

## Club Classification: An Explanation

The classification of Huskerland clubs for team awards at the annual tournament has long been debated and sometimes contentious. Several ideas have been used and I'll try to help you understand our current method and how it came about.

Initially, all clubs were placed in the same class as the NSAA placed the high school where they practiced. Over time, we found winning the team award took on an over-riding importance and some problems crept in. In some towns with a private and public school, there were 2 separate clubs all year – at least until Huskerland—when they merged and entered under one name. That effectively increased their entries to where they had a total greater than a usual club.

We also noticed a few phenomena taking place. One was the merging or co-ops of high schools in the state, but the wrestling clubs continued at each of the original schools, or in a town that no longer had a high school. The second was the rise of clubs with a regional membership well beyond the locale of their high school, and where some did not pretend to represent a single high school. Both these situations presented problems under the old method. A third showed us that annually, under the NSAA method, one club in each class typically had 5-10 more entries than the rest of the class. In that case everyone knew, just on entry numbers alone who was going to win the team award at the end of the tournament.

The first attempt to rectify this problem and force all clubs to win team trophies *on the mat* was the short-lived TTT system. A club could choose how to be classed, by school classification and only score those wrestlers declaring their intent to attend that high school, or in an open category and count every one. While the concept was good, it proved confusing to coaches and even us. Plus kids in grades lower than 7-8 aren't sure a lot of times just what high school they'll go to with the state allowing opt-ins to another district.

It comes down to the current board wanting to make competition as equal as possible by grouping clubs by entry number. We understand the thought of some directors that it is not their "fault" if they outnumber another club in the same class according to NSAA methodology and have twice as many entries as others. Some rightfully state that is only because of their efforts to go out and get kids and then do an excellent job of coaching. If they have 20 wrestlers and someone else only 10, it is directly due their excellence, and we really do understand.

But like the club whose home is in a town with no active school, this presents a problem where town tradition becomes a factor. Everyone who will read this can name a town that always excels in wrestling or another that always excels in basketball. In those places, no matter how good the coaching, a lot of young people will go play basketball.

So basically we have adopted a system that groups clubs with entries within 4-5 of each other. The wrestlers in all club classes must go out and win some matches for their club to win. While this may change in the future, and while we respect the opinions of those who feel differently, at this time the board, and myself especially, feel it is best to make competition for team awards as equal and fair as possible. The alternative would seem to be to hand out the awards before the first matches of the Huskerland tournament and I doubt that would be anyone's choice. Fred