

High School Trac

High school track coaches agree that the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's move to two divisions in track has increased participation. The move has also brought another problem.

The state meet has grown so big that it is hard to handle with any degree of smoothness.

There were numerous delays in the meet at Raleigh last Friday, though the competition wound up only a little behind schedule. During the waits, the topic among coaches was nearly always the same: What is going to happen to track in North Carolina?

Everyone agreed the sport is growing. And just about everyone agreed that something is going to have to be done to handle the increasing number of participants. There the agreement ended. Few coaches had the same idea on how the state meet should be handled in the future.

TWIN CITY SENTINEL SPORTS

with

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There were three basic plans.

One was to divide the competition completely into Class I (for A and 2-A schools) and Class II (for 3-A and 4-A). The split would start in the sectionals with the meets held at different sites. And the state competition would also either be held at different sites or on different days.

Many coaches felt the business of running a Class I 100-yard dash and then a Class II was confusing. They

felt also that it detracted from the interest. Class I participants and fans were not interested in Class II—and vice versa.

At least one sectional director said he would not be willing to hold the meet in 1969 if he had to run off two meets in one.

"If we're going to do it this way," he said, "the Class I schools are going to have to run their own meet."

Almost without exception the larger schools like the split. Most of the small schools like it, too.

k's Growth in State

"It's better this way," said a coach of a small school with a fine track program. "We just cannot compete against the big schools year in and year out."

Another suggestion is to have eight district meets without classification. This follows the same plan as basketball. Team champions would be crowned in these meets, but only the winners in each event would advance to the state meet.

Competition in the state would be on an individual basis only.

A Charlotte Myers Park runner voiced one of the big objections to this proposal.

"I finished second in my event in the sectionals," said the lad. "If you did it that way, I wouldn't be here at the state meet."

Coaches who support this idea argue that only the district winners should go to the state basketball tournament in 3-A through A. Other teams might like to go but they know they cannot.

A third idea is to follow the golf program—that is set

certain standards for participation in the sectional meets. A golfer must have a certain handicap or he cannot take part in the sectional golf play. Only the top men advance to the state meet.

Several of the coaches felt it was not good to let boys who were not highly skilled to enter the sectional tournament. They argued it takes so long to weed out the mediocre boys that the the good boys get cooled off before they can compete.

"I had to wait so long between jumps," said one boy in the sectionals, "that I didn't jump nearly as well as I have during the season."

Of course, this would knock out a lot of youngsters from a chance to participate in the sectionals. But coaches who support this idea say that the

emphasis on participation should be in the regular season. Playoffs should be for the highly skilled.

There was quite a bit of sentiment to return the state

Creates Problems

meet to a high school track. Many coaches felt that it was time for the high schools to take over the responsibility of running their programs.

"When schools did not have

the facilities, we had to ask the colleges to help us. But now we should be able to do the job ourselves," said one coach.

The problem, of course, is to get a school to accept the responsibility. Putting on a track meet, particularly one as big as the state competition, takes a lot of work, planning and personnel.

And it is hard to estimate what is needed. At the state meet, the programs were gone before the meet began. At the night session, they ran out of tickets. It was a losing battle to keep spectators out of the infield and out of the way of the competitors. A football office secretary had to come back and work at night to get the mimeographed results out when the meet was over.

Individual sports such as track and wrestling are growing. And the State Board of Control at its June meeting is going to have to give serious consideration on how to handle these programs. What happens in track will be important because the same problem is coming in wrestling. At present, sectional and state tournaments are at capacity. And 80 more schools have indicated they will have wrestling teams next year.

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