



**Date: 2\15\2021**

**Time: 1:30 pm**

**Location: via Zoom**

**Call to Order – 1:35 PM**

**USAWNJ Members**

**Purpose of Meeting** – Update on the HS states\logistics for holding event

**Attendees-**

Jeff Dickman, Rick Puerto, Bryan Heller, Danny Franke, John Winkler, Desmond Kaplan, Dianna Barkman

**Scholastic-**

**Jeff** – Looks like we are getting the HS states. NJSIAA president still won't talk to him directly even though he has reached out to her. She tried to use Damon Logan as a go between but Jeff wants to talk to her personally. Jeff assumes they aren't going to do anything. The season starts with practice in just two weeks and competition starts on March 16. There is some confusion as to the end of the season and dates for districts, etc. The NJSIAA doesn't have a facility. Jeff has Sportika booked up for any possible dates that post season events could be held. Jeff also found out that we can use assistant coaches (i.e. Pat Pollard, Joe Dubuque) to corner the HS kids.

**Rick-** asked how many mats we can set up at Sportika

**Jeff** – said that he needed to check with Danny as to whether each screened off area could be considered its own venue for capacity purposes in order to comply with State mandates. Saying that each quarter can be allowed 150 people.

**Desi-**confirmed that for other states where he has run tournaments that has been the case. He also added that even though those areas can be cordoned off they don't have to be during the event.

**Jeff** asked Desi, given that parameters, can we run a 14 weight class 16 man bracket in 3 days.

**Comments** from Bryan and Rick were that we run 32 man brackets

**Jeff** explained that he is looking at the amount of time involved in a 16 man vs 32 man and running the tournament safely and well. Jeff is looking to run it with weigh ins and possibly a first round on Friday with following rounds on Saturday and Sunday

**Desi** replied that you could do a 16 man or 32 bracket in one day but will still be under the 5 match per day rule so you would need to do it in 2 days. There is an NFHS slide in rule that says you can do whatever you want in order to run your state tournament. The question is which rules you are going to follow. He explained that typically they have run the 32 man bracket by breaking down the weight classes in 3 sections (2 5 weight classes, and 1 4 weight classes) and run the tournament up to the end of a round up to semifinals. Second day would be semifinals to the end. That way we are eliminating wrestlers and not bringing so many back.

At this point Danny entered the meeting and Jeff posed the question as to whether Sportika is under any guidelines by the State as to dividing the space and cordoning it off in relationship to Covid capacity limits.

**Danny** stated that current limits are at 35%. Sportika has a capacity of 2496 which puts it at the 750 limit. They had been renting the space for practices, etc. with no spectators but as of 2\19 each participant will be allowed by the Governor to have 1 parent with him not exceeding the limit.

With that information **Jeff** asked Desi if it would be better to do a 16 or 32 man bracket.

**Desi** replied that both are doable. With 16 you could run it straight out and not be at capacity. 32 man brackets would be cutting it close. He felt that the best way would be breaking it up into weight class sessions (2 or 3) in order to bring the numbers down even more. It would be better from an optic standpoint to have fewer numbers in the building.

**Danny** agreed with Desi. Perception is very important. It gives the viewer the feeling that we are doing everything we can to limit the number of people congregating in the area at one time in order to hold a safe tournament.

**Jeff** polled the HS coaches at the meeting as to their preference of a 16 or 32 man bracket. Bryan was in favor of a 32 man bracket based on the difficulty of bracketing only 16 kids. It would also keep the complaints down. Jeff asked Bryan and Danny to speculate as to whether NJSIAA would be running districts and possibly regions. Jeff's criteria is based off of having districts and holding a 32 man bracket. Take the champion of each district. If there are regions we would take the top 4. Last Jeff heard NJSIAA was stopping at districts.

**Danny** answered that districts are happening barring any unforeseen circumstances. He thinks that there will be a region tournament but the debate is the number of wrestlers taken to qualify for it.

**Jeff** took a look at the calendar to see if dates were available to run a two day "qualifier" for the state tourney if there are no regions. He felt that only taking the champion from each district was not a fair way to go and we would receive a great deal of backlash.

**Rick** suggested taking the top 4 from the district and running it as a region.

**Jeff** spoke to with Damion Logan while he was texting the "boss lady" He said they definitely have time set up for districts but were struggling to find locations for regions.

**Danny** said they sent a survey out to schools. Some were willing to step forward but they needed to find schools that made sense.

**Bryan** brought up the issue of contact tracing citing an occurrence within his district that had the basketball team shut down for two weeks. One of the player on an opposing team was exposed to a student in his classroom that was positive and even though he, himself, did not test positive both teams were effected. That incident leads him to believe that it seems unlikely that wrestling can see two tournaments run without a large group of kids being left out. Contact tracing could wipe out an entire team or more of wrestlers.

**Jeff** asked Desi and Danny to comment on the matter. Desi is writing up the health and safety measures for another event that we will be using. Danny said the procedures at Sportika include temperature checks at the door, face masks required by everyone at all times-the only exceptions is those wrestlers who are actually competing on the mat, no congregating in the common areas-participants and spectators can sit in the bleachers, cleaning of bleachers occurs between sessions and the building is fogged twice a week to kill germs, and do their best to police the mask rule.

**Jeff** tasked Bryan to put together a list of the stuff we are doing health wise, so he can release the details of our health and safety plan and how we will be running the tournament to the State. He wants to squash the rumor that USAWNJ is all talk and that there isn't a plan in place.

**Bryan** will take Pete's plan that he has written up, summarize it in an email, and send it out to the group. He will include Danny on the email as well. We will make sure we are all on the same page before releasing it to the public.

**Rick** sought clarification from Danny as to the number of mats that can be run in the facility.

**Danny** gave dimensions of the area and figured you could put at least 16 mats in place. Jeff ran the space size with Cory and figured 22 uncomfortably and 18 with bleachers. Jeff suggested we just use 16-4 per quarter. He asked Desi if that would work.

**Desi** assured him that was more than adequate for what we are running. They also discussed time limits between matches. NFHS rules place a 45 minute rest period for wrestlers between their matches. Desi's opinion was that anything more than 12 for a 32 man bracket would not be time or cost effective. Cleaning

mats does not take that long and you would be reducing the number of mats for each succeeding round anyway. With mat rental at \$200+ per mat plus set up of equipment, and manning the tables, it makes more sense to just take 15 minutes to clean the smaller number of mats. It would be better for us to keep people from congregating on the unused mats.

**Jeff** feels that perhaps another conference call would be needed to figure out the criteria to be used.

**Discussion** centered on whether to use last year's placing at states, internal season record, or head to head competition as a starting point. Trackwrestling can be used to determine the head to head competition records. It also focused on who should be on the committee to help determine criteria. **Bryan** liked Pete's suggestion of nominating kids and having a committee made up of some HS and college coaches, USAW people and having established criteria for auto-qualifiers. For example, if a wrestler has 2 or more wins from last year's states they get an auto-bid, anyone who beats that kid head to head this season gets a bid, then see how many spots we have left. This would be similar to the way NCAAs are done. He suggested that without a region or even a district tournament you could still use that criteria to come up with a list of quality kids. We need to be careful with how we word the criteria for perception.

**Desi** stated that he is setting up the HS New England's in a similar fashion because of the novel situation with Covid. They also have a committee that had to work outside the normal metrics because you had some areas that didn't have a season at all. They have auto-qualifiers that submit their intention and are sent a registration link, after that the at large group goes to committee to secure their slot.

**Bryan-** talked about having the kids declare a weight class 2 weeks prior to competition (like districts) and cannot change.

**Danny** brought up the scenario of a freshman who is good enough to compete at the state level but is quarantined because of covid. How do you seed him?

**Bryan** suggested he comes up as a wild card and figure it out.

**Desi-**he comes in as an unseeded kid and if he pins his way through it is what it is in the covid year.

**Jeff** wants all of this done by the weekend (2/20/21). He charged Bryan with setting up a committee to iron it out. Possible members-Pete, Danny, keep the information from Desi He wants the perception that USAWNJ is working on figuring this all out and that we are serious about putting on a quality event. We are looking at about 10 weeks to 2 months to get this set up.

General consensus was that the NJSIAA will commit to doing states and if they have to pull the plug they will because of contact tracing issues. Danny's last conversation with them was that they want to put on states and they don't want to give it up. But they are struggling with logistics. Jeff asked if there was truth to the rumor that they wanted to work with us. Bryan felt that they wanted to use our plan but do it themselves. Jeff feels that will only help us look good in the eyes of the public. If NJSIAA does run states we will still hold a tournament for the non-qualifiers and give them a chance to compete one last time. Thoughts were also tossed out on the number of wrestlers that would be involved in a second chance tournament; looking perhaps to not allow spectators (i.e. parents) to give more kids a chance to compete. This topic will be revisited should the need arise.

**Jeff** summed it up.

- 1) Danny has the facility
- 2) We know how many people we can get into it
- 3) Desi and Danny have the health and safety protocols worked out
- 4) Bryan, Pete, Rick will work on a process to come up with criteria. Run it by Jeff before it's released.
- 5) Desi and Wink will work with Rick to look at numbers for the Kids States and create a plan for number of divisions\sessions that can be done. Original idea was to have a night session on Friday, 3 sessions on Saturday with breaks for cleaning and sanitizing

6) Rick and Jeff will work on numbers from previous years and considerations for having max participants.

7) Desi offered his expertise on running Covid related events of all sizes to Danny and USAWNJ in relationship to what works and what the pitfalls are in holding these events. Just reach out to him. It's imperative that we all work together from a liability standpoint to make this work. He stated that of utmost importance is that the plan we publicize is the plan we execute with no deviations; To deviate is basically running it in malice.

**This lead** to the following discussion:

This may mean extra staffing on the policing end, particularly the wearing of the masks properly. Jeff is already planning on bringing in his own extra security people and looking at possibly hiring Strike Force for additional help. Sportika has a retired police officer security company that they bring in when they need them also. Jeff has a possible total of 16 (4 per mat) but can utilize Sportika's security as well. Desi said those numbers would be fine and emphasized that it is more policing of the masks as mandated. Those tasked with policing the masks should have identifying attire and be seen doing their jobs so the perception is that we are vigilant in keeping the attendees safe and adhering to our policy and state mandates. Plan stands that Danny's guys will take the task of mask police and Jeff's security will take care of policing and cleaning the mats. Danny agrees. Desi related that one way that has worked well in previous events was to issue wrist bands and post a sign that says, "3 strikes and you're out!" Each time someone is cited for improperly wearing their mask their band would be marked with an X. Third time removes the offender from the venue. Desi stated that 100% of the time that approach was used there were 0 issues. Set the tone from the beginning, have signs posted in several places. Since it will be streaming everyone watching will see what is going on in the venue and it is imperative that we put our best foot forward since we represent USAW, USAWNJ and also Sportika.

**Jeff:** In the end we will follow all the protocols necessary to run a safe and compliant event. Added security, medical staff, etc. Desi offered to provide electronic waivers if we need them for every athlete. Waiver states that the wrestler\parent is aware that they are competing during a covid situation and take on the responsibility of their own health risks by digitally signing the waiver when they register. There are ways that we will be able to track that a waiver has been signed. Desi, Jeff, Rick, and Don will work out the details together. There is a possibility that we will use it for the Kids States also.

**Jeff** charged Bryan with getting the information out that kids\coaches\possibly parents (who plan on coaching) need to get their USAW membership cards. Desi also informed us that Flo has added a dropdown for floor passes that require parents to list their coach membership number in order to receive one. This is part of the registration process. At weigh in the athlete will receive his band and the floor pass band for his "Plus One" fan. It eliminates another point of contact at the venue, the hassle of collecting money, ties the athlete to the fan, and controls the number of people in the venue with no one sneaking in. Jeff wants to make sure we have written documentation that we are doing that so we can show how we are controlling numbers to meet state mandated requirements. Jeff wants our event to be seen in a very positive light.

**Please** keep Desi up to date with the plan and get info to him ASAP. He's swamped.

**Adjournment**– 2:37 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Dianna Barkman USAW ID: 111295101

Acting USAWNJ Secretary

**SECRETARY APPROVAL:**

*(Signature & Date)*

*Dianna R. Barkman 3/2/2021*

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