

Background, Structure, Team Selection Process and Player Eligibility

The Wisconsin State Invitational Championship Tournament ("WSICT") is an annual event for 5th through 8th grade teams, played between mid-February and mid-April, with the event for each grade on one weekend (Saturday and Sunday), with different dates and locations for each grade. All teams invited to the WSICT for the first time are extended oral invitations (over the phone) in the fall and winter preceding the next spring's events. Teams that have played in, and were competitive in, the event the previous year, and are in compliance with all tournament rules regarding All Tournament Team ballots, liability waivers, eligibility requirements, etc., are extended written invitations in late September or early October preceding the WSICT tournaments the next spring. For the teams that do not qualify (either because they aren't sufficiently strong or are not true high school feeder teams as provided for by our eligibility rules), this posting will hopefully help coaches understand the selection process before contacting us about entering the tournament. For those teams that are very competitive and are single-school district feeder teams, this posting will answer some basic questions and assist in streamlining the application process.

History of Tournament

The tournament was first organized in 2001 by The Great Northwest Basketball League ("GNBL"). Our motivation in starting the tournament was to provide an opportunity for the best teams in the area covered by the GNBL (northern, western and central Wisconsin) to have the opportunity to play the best teams from the rest of the state. The 2011 WSICT held in the spring of 2011 was our 11th annual tournament. The size of the field has grown from 215 total teams in six grades (6th, 7th and 8th grade boys and girls) in 2001, or about 36 teams per grade, to 686 teams in 2011 for eight grades (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade boys and girls). The field each year for grades 6th, 7th and 8th grade is usually somewhere in the 80s or low 90s (teams per grade). The two 5th grade tournaments are somewhat smaller – not because of less interest – but because it is more difficult for us to

identify the best teams in the state at this younger age level, so we end up inviting fewer teams. Our target field size for the 2012 fifth grade tournaments are between 72 and 76 teams per grade/gender. Results of all eight 2011 WSICTs can be viewed on this website by clicking "Wisconsin State Invitational Championship Tournament." The score of every pool and play-off game is listed, as well as the All Tournament Team in each division. Scoring information and All Tournament Team selections can also be viewed for previous WSICTs by clicking on "WSICT Archives."

Tournament Format

Each team at the WSICT plays no less than six games – no more than seven games – in a two-day event (Saturday and Sunday only; there are no Friday games). All WSICTs are held somewhere in central Wisconsin. In past seasons, the field in each grade was divided into three or four divisions. We have tried, in the past, to track with the five (previously four) WIAA divisions and have the same number of divisions in the WSICT as well. However, at most previous WSICTs, there has been competition at one less division than in the WIAA, because we have been unsuccessful attracting a sufficient number of competitive Division 5 (previously Division 4) programs. When that has happened, we have organized four divisions: Division 1, 2 and 3, tracking directly with the WIAA parameters on school size, and a combined Division 4/5 field. We occasionally will move a team down or up one division (we only do that with a team's permission) in order to get a manageable number of teams in each division for pooling purposes. When asking teams to do this, our sole factor is size of high school enrollment (not perceived team strength), so that school districts of comparable size play only other communities their relative size.

Dates and Locations of 2012 Events

The dates and locations of the eight 2012 WSICTs are listed below:

8th grade boys, March 24 and 25, 2012, in Stevens Point (Divisions 1, 3 and 4/5 teams) and Merrill (Division 2).

7th grade boys, March 31 and April 1, 2012, in La Crosse.

6th grade boys, April 14 and 15, 2012, at De Pere, West De Pere, Ashwaubenon and Wrightstown.

5th grade boys, April 14 and 15, 2012, at Kimberly and Menasha.

8th grade girls, March 31 and April 1, 2012, in Stevens Point.

7th grade girls, April 14 and 15, 2012, co-hosted by Wausau East, D. C. Everest (Schofield) and Marathon.

6th grade girls, February 25 and 26, 2012, co-hosted by Merrill, Wausau West and Marathon.

5th grade girls, February 18 and 19, 2012, at Neenah, Appleton East and Little Chute.

Eligibility Rules

The most often asked question by coaches is: what do I need to do to demonstrate that my team is strong enough to play in this tournament? While team strength is a critical part of the selection process, the first criterion is player eligibility. Every year there are a number of strong teams that we must decline because their players live in multiple school districts. While parochial schools (which have no territorial districts) are welcome to participate in the WSICT, the eligibility requirements for non-public schools in this tournament are as stringent as those for public school, with all players required to attend a feeder school of the same denomination within the high school's geographic drawing area. We also provide exceptions for students currently open-enrolled at a different public school district than the one in which they currently live. We do NOT, under any circumstances, consider where an older sibling attends or attended a particular high school, or where parents say they are planning to send a son/daughter to high school (unless he/she is already open enrolled by the time of the 8th grade WSICT for a player going into 9th grade in 2012-2013). For a very detailed discussion of tournament player eligibility requirements, see WSICT Rule 12, which can be accessed on this website by clicking on "2012 WSICT Rules." We also encourage coaches who anticipate that they want to apply for entry into the 2012 WSICT to read all the rules, especially those relating to game situations.

Selection Process

In deciding which teams to invite to the WSICT, tournament organizers spend a great deal of time researching the strength of potential invitees. That includes:

- Monitoring traveling league website results and standings. Most of the larger traveling leagues in the state (e.g. The Great Northwest, Tri-County, YGSBL, WYBL, etc.) maintain websites that post standings and/or game results. We monitor these on a weekly basis during the fall/winter season. For older grades (i.e., 6th, 7th and 8th), we will also take a look at last season's results. If you coach a team that plays in a smaller league that maintains a website that is actively updated with game results, let us know what that website is by e-mailing us at: *terri@gnbl.org* and we will check it out. We only monitor leagues that are organized on an A/B basis, or where the communities participating field only one team. We will not monitor leagues where participant communities have multiple, evenly-divided teams, because the results of games involving such teams do not accurately reflect the relative strength of a community's "A" team once the strongest players are put together on one team.
- Recommendations from alum coaches. The coaches of the 686 teams that attended one of the 2011 WSICTs were asked to complete a form recommending younger teams (last season's 4th grade) from their community, that they feel would be sufficiently strong to play in the 2012 WSICT. That form also asked them to recommend teams from their grade, or other grades, from different communities.
- Varsity coaches and tournament directors. Throughout the year, we talk to many varsity coaches and tournament directors about strong teams in their area that they have seen.
- Peer coaches. Every time we invite a new team to one of the WSICTs, particularly for the incoming 5th grade teams, we ask him/her to identify the six or seven best teams he/she saw last season or this season. Once we hear about a team for the second or third time from peer coaches, we add that team's coach to our call list.

Coaches who follow the process outlined in the three bullets below are welcome to initiate the enrollment process. Such overtures should be directed to Jerry Engeleiter at 715-549-6161 or via e-mail at jerry@gnbl.org. If you call or e-mail, do not do so until you are prepared for the following:

- One of the team's coaches (not a parent, scheduler or team manager) must call initially so we can ask questions about opposing teams played.
- If sending an e-mail, or leaving a voice mail, identify the specific public high school or private high school into which your youth team feeds. If you say you are from the Milwaukee "area," or you are from "Green Bay" or "Madison," (when we don't know which of the numerous high schools in those communities your team feeds into), we will not respond.
- If you coach a 6th, 7th or 8th grade team, look at the 2011 State Tournament results for your grade level and be prepared to discuss which of those tournament participants you played last season and how you did. If you coach any grade (including 5th) and you contact us after the 2011-2012 season has started, also be prepared to discuss game results against the best teams you played this season.

Application Process

The application process for the 2012 WSICTs will work as follows:

- Teams that played in the 5th, 6th or 7th grade WSICT for their gender in 2011 and who did not lose multiple games in their tournament by large margins (20 points plus), will receive an enrollment packet in the mail in mid to late September. Teams that finished in approximately the top 75% of the preceding season's field are guaranteed a spot for the 2012 WSICT, provided they've met all eligibility and other tournament requirements (i.e., submission of All-Tournament Team Ballots, completion of Liability Waivers for all players, etc.). Teams that finished in approximately the bottom 25% of the previous year's field will compete for the remaining spots in the 2012 field with new teams that are applying in 2012. Where new teams to the field can show that they are decidedly stronger than the approximately bottom 25% of the previous season's field – the new team will be

added to the field. However, where the newly-applying team is not apparently stronger than a lower-finishing team from 2011, the team that played in the 2011 tournament will get preferential treatment.

- Teams from eastern, southern or south central Wisconsin that were not invited to a 2011 WSICT, whether we invite them for 2012, or they contact us to initiate the application process as described above, will be sent enrollment packets if the coach makes a compelling case for their level of competitiveness. If that contact happens after October 1, 2011, packets will be mailed the day after that conversation. If the contact happens before October 1, 2011, the packet will be mailed at the same time as it is sent to teams that attended in 2011. See the previous bullet for a discussion of how enrollment applications from newly-applying teams are considered relative to returning teams. For 5th grade teams, where there are no returning teams, obviously this comparison process is irrelevant.
- Teams that were invited to a previous WSICT (2009, 2010 or 2011) and declined, or didn't respond to the invitation, will in most cases not be sent an enrollment packet for 2012 unless the coach of that team first calls us (the enrollment packets are voluminous and there is no reason to send one unless previous interest has been shown). Teams that have declined a previous invitation can contact us as described above. See the first bullet of this section for a discussion of how enrollment applications from newly-applying teams are considered relative to returning teams. If you coach an "excellent" or "very good" team that declined a previous invitation, getting into the field on a second-chance basis, shouldn't be that difficult. However, teams that are "good" (as compared to "very good" or "excellent"), but would likely not have finished in the top 75% of their division's field at last spring's WSICT, will find it more difficult to get into the field, because in those cases preferential treatment will be given to teams that played in 2011 and to those that didn't previously decline an invitation.
- GNBL teams (note: if your community's teams are not in the area covered by the GNBL, this bullet does NOT apply to you). Teams in communities from northern, western and central Wisconsin that are located in the area covered by

the GNBL, must play at least three dates in the GNBL to represent the GNBL at the WSICT. GNBL teams that play in the 6th, 7th or 8th grade League Championship Tournament ("LCT") and do well relative to their school size, will be accepted into the WSICT field. Those that do poorly at the LCT, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis (e.g., finishing 25th at the LCT may be an acceptable showing for a Division 4/5 community, but not necessarily for a Division 1 community). GNBL teams that decline to play in the LCT, will not be included in the WSICT field. GNBL teams that were not invited to the LCT because they either did not play in the League in 2010-2011, or were not ranked in the Top 32, can still prove that they are strong enough to be considered for the WSICT, but that decision will be based entirely on 2011-2012 GNBL performance. GNBL 5th grade teams that register as an "A" or "B+" team, will be contacted once scheduling has been completed for that grade, but with a proviso that ultimate acceptance into the field will be based on actual performance at the A/B+ level. GNBL 5th grade teams that register at the "B" level or below, will not automatically receive a WSICT enrollment packet, but their results will be monitored throughout the season and an invitation extended later where game results warrant.

Timeline

We will use the following timeline for sending acceptance memos to teams that will be included in the 2012 fields:

December 12 – December 23, 2011: Acceptance memos will be mailed to all those teams that played in the 2011 WSICT, have submitted an enrollment form and that finished in approximately the top 75% of their division at the 2011 WSICT. Due to the early timing of those events, all 5th and 6th grade girls applications that have been received will also be acted on during this time frame.

December 26 – December 31, 2011: Acceptance memos will be mailed to all those teams that had *not* been invited to a previous WSICT (2009, 2010 or 2011), have submitted a

completed 2012 enrollment form and are clearly strong enough to compete with the top 75% of the field at their grade level.

January 2 – 15, 2012: Acceptance memos will be sent to all previously-invited teams that did not play in the 2011 WSICT, but have been accepted for 2012. Acceptance memos will also be sent to all teams that finished in the approximately bottom 25% of their field at the 2011 WSICT, and have been accepted for 2012. Teams that played at the 2011 WSICT, but did not make the 2012 field, will receive a phone call from tournament organizers; we will likewise call similarly-affected new invitees during this time frame. Teams that were invited previously, declined to come or did not respond, and who did not make the field in 2012, will receive an e-mail during this timeline.

- Note: teams that submit their enrollment applications after January 1, 2012, will be responded to within ten days after receipt, with teams added to the field on a case-by-case basis, until full capacity is reached at each grade level.