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HIGH SCHOOL

AHSAA got it wrong: Let public and private schools play it out | Donaldson



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Key Points

- The Alabama High School Athletic Association will split public and private schools for postseason and regular season play.
 - The author argues against the split, believing the best teams should compete against each other regardless of school type.
 - Issues like recruiting, competitive balance, and the multiplier led to the decision, but the author feels these root causes were not properly addressed.
 - The split may devalue championships, according to the article.
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After months of speculation, decision day finally came for the [Alabama High School Athletic Association](#) with the anticipated [public-private split](#).

The AHSAA announced a split for the postseason but will also see public and private schools play in different regions and classes for the regular season. The two groups can still schedule non-region games against each other.

But did the split need to happen at all?

The short answer for me is quite simple, no.

The longer answer is that I see what lead us down the path to this decision: But I say if you want to be the best, you need to play the best – and now we won't always get to see those games play out on the field.

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I'd argue that most coaches in the state would rather play the best teams and come up short than take the easy road. What kind of lesson are we teaching high school athletes by removing challenges ahead of them?

I get that the multiplier and competitive balance – remedies instituted by the state organization to offset private schools being able to draw from undefined areas and recruit athletes to build championship-caliber teams in ways that public schools aren't allowed – factor into the equation, along with the AHSAA's interpretation of the CHOOSE Act that allows tuition tax credits for private-school attendees. But let's not act like a public schools never recruited a player before.

Competitive balance and the multiplier are gone with this move, but recruiting and the transferring of high school kids will stay, and both public and private schools will be equally as guilty. A better solution would have been spending the last few months addressing the root issues of why public and private schools had been bickering like siblings.

Now, I have been against splitting up private and public schools since the beginning of this saga, but even as I sat in the AHSAA's office and heard

executive director Heath Harmon explain it, I was thinking, "Is this really the right path?"

With splitting the schools up, the championships could get devalued. Even the best teams may not get a chance, with larger public schools dropping into lower classifications and wide gaps in the private classes, so who even wins there?

There are a lot of problems facing the AHSAA from inside its own house or outside of it, mainly from a [state government](#) that has already weighed in, but splitting private and public schools wasn't the answer.

I say let the best teams settle it on the field. Or court. Or diamond.

Maxwell Donaldson covers high school sports, Jax State athletics, the outdoors in Alabama and more for the Gadsden Times and USA TODAY Network. Find him on Twitter/X [@_Max_Donaldson](#) and contact him at MDonaldson@usatodayco.com.