

# Idaho keeps balls in play

Competition schedule is not likely to change; board OKs moratorium on new sports programs

By William L. Spence of the Tribune

Tuesday, April 14, 2009

BOISE - Despite shrinking school budgets, the group that governs high school sports is hoping to maintain the current number of athletic competitions next year.

At its April board meeting, the Idaho High School Athletics Association defeated a proposal to cut the number of games for all sports by 10 percent during the 2009-10 school year.

Reducing the competition schedule was one of several cost-saving recommendations the board has considered in recent months. Other options included reducing the state wrestling tournament from three days to two, and placing a two-year moratorium on all new sports programs.

John Billetz, executive director of the association, said the board agreed to the moratorium, which will prevent activities like lacrosse, swimming or bowling from being added to the list of interscholastic sports programs.

But the board was unwilling to reduce the competition schedule at this time.

"The feeling is that school districts have been looking at ways to reduce costs on their own, and some have been very successful," he said. Moreover, districts will have a better idea where they stand on property tax revenue and possible supplemental bonds later this spring.

Consequently, the board agreed to keep the 10 percent reduction on its discussion agenda - meaning it could still take action on the proposal - but doesn't think it's necessary to do something right now.

The Legislature's joint budget committee recently approved a \$1.31 billion general fund budget for K-12 education. That was off \$109 million, or 7.7 percent from fiscal 2009. The committee used \$60.6 million in federal stimulus money to offset much of the effect, but there was still a net decrease in available state support to about \$49 million. That makes this possibly the first time that state funding for schools has dropped from one year to the next.

---

*Spence may be contacted at [bspence@lmtribune.com](mailto:bspence@lmtribune.com) or (208) 848-2274.*