as well as USTA play.
- USTA junior memberships are now free.

As a consequence of these developments, we believe that using the USTA “all factors” method for the seeding meeting best satisfies our goal, which is to identify the players who have the best chance of winning the tournament. After all, a player does not lose the benefit of his/her USTA experiences simply because he/she is playing in a high school tournament.

Not allowing coaches to share a player’s UTR or WTN seems, to us, to be a withholding of important information that coaches need in order to identify the players most deserving of seeds.

The all factors method has three components:

- A seeding committee, which is our case, is composed of the assembled coaches.
- Consideration of all relevant factors, which means that a coach can say anything he/she wants in order to make the case that a player should be seeded.

- Decisions by vote of the committee members; that is, the assembled coaches, who are free to evaluate the evidence presented by their own standards, weighing a player's record, strength of schedule, UTR or WTN, state ranking, or tournament results as he/she sees fit.

(See the appendix for the language from USTA Friend at Court regarding the "all factors" method for tournament seeding.)

We are not recommending, at this time, that the UTR or WTN of the players be used as the exclusive criterion for seeding. But, we do believe that coaches should be able to share that information, and their peers should be able to weigh that data point as they see fit.

Second, we wish to settle the question of the "coin flip" for placement of the #3 and #4 seeds.

USTA regulations call for the #3 and #4 seeds to be placed on the bracket by virtue of a coin flip, to prevent the #4 seed always having to play the #1. It's a recognition that seeding is always somewhat subjective, and introduces some protection against mistakes by the seeding committee.

However, given that the state tournament is a one-off, annual event, the coaching community believes that placing the #3 and #4 seeds on pre-determined lines, such that #1 plays #4 and #2 plays #3 in the semifinals is appropriate.

The only exception is that the provision to separate teammates into opposite halves of the draw would take precedence.

This position was supported by 55% of the coaches responding to our postseason survey.

Budget Impact -

There is no budget impact associated with this proposal.

Educational Impact -

There is no educational impact associated with this proposal.

Gender Impact -

This proposal would apply equally to the men's and women's tennis seasons.

Effective Date -

This proposal would take effect with the 2026-27 women's and men's seasons.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix

Permitted Seeding Methods

From 2026 USTA Friend at Court, pages 61-62.

4. Seeding methods.

- a. Computerized List Method. The Computerized List Method of seeding is based on a computerized system of rankings, ratings, or standings.
- b. All Factors Method. The All Factors Method of seeding is based on the players' chances of winning the tournament as determined by the Tournament Committee. The Tournament Committee shall consider all reasonably available information, including ranking lists, ratings, standing lists, recent records, types of surface, and particularly head-to-head encounters.

Comments:

FAC Comment II.A-3: When using the All Factors Method of seeding, it is common to start with a recent ranking or standing list and use other information to enhance the accuracy of the list. The Tournament Committee shall not rely on just the current rankings or standings. The Tournament Committee shall consider all reasonably available information, including results from unsanctioned matches. It should take care to assure itself that all results are correct. The Tournament Committee should make every effort to obtain information from all available sources.

FAC Comment II.A-4: Some common errors in the All Factors Method of seeding: "He's ranked No. 1, so he must be seeded No. 1"; "She won the tournament last year, so she must be seeded No. 1 this year"; "Since this is his first year in the division, he cannot be seeded or he cannot be seeded any higher than five."

FAC Comment II.A-5: Doubles players playing together for the first time shall be considered for a seed based on doubles results with other partners and on singles results.