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MHSNSCA

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MINNESOTA HIGH SCHOOL NORDIC SKI COACHES ASSOCIATION
2021 STATE MEET PROPOSAL

MSHSL Staff and Board Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota High School Nordic Ski Coaches Association (MHSNSCA), I would like to thank you for your approval to allow a 2021 tournament for Nordic Skiing. The State Meet is the pinnacle of many students' high school skiing careers, and our hope as coaches is to offer guidance and input on the format for this year's race. We believe our proposal meets Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) COVID safety guidelines and still provides our athletes with the same opportunity to qualify and compete in the State Meet they would have any other year.

The current proposal for the 2021 Nordic State Meet is to hold a one-day event at Giants Ridge Ski Resort with participation limited to 88 skiers for each separate Boys and Girls competition. While we recognize the need to meet MDH guidelines, the MHSNSCA believes an alternative format is the safest and most equitable option to hold this year's State Meet. Other higher risk winter sports have not seen a reduction in their participants or competition format. We believe that safely increasing State Meet qualifiers can be achieved without compromising student athlete health and safety. Increasing the number of qualifiers per Section and maintaining a standard race course length and format is thus a top priority for the MHSNSCA.

Our proposal is for a two-day Nordic Skiing State Meet that would allow separate days for Boys and Girls competition, matching the format used in the fall for Cross Country Running section championships. A two-day format allows for two individual interval races: a Classical 5km in the morning and Freestyle 5km in the afternoon. We recognize that the traditional pursuit start in the afternoon does not allow for proper social distancing, and suggest that for this year the separate Classical and Freestyle race times be combined to determine 2021 individual State Champions and team scoring. Most importantly, a two-day State Meet would allow for standard Section qualification of the top two scoring teams and six additional individual skiers. We recommend keeping the State Meet at Giants Ridge as scheduled, but propose having Grand Avenue Nordic Center in Duluth as a backup location if an early spring thaw imperils snow conditions.

We recognize the unique challenges facing MSHSL throughout this pandemic. It is impossible to make everyone happy or have a “normal” end to our ski season. In a year unlike any other, our primary goal as coaches has been to provide our student athletes with the best experience possible while safely leading them through a time of great change. This proposed format allows for a safe event with flexible scheduling while providing our student athletes and teams with the same opportunity to qualify as they would any other year. The MHSNSCA is ready to assist MSHSL staff and board members as needed to make this proposal a reality, including any financial assistance associated with a two-day State Meet.

This proposal is the result of input received from Nordic Ski coaches across the state and designed by the MHSNSCA Executive Committee. I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss the 2021 Nordic Skiing State Meet Format.

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