

OHSAA TENNIS

FOUR EQUAL DISTRICTS PROJECT

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The change in the Division 2 District structure released during the 2009 Girls Tennis season was a concern for many in the tennis community. Not only did it make little sense from the seeding and travel perspectives, but the non-transparent decision also left many wondering what had happened.

The move from four to five Districts gave Division 2 five "number one" and five "number two" seeds. That, all by itself, was a major concern because it is not possible to make that work effectively in a draw. While there are certainly good players from the Central, East, and Southeast Districts who deserve to go to States, rarely would these three districts have the quality of players to deserve two "number one" and two "number two" seeds.

From a logistics standpoint, it also required some schools travel much further. Some schools in the East District had to drive through Columbus, plus two more hours to get to Portsmouth for their district competition. (Click [here](#) for one example.)

Tennis needs to move to four equal districts, but before digging into tennis, let's first look at wrestling. Wrestling is extremely similar to tennis because it is an "athlete-versus-athlete" sport. Just as with tennis, the opponent is the "track" or the "golf course". It is also largely an individual sport within a team sport. More importantly, those participating in wrestling profess that it is done extremely well in Ohio. Since wrestling already has four equal districts, it shows what is possible and what is permissible per the OHSAA.

Wrestling's Districts

The map to the right shows all 597 wrestling schools. They are grouped based on their actual districts. The number of schools in each division are: D1 - 181; D2 - 189; and D3 - 226.

The number of schools in each district are:
Central - 87; East - 46; Northeast - 182;
Northwest - 115; Southeast - 32; and
Southwest - 135. (The legend for the various districts is included at the bottom of the map.)

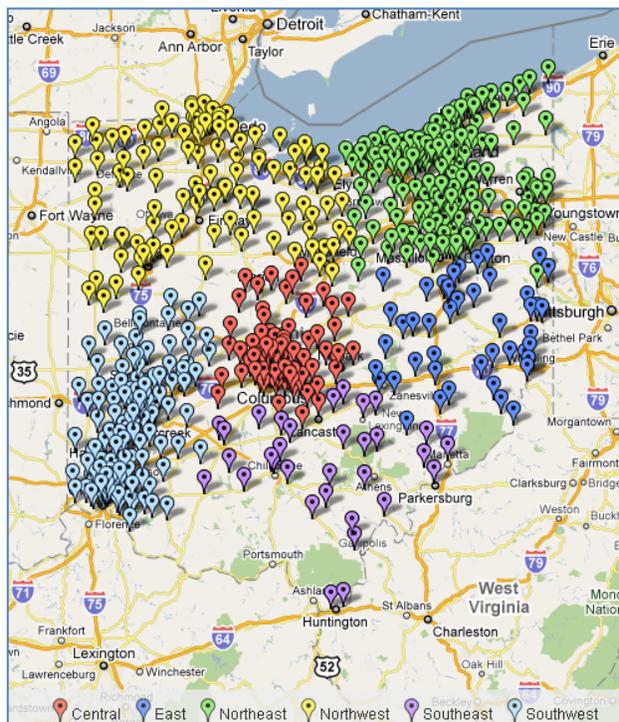


Figure 1 - Map of All Wrestling Schools by Home District

The Central District is the smallest in area while the Northwest and Southeast Districts are likely the largest.

Please note that it is highly recommended that this document be read online. All maps are hyperlinked and clicking on the various markers will provide the school name. Readers may also zoom-in or enlarge the type to make it easier to read.

The next map shows how all wrestling schools are grouped into four equal districts for qualifying for States. While this map looks chaotic, it was important to include it. Early in the process of this "Four Equal District" project, it was explained to me that the district lines needed to be the same for each division and for each county. That is clearly not the case. There are no district "lines".

The various division maps add more clarity but additional comments are still necessary.

The division 1 map below shows that the Northwest is really a combination of the Northwest and Northeast District schools. It also shows an interesting approach to deal with schools in the Southwest District. The schools in the Southwest, identified with the blue markers, are split by their sectional. There are two sectionals combined in the Centerville Sectional. The schools, which select to wrestle in [Centerville 1](#), travel to the Division 1 District Tournament at Central's Hilliard Darby.

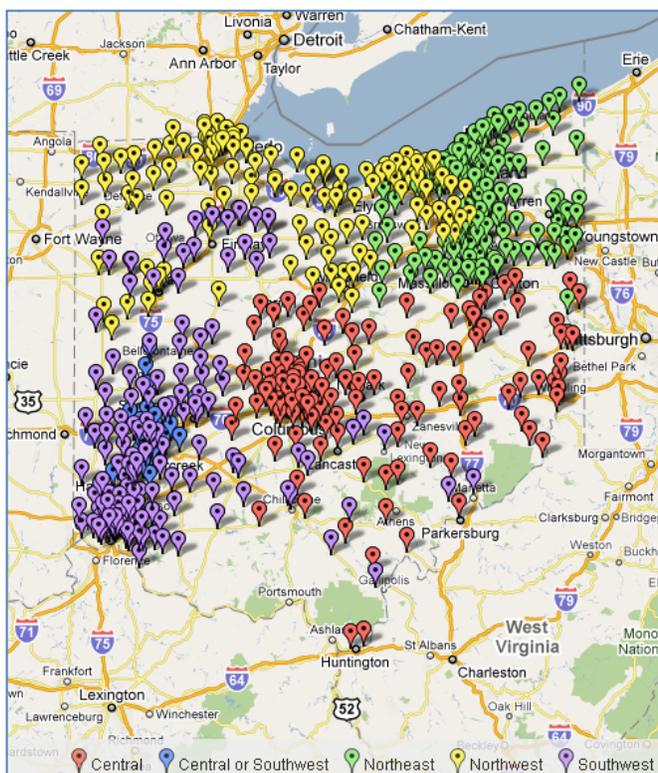


Figure 2 - Wrestling Schools by Wrestling Region or District



Figure 5 - Wrestling Schools in Division 1



Figure 4 - Wrestling Schools in Division 2



Figure 3 - Wrestling Schools in Division 3

As for wrestling's Division 2 and 3, Division 2 is rather straightforward with all districts. Southwest's Division 3 was puzzling at first because of the large number of schools included, but it was explained to me that many of those schools do not field full teams so they are not included in Southwest's count of schools.

Now that it is clear what the limitations are (and there do not appear to be any limitations), let's move onto tennis.

Tennis Districts

The map to the right shows the Ohio schools with tennis programs, grouped by district.

The number of schools in each division are D1 - 201 and D2 - 211. These two divisions are similar in size to the divisions that the wrestlers have.

The number of schools in each district are: Central - 70; East - 9; Northeast - 134; Northwest - 70; Southeast - 19; and Southwest - 110.

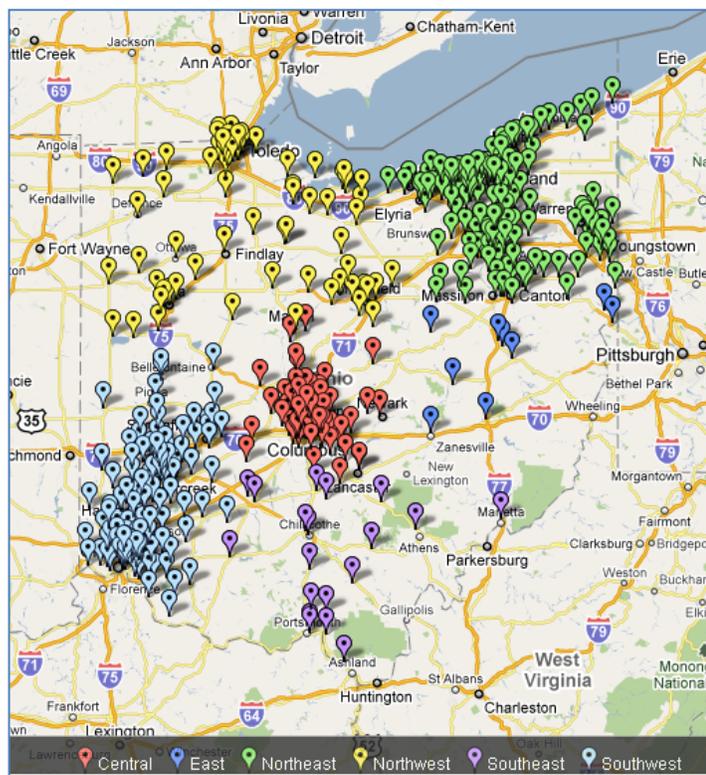


Figure 6 - Tennis Schools Grouped by District

The following maps show the tennis schools based on division and district. Note that in Division 1, the Central, East, Southeast Districts are grouped. In Division 2, the East and Southeast Districts team-up to create their own district. Note that the long travel distance in division 2 is certainly no longer an issue for some schools. As stated before, this [link](#) provides the directions for the 258 mile, four hour and 48 minute drive from the Beaver Local High School to Portsmouth for the district tournament.

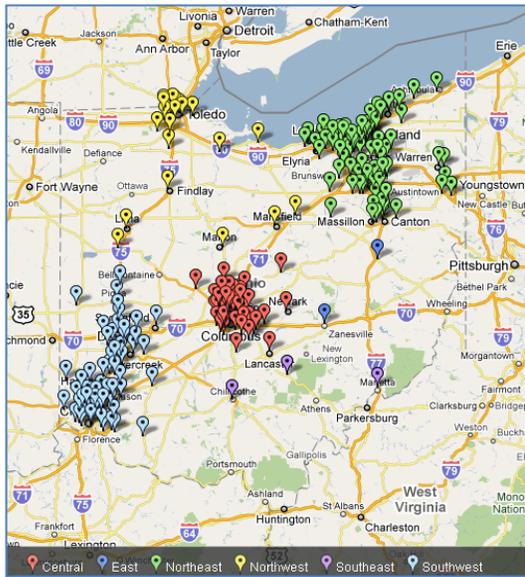


Figure 7 - Tennis Schools in Division 1

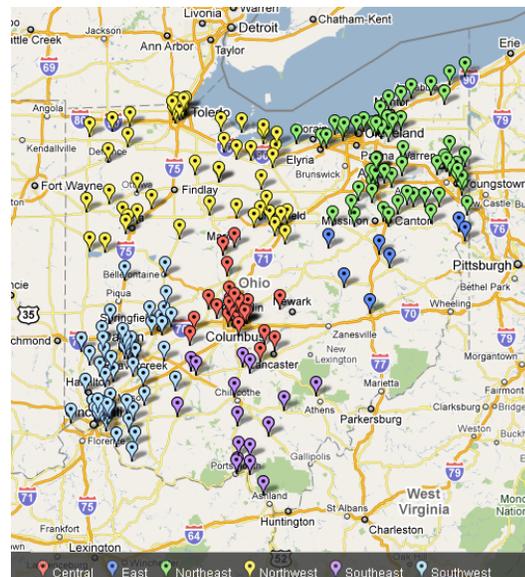


Figure 8 - Tennis Schools in Division 2

The following two maps are the various sectionals that make-up the Division 1 tournaments in the Southwest and Central Districts. Please note that some of these sectionals are "combination-sectionals". In the Central District, the schools in the Hilliard Davidson, Upper Arlington, and Pickerington Central Sectionals combine and seed the various teams. These teams then select the sectional in which they would like to play. This is also done in Division 2 with the Columbus Academy and the Columbus School for Girls sites. Personally, I think this is a great way for the coaches to improve the odds that the best players get to Districts / States. Coaches may also select the closest sectional to reduce travel times. This approach is also done in wrestling.

(Please note that limitations in the software prevented all of the districts to be shown on one map.)

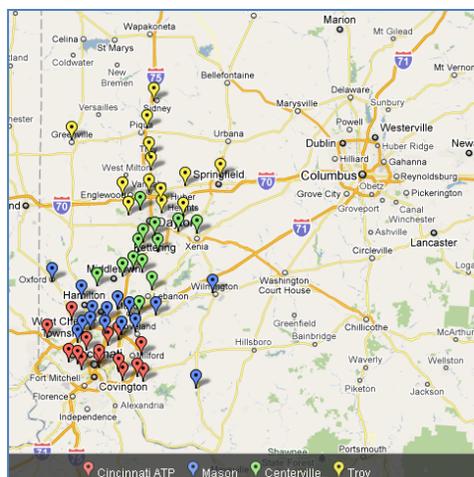


Figure 9 - Tennis D1 - Southwest

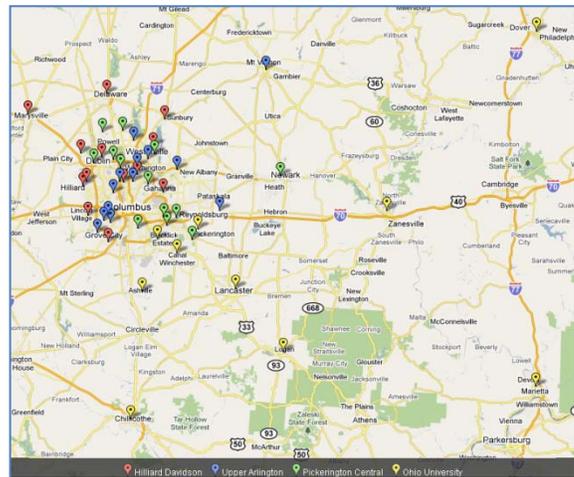


Figure 10 - Tennis D1 - Central, East, Southeast

The following maps are for the Northwest and Northeast. The Northwest has far fewer schools per sectional and the Northeast has far more schools per sectional.



Figure 11 - Tennis D1 - Northwest



Figure 12 - Tennis D1 - Northeast

The Division 2 school maps are as follows:



Figure 13 - Tennis D2 - Southwest

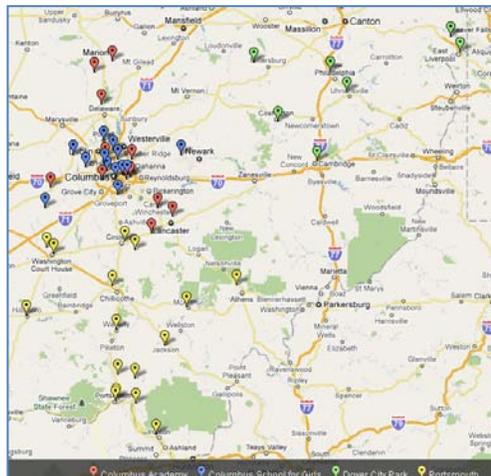


Figure 14 - Tennis D2 - Central, East, Southeast

These are Division 2 schools in the Northwest and Northeast Districts.



Figure 16 - Tennis D2 - Northwest



Figure 15 - Tennis D2 - Northeast

Other Considerations

Before jumping into the recommendations, it is important to take a few other things into consideration before determining what is best for tennis in the State of Ohio and for the athletes who deserve to go to States.

It is an enormous honor for any athlete to be given the honor to compete at a state tournament. To get to States, you have to work extremely hard (typically year-round) in your chosen sport (and it helps to have a bit of luck). While the process will never be completely "fair" on who earns a spot for States, it is not in tennis' best interest to make it extremely "unfair". It is also not in any sports' interest to have a competitor who is humiliated or embarrassed in state competition.

To better understand how valuable a "States Spot" is, let's first look at wrestling. There are 672 State wrestling "spots" (14 weight classes * 16 wrestlers * 3 divisions). There are wrestlers in 597 schools that are vying for these 672 spots. That works out to roughly 1.1 spots per school. In tennis, there are only 96 State spots ((16 singles + 32 doubles) * 2 Divisions) but there are over 400 schools. That works out to 0.24 spots per school. To be on par with wrestling, tennis would need to have 450 spots for States or roughly nine divisions. Obviously, these are pretty ridiculous numbers but it clearly makes the point that getting to States in tennis is an *extremely* huge honor and the kids who are at States need to *deserve* to be there. It is a disservice to the athletes and to the sport to use a gerrymandered approach to obtain one of the 16 singles or doubles spots -- these tennis spots are far too valuable for that.

Another consideration is the humiliation factor. After watching some of the players at the last two State Tournaments, it is clear how quickly they realized that they did not deserve to be at States. You could see it in their eyes and you could see it in the crowd as their collective chins drooped lower and lower as they got pummeled point after point. Imagine a basketball team getting beat 120 to 10 at the Schottenstein Center and it becomes clearer what some of these

kids and their fans went through. Thankfully for these humiliated athletes, the scoring system in tennis does not clearly reveal what happened since not all points are recorded. Still, it is worth asking the question -- is getting an easy path to States worth the humiliation when you get there?

Why is there more disparity in talent among districts at States for tennis versus other sports? In tennis, it is extremely important that athletes have the ability to practice year-round and it is mandatory that they have a critical mass of opponents with whom they can train. While every athlete in every school has easy access to a road for cross country training or a gym for basketball, only the urban areas have an abundant supply of indoor tennis courts and a critical mass of other players. All districts need a large urban area in their territory.

Obviously, humiliation is one concern but a greater concern is with safety. Some of these girls who play doubles have not seen the level of pace that is possible at States. Some of these balls come back like missiles, especially the returns. The net players are at risk if they have not been exposed to this level of pace.

Recommendations:

- Invite two wrestling experts into the discussion and get their recommendations. They have gone through all of this before and they can save the tennis committee a substantial amount of time. (It is also worthwhile to note that at one point, wrestling moved from a four to a five district approach. However, they quickly reversed course (within one year -- not two) when they realized it was impossible to seed the wrestlers.)
- Create four equal districts (or regions) with approximately 50-55 schools in each. Primarily use the same sectionals as what is in place now, but note that some of the existing sectionals are too large and others are too small.
- Specific changes to D1 could include:
 - Northwest District. Move the Northeast's Oberlin Sectional (20 schools) to the Northwest, as well as four to six of the western-most schools in the other Northeast Sectionals. Move four to six schools from the Southwest District to the Northwest. The Northwest District would receive four spots for States.
 - Northeast District: Convert the three remaining Northeast sectionals into four sectionals of ~12 schools each. The Northeast would receive four spots for States.
 - Southwest District: Move four to six schools from the Southwest District along I-75 to the Northwest District.
 - Central: Two to three schools could be moved from the Southwest's most eastern and/or northeastern borders along I-75 or I-70 to the Central District. Central would receive four spots for States.
- Division 2 changes could include:

- Central, East, and Southeast: Central could once again include the East and Southeast Districts. However, the Portsmouth Sectional is too large and the Dover Sectional is too small. Dover could acquire four to six more schools from the Northeast's sectionals. Some of the schools in the Portsmouth Sectional could be moved into the Central-area Sectionals. Central would receive four spots for States.
 - Northwest District: The Northwest could acquire four to six schools from the Northeast's western-most sectionals. These schools would play at Shelby High School and Port Clinton's VonThron-Hablitzel Tennis Center. Northwest would receive four spots for States
 - Southwest District: No changes are necessary. They would continue to receive four spots for States.
 - Northeast District: After the changes with the Northwest and the Central, East, and Southeast Districts, Northeast could adjust their sectionals to make them all smaller. The Northeast would receive four spots for States.
- Encourage the sectionals in each district to group together and use the Central's "combination-sectional" approach. This gives the schools more flexibility to select the best sectional for them. Some schools may select a sectional based on the ones that are closest to them geographically while others may pursue an approach that increases the likelihood that their players can get into Districts and/or States. Either way, "combination-sectional" approaches are perceived to increase the odds that the most deserving players get to States.

Changes are long overdue. The Northwest has been pursuing four equal districts for years and this should have been done years ago. While the changes made a year and a half ago were very unfortunate for some very deserving athletes, it brought some very necessary attention and urgency for changes to occur. Just as the wrestling organization did for their athletes, please consider what is best for all of the tennis players in the State.

It is also recommended that tennis not wait until next fall to implement changes. Let's get these done in time for the boys season this spring.

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Additional Comments: Note that some of the school addresses may be in error and / or Google may not show the correct address. Please send me an email or submit a feedback with any corrections. Also note that the schools listed are primarily those with girls programs. If necessary, the boys programs can be added.

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