

The primary role of the CIAC Boys' Tennis Committee is to plan and execute the State Tournaments (Class and Open) that culminate our season. The committee's guiding principle is to identify the Team and Individual State Champions in Boys' Tennis in the fairest possible way. Appointed by the Connecticut High School Coaches' Association, the committee is made up of representative coaches from different conferences, sizes of schools and geographic locations around the state. Although this group has the authority to establish rules and guidelines for the State Tournaments, it reflects the will of the majority of coaches in the state.

Periodically, the issue of format for the Boys State Tournament comes up for review. The reason for this is that Girls Tennis changed their format several years ago to a team, head to head model from the kind of individual model that the boys have used for over 35 years. Since then, many coaches have wondered why we do not run the same format and some have requested that we do. Five years ago we conducted a survey, and by a vote of about 3 to 1, state coaches wished to keep our present format. However, only approximately 1/3 of eligible coaches voted.

The Committee felt that we should conduct another assessment of coaches' and athletic directors' preferences about the state tournament format, aiming for a greater response from them. This recent survey occurred less than two years ago (2011), and the survey questions and, generally speaking, the responses indicated a fairly even split about the two formats. There were more responses than the previous assessment, but few of these came from athletic directors. The Committee would like input from a broader base that includes AD's about their preferences for the boys tennis state tournament. We recognize that not all AD's have a full grasp of the issues and subtleties related to scholastic tennis. So, we have included a review of some of descriptive material about each format as well as the pros of each.

Current Boys Tennis Format

Class Tournament: 4 classes--LL, L, M and S. A team qualifies with a 50% record but a non-qualifying team may send some individuals based on the performances of the top 3 singles players and top 2 doubles teams. LL, L and M schools that qualify as teams may send either 5 singles and 2 doubles, or 4 singles and 3 doubles (it is important to note that currently some leagues play the 5 singles and 2 doubles format, while other leagues play a 4 singles and 3 doubles format). Schools in the S division that qualify as teams may send 3 singles and 3 doubles or 4 singles and 2 doubles (there is at least one league comprised of S schools that plays only 3 singles and 2 doubles). In each division, there are two events: a singles tournament and a doubles tournament (players play in one OR the other). Each tournament is a single-elimination event, with players scoring points for their team for each round won in both the singles and the doubles draw, with the total number of team points determining the Team State Champion in each of the four classes. The winning singles and doubles players are the Class State Champions. There is no head to head, team vs team competition.

State Open: The Boys Tennis State Open is smaller, comprised of the 32 semi-finalist singles players, and 16 finalist doubles teams from the Class tournaments in a single elimination event. The winners of each event are the Open Champions.

How the tournaments are run: The Committee meets after the entry forms are submitted to make draws for all of the tournaments (singles and doubles, 4 classes). This generally takes one day and is done at the CIAC office. Top singles players and doubles teams are seeded by committee, with both win-loss records and strength of schedule as major factors in the determination of seed. The class tournaments are held at separate sites and, on the first day, players miss a day of school (in which we complete the first and second rounds). The next round occurs on the weekend, maneuvering around SAT's, proms and graduations. The round of 16 and quarter-finals of the singles and the quarter- and semi-finals of the doubles are usually held on the following Monday, around 1:00, with semi-finals of the singles on Tuesday at 3:30 and Finals on Wednesday at 3:30. During the later rounds of the tournament, we try to use sites central to all teams, like Yale or Hamden, to minimize travel and time out of school. The Open is run on the next Saturday in New Haven, with the semi-finals of singles on Monday afternoon at 3:30 and Tuesday finals at 3:30, so no days of school should be missed.

Days out of School: one full day for most participants; one half day for about 128 players; two limited dismissals for 3:30 start times for about 16 players.

Travel Time: since large facilities are at a premium, travel to West Hartford occurs for 2 days (LL), 4 days (S); while both the L and M events are held in New Haven at Yale. New Haven and other more central locations are the destinations for other days of the tournament.

Current Girls Format

Class Tournament: Teams qualify with a 50% record, then are seeded by won-loss records. Teams play each other, head to head, in a 4 singles and 3 doubles format. The tournament begins on Tuesday after Memorial Day (first round at one o'clock; second round about 4), then continues Weds-Friday at 3:30. The 3 class champions (L, M and S) are the head to head winners on the day of the finals. There are no individual Class, State Champions.

State Open: Players qualify for the State Open by having a specific winning percentage at #1 or #2 singles or doubles through the entire season. (Players must play in the same position all season.) The qualifiers enter a single-elimination singles and doubles draw that spans three days. The first few rounds are determined by an 8 game pro set; the following rounds are traditional 2-3 sets.

How the Tournaments are Run: The Girls Committee meets after entries are submitted. Pairings for the Class Tournament are done by school record (Best record vs worst, etc). The Committee then seeds the large State Open. The head to head matches of the class tournament begin the Tuesday after Memorial Day with a double header, then run through Friday with all division championships held at Yale. The State Open is a three day event at Yale beginning that Saturday.

Days out of school: Partial days on Tuesday through Friday for a decreasing number of teams depending on travel. Partial days for a few on the following Monday and Tuesday for the state Open later rounds.

Travel Time: The home team is determined by the higher seed. On the first day that has two matches, a neutral site may be used, and all teams go to Yale for the finals on Friday. The State Open is held at Yale University on Saturday through Tuesday.

Arguments in favor of a Head-to-head Team Format in CIAC Tournament

1. Most teams will have reduced travel and time missed from school (since teams are eliminated as a whole).
2. There is no subjective judgment by the seeding committee for the seeding of teams in the class tournament. Teams are seeded strictly by their won-loss record.
3. Head-to-head competition creates more of a team atmosphere as matches are played at one site at the same time, with all team members (and fans) present.
4. The head-to-head format allows tournament champions to be determined by teams playing each other, rather than winning indirectly by allocating points to individual winners in the draw.
5. There are few conflicts with SAT/ACT and other end of the year activities
6. The head to head format is consistent with how matches are played during the regular season.
7. With no individual players from non-qualifying teams in the tournament, they cannot influence the outcome of the class tournament.
8. Problems with locating and paying for large facilities to host class tournaments are minimal.
9. All entries must play in the position they played for the regular season. Teams cannot shift lineups to allow singles players to play doubles in order to progress further in the doubles tournament or earn points for the team

Arguments in favor of an Individual Class Team Tournament Format in CIAC Tournament

1. Lineup issues (stacking or playing players out of order to gain an unfair advantage), which can occur in a head-to-head format, are eliminated. Players are seeded, and then match-ups are determined by draw.
2. A jamboree environment exists at an individual tournament where all players and coaches can be seen at one site, viewing many competitors in the same class.
3. Teams are encouraged to play a challenging schedule during the regular season and are not penalized for playing in a strong league. Teams are not rewarded for playing a weaker schedule in order to gain a higher seed.
4. Strong players from non-qualifying teams earn the opportunity to play in the class tournament by qualifying with superior records.
5. CIAC supervision (via site directors) is in place at every site for an individual tournament. This is not true for the head-to-head format due to the large number of sites used.
6. Players from weaker teams may have the opportunity to go beyond one round, depending on their draws. They may get to experience some success rather than a quick drubbing and departure.
7. An individual tournament has a degree of flexibility for scheduling individuals with school-related conflicts (SAT's, proms, etc).
8. Players do not have to maintain positions on qualifying teams, so that strong players can be held out of one-sided, head to head match-ups against weaker opponents. This allows more players from a given school to participate in matches at the varsity level during the regular season. Players may also move up or down the team's ladder during the season as they improve (as often is the case for players who do not play indoor tennis during the winter season).
9. The current differences in match format among conferences in the state may be accommodated in an individual event (i.e. 4-3, 5-2, etc). No standard format is required.