

Hi Sherry:

Here is the document I promised for distribution to the TMC.

I'm not sure that this is just a vocational issue, as had been listed on the agenda/notes for previous meetings. It has more to do with the tournament experience, given the distances schools are now traveling.

The attention to detail for travel and overall experience was a major selling point that was offered by the 4-person committee at meetings to explain the statewide tournament coming out of COVID. If anything, the possible solutions should at least be examined in detail to see if feasible.

Thank you,

Mike

Good Morning:

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to address the Tournament Management Committee.

Let me preface my comments by saying this topic has nothing to do with competition or anything that takes place on the playing field. It has everything to do with the management of the event with regard to scheduling, travel, start time, and safety of those participating in the statewide tournament event, especially the visiting school. It also touches on the organization and setting of reasonable and/or consistent cut-off dates and bracket releases for the management of contests.

Blackstone Valley Tech was to travel to Danvers for a Division 5 Football contest. I can't express how accommodating Danvers Athletic Director Drew Betts was throughout the entire process leading up to and following the contest. The collegiality was top-notch and much appreciated, with multiple days of communication, as it should be in this statewide format.

Communication began Sunday evening and was followed-up Monday morning via phone. Having previous experience while traveling a similar route to Stoneham just two years prior for a Football matchup, I requested a 6 pm start time, due to the necessity of departing Upton by 3:15 pm to beat the traffic. Unfortunately, Soccer brackets had not come out yet and rightfully so, Drew (Danvers AD) was concerned that he might have a Friday afternoon Soccer contest. So, once again the collegiality was present and given the unknown, we had to set the game time for 7 pm.

Blackstone Valley Tech traveled to Danvers for a 1<sup>st</sup> round 5-12 matchup in Division 5 Football. By bus this is a 1 ½ hour to 1:45 minute trip depending on traffic. After eating dinner at 3 pm and departing school at 3:15 pm to beat the traffic we arrived 2+ hours prior to kickoff, and then sat in Danvers High School for 1 hour prior to being able to suit up and get on the field. Once again, Drew Betts was accommodating for providing our team with an area to settle.

The long and short of it was that Danvers did not have a Girls Soccer game. The Football game could have been played with a 6 pm start and my student-athletes would not have had to arrive home past midnight to 1 am as Junior Operator's in a motor vehicle.

This is a concern given our sending districts within the Blackstone Valley encompass 60 square miles. Many of the roads that these Junior Operators travel on do not have street lights and are extremely dark in the late evening and early morning hours. I hope you would agree that any student-athlete traveling home past midnight is a concern for any and all school officials.

There is a lot to unpack here, but to be fair and attempt to provide solutions to the issue brought forward, I would like TMC to examine/discuss any of the following possible solutions:

1. Same-day cut-off dates across the boards in all sports in the Fall season (suggestion – Sunday following Week 8 of Football).
2. Same-day Bracket Release for all sports to assist in Athletic Directors handling of contest scheduling and management. Especially Athletic Director's that are tasked with hosting multiple preliminary and/or 1<sup>st</sup> Round Contests in various sports. Some Athletic Director's would even like to have the brackets 2 hours earlier than the public, just to assist in scheduling.

3. On the Friday of all statewide tournaments, if a school is hosting Friday Football, only First Round Football playoff contests are to be played at the host school on Friday (afternoon or evening), unless circumstances warrant a Saturday Football contest. This allows for 6 pm Football start times on Friday, addresses schools traveling a significant distance, assisting with traffic and safety concerns with travel, as well as well as significant wait time prior to the contest.

In advance, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Denise  
Blackstone Valley Tech  
Athletic Director