



2026 BOWLING ADVISORY MEETING

Minutes and & Recommendations

May 1, 2026

The following members were present for the Virtual meeting: Jonathan Hauter (IESA Assistant Executive Director), Al Nordman (Oregon/Tournament Manager), Fred Pufahl (Frankfort Summit Hill), Andy Dole (Homer Glen), Jim McCabe (Utica Waltham), Kelly Nimtz (Loves Park/Machesney Park), Not present: Maurice Thomas (Maywood Irving/Melrose Park Stevenson), Doug Wagoner (Hoopeston Area), Emilie Young (Lincoln Chester-East Lincoln).

The IESA Bowling Advisory Committee makes the following recommendations to the IESA Board of Directors for its June 18, 2026 meeting:

Recommendation #1: Sectional and State Finals Format

Current: All bowlers will bowl in the Friday preliminary round which will consist of four games. In each division, the top 10 teams and the top 32 individuals not associated with a qualifying team will advance and compete in the remaining two rounds on Saturday.

Proposed: All bowlers will bowl in the Friday preliminary round which will consist of four games. In each division, the top **12** teams and the top **24** individuals not associated with a qualifying team will advance and compete in the remaining two rounds on Saturday.

Rationale: The proposed change creates a more balanced and meaningful advancement structure between team and individual qualifiers. By increasing the number of advancing teams from 10 to 12, more schools are rewarded for overall team performance, which is a central component of the sport and encourages broader participation and team development across programs. Adjusting the number of individual qualifiers from 32 to 24 is necessary to maintain a manageable field size for Saturday competition, ensuring the event stays on schedule and runs efficiently. There is no change to the amount of bowlers who will advance from day 1 to day 2 like in previous years, just the distribution of spots will change.

T & C: IV. G.

Admin Vote:

Board Action: **Approved**



Recommendation #2: Sectional and State Final Format

Current: The intent is to advance 24 boys teams, 24 girls teams, 48 individual boys and 48 individual girls (not associated with one of the advancing teams) from sectionals to state finals. **The number of advancing teams and individuals from each individual sectional site will be based on the number of schools entering the activity.**

Proposed: The intent is to advance 24 boys teams, 24 girls teams, 48 individual boys and 48 individual girls (not associated with one of the advancing teams) from sectionals to state finals.

Rationale: The language stating that "the number of advancing teams and individuals from each individual sectional site will be based on the number of schools entering the activity" was originally included when participation numbers were lower and there was uncertainty about filling the intended number of state qualifying spots. At that time, it provided flexibility for the IESA Bowling Administrator to ensure a full field at the state finals.

With consistent participation levels now meeting or exceeding the intended qualifiers, this language is no longer necessary. Removing it establishes a clear and consistent advancement structure across all sectional sites, eliminating any confusion about varying qualification numbers. This ensures transparency, uniformity, and a better understanding for coaches, athletes, and administrators regarding the state advancement process.

T & C: IV. F. c.

Admin Vote:

Board Action: **Approved**

Recommendation #3: Bowling Competition Rules Update

Current: Bowlers are prohibited from playing music with or without headphones, using cell phones, electronic devices or any unusual equipment that might be distracting or assist a bowler in receiving outside coaching or instruction at any time during the competition, including during warm-ups, in the competition area. Coaches are allowed to have electronic devices.

Proposed: Bowlers are prohibited from playing music with or without headphones, using cell phones, electronic devices or any unusual equipment that might be distracting or assist a bowler in receiving outside coaching or instruction at any time during the competition, including during warm-ups, in the competition area.



Players are also prohibited from wearing any SMART watch that can receive information at any time during warmups or competition. Any player caught wearing a SMART watch will receive a zero for the frame they are caught in and a zero in any subsequent frame until the watch is removed. Coaches are allowed to have electronic devices.

Rationale: The inclusion of smart watches in the electronic devices restriction is necessary to maintain the integrity, fairness, and focus of the competition. Smart watches are capable of receiving real-time notifications, messages, and data, which creates the same potential for outside communication and coaching as cell phones or other electronic devices already prohibited under current rules. This rule also keeps us consistent with what bowlers will be required to do for IHSA.

T & C: VII. B.

Admin Vote:

Board Action: **Approved**

Recommendation #4: Bowling Competition Rules

Current: Bowlers are not permitted to leave the pit area to receive coaching instruction from spectators. If a bowler needs to leave the pit area for a personal reason (use the restroom, exchange equipment), there can be no communication between the bowlers and spectators that could be deemed coaching advice of any nature for the duration of the ten frames each game.

Proposed: Bowlers are not permitted to leave the pit area to receive coaching instruction from spectators. If a bowler needs to leave the pit area for a personal reason (use the restroom, exchange equipment), there can be no communication between the bowlers and spectators that could be deemed coaching advice of any nature for the duration of the ten frames each game. **Additionally, bowlers are not allowed to receive coaching from spectators at any time in or out of the pit area while rounds are in progress.**

Rationale: While the original rule restricts bowlers from leaving the pit area to receive coaching, it still leaves open the possibility for indirect or situational communication with spectators whether verbal, visual, or otherwise, while remaining in or briefly outside the pit area. This added language closes that loophole by clearly stating that *no coaching from spectators is permitted at any time during active rounds*, regardless of the bowler's location.

T & C: VI. H. 5.

Admin Vote:

Board Action: **Approved**

Other Items/Topics Discussed:



- The committee discussed adjusting the lane blocks to use more of the house. Along with integrating the individual bowlers within the team blocks to limit the congestion.
- The committee discusses the Withdraw policy and substitutes to better reflect during live scoring to limit confusion.
- There was discussion on Sectional advancers and providing an equal distribution of individual qualifiers out of each sectional depending on actual bowlers in the sectional. This was discussed at length; the committee feels at this time there should not be a change in the advancement of individuals depending on size because it was only our first year moving to 6 sectionals. There was agreement that there should be 2-3 years of data in the current format before a change would be seriously considered.
- Participant wristbands for both days at state. The committee talked about providing a separate wristband for the Friday advancers into day two.
- State venue feedback

Next Meeting: **April 30, 2027 (In-Person)**