

# HeraldNet

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## State high school basketball tournaments reduced to eight teams

*Herald staff*

The state basketball tournaments are going to look different next season, based on a decision made Friday by the WIAA Executive Board.

The board voted to restructure the state-tournament format beginning with the 2010-11 school year. Under the new format, 16 teams from each classification will compete in the first round at regional sites Feb. 25-26. From this round, eight teams advance to a state site for the second, third and fourth rounds of the tournament March 3-5.

There will be three state championship sites, with two classifications at each site. Sites and classification distribution have yet to be determined. The second, third and fourth rounds will use a modified double elimination format.

The classification groupings likely will be 4A and 3A in Tacoma, 2A and 1A in Yakima, and 2B and 1B in Spokane, Everett School District athletic director Robert Polk said.

Before news of the tournament restructuring was announced, Polk said there was support among members of the WIAA Representative Assembly to alter the state basketball tournaments because of several ongoing problems, including travel costs, missed school time and poor attendance at consolation-round games, especially late in the tournaments.

"I don't know how I feel about it," said Marysville School District athletic director Greg Erickson, who is president of the Western Conference. "I know I want to host a regional. I like to see our gym full of people."

The format eliminates the fifth-eighth place game at state. The Edmonds-Woodway girls played in and won that game this year after losing to eventual 4A champion Auburn Riverside in the first round. Warriors coach Duane Hodges said Friday he'd have to see more details before commenting on the change.

Jackson boys coach Steve Johnson, whose team was the Class 4A runner-up in March, said he understands the rationale behind the decision and viewed it as a compromise.

"It's a little sad to do away with the old format. It was unique and fun," Johnson said. "But I'm happy they didn't totally get rid of the spirit of the way it was."

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