

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

WHERE WE WERE THEN, WHERE WE ARE NOW



As we prepare for the upcoming Winter Sports Championships, I am struck by where we were approximately one year ago to where we are today. In some ways, January, 2022, seems like it was a long time ago, but in actuality, it really is not. In looking back, we thought we might have been through the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was still at the forefront of many decisions that our schools and our office had to make. There were many member schools throughout our section who had to pause their Winter Sports in December and January due to COVID-19 affecting their programs. We extended the regular seasons for our Winter Sports, including allowing Sundays during the season as potential contest dates, to give our schools the maximum amount of time possible to ensure that all their regular season/league games were able to be played. Our January Executive Committee meeting, January Southern Section Council meeting and February CIF Federated Council meeting were all changed from in-person gatherings to a virtual format. Thankfully, none of those same issues are facing us at the present time and let us all hope that continues. With the 2023 Winter Sports Championships approaching rapidly, let's take stock of where we were then and where we are now.

Traditional Competitive Cheer

- 2022 – We were originally scheduled for our Traditional Competitive Cheer Championships on January 8, 2022, but with the COVID-19 surge going on at that time, we had to postpone that event until Saturday, February 5. Since we had to cancel this championship in 2021, we wanted to do everything we possibly could to not have to cancel it for the second year in a row. We had to do COVID-19 vaccination checks for all spectators prior to them entering the facility and all attendees inside the gymnasium had to wear protective masks. We had approximately 80 teams participate that day, less than we would normally have, due to the change in date and the effects of COVID-19 on our teams.
- 2023 – We are all set for our championships to be held on Saturday, January 21, at Martin Luther King High School in Riverside. We have 106 teams on the performance schedule, which is a record number for this championship, since we began in 2019. This event continues to build momentum each year and we are very pleased to see such a great response from our member schools.

Boys/Girls Dual Meet Wrestling

- 2022 – We debuted a new format where the first three rounds were contested at one venue on a Saturday, with the Championship Finals the following Wednesday at home sites.
- 2023 – This will be the second year of the format we adopted last year and believe we have enhanced the championship experience for everyone involved. The Championship Finals as a stand-alone competition, has become a much bigger event, as it should be.

Boys/Girls Masters Meet Wrestling

- 2022 – For the first time ever, we conducted our Girls Masters Meet Wrestling Championships in the exact same format as the Boys, with a two-day tournament to qualify our wrestlers for the CIF State Wrestling Championships. The Boys Championships were held at one venue and the Girls Championships were held at a different venue on the same weekend.

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Boys/Girls Masters Meet Wrestling (Cont.):

- 2023 – We are excited to debut a new format where we will hold both the Boys and Girls Masters Meet Wrestling Championships on the same weekend and at the same venue. Also, they will no longer be two-day tournaments, they will be one-day tournaments for each gender. Palm Springs High School will host the Boys Masters Meet Wrestling Championships on Friday, February 17, and the Girls Masters Meet Wrestling Championships on Saturday, February 18. What an incredible opportunity for all student-athletes, coaches, parents and Wrestling fans to be able to watch the best wrestlers that we have in the Southern Section compete in pursuit of their dreams to qualify for the CIF State Boys and Girls Wrestling Championships in Bakersfield.

Boys/Girls Basketball

- 2022 – Due to COVID-19 issues, we had all Championship Finals contested at home/host sites.
- 2023 – All Boys/Girls Basketball Championship Finals will be held at neutral sites, with 4 games: Open Division Boys and Girls and Division 1 Boys and Girls, being played at the Honda Center in Anaheim, and 16 games being played at Edison High School (new venue), Mira Costa High School (new venue) and Colony High School.

Boys/Girls Soccer

- 2022 – Due to COVID-19 issues, we had all Championship Finals contested at home/host sites.
- 2023 – Division 1 Boys and Girls and Division 2 Boys and Girls will have their championship contests at a new venue – Veterans Stadium on the campus of Long Beach City College, and Divisions 3-7 will be at home/host sites.

Girls Water Polo

- 2022 – Conducted our 7 Championship Finals utilizing two pools at our long-time home for these championships, the William J. Woollett Aquatics Center in Irvine. Of all our Winter Sports Championships last year, this is the one that was conducted as it usually was.
- 2023 – A challenge is facing us with a major construction project taking place at the Woollett Aquatics Center over the last few months. However, we are committed to returning there this year with the knowledge that one pool will be available, and if all goes according to plan, both pools will be ready to go. Regardless of whether there is one pool or two, we are glad to be back at our traditional venue.

The Winter Sports Championships are the busiest season of all the championship seasons that we have. 73 divisional championships, in 9 sports for Boys and Girls, will be awarded between January 21 and February 25. We persevered through many obstacles that were in our way in 2022 and look forward to an exciting and memorable Winter Sports Championships in 2023!

Thank you very much for your continued help and support, it is truly appreciated.

All the best,

Rob Wignel

