



A study of the classification system of secondary sports competition in the state of Montana  
by Thomas Roy Lindskog

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in Physical Education  
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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to conduct a survey of the classification system for secondary sports competition in the state of Montana. Specifically, this study attempted to determine high school administrators', athletic directors' and coaches' opinions regarding the classification system in Montana and what changes, if any, should be made in the current system. The study compared the classification systems used by other states with similar population and large geographic areas to the present classification system in Montana. With the results of the survey and the comparisons, this study attempted to determine the best classification system for secondary sports competition in Montana.

This study was delimited to high school administrators, athletic directors and coaches who were employed by school districts in the state of Montana. It was also delimited to one survey per school throughout the state. Questionnaires were sent to administrators, athletic directors and coaches in the 182 schools in the state. The questionnaire was completed and returned by 172 of these people. The other ten people were contacted and responded by telephone to give a 100 percent return.

The questionnaire was developed by the author to collect data concerning classification of sports competition in the state of Montana. The findings of the study support the following conclusions: (1) there is a need for reclassification of sports competition in secondary schools in Montana; (2) classification should be based on school enrollment; (3) there should be a four-class system for all sports for boys as well as for girls; (4) for economic reasons, there should be a limit on distance of travel and (5) the schools should be reclassified more often.

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Date

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A STUDY OF THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM OF SECONDARY  
SPORTS COMPETITION IN THE STATE OF MONTANA

by

THOMAS ROY LINDSKOG

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

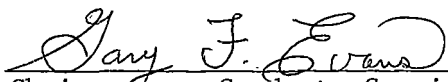
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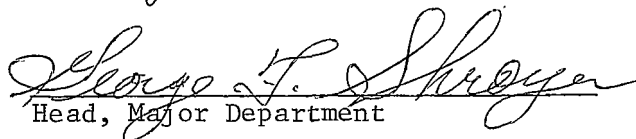
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to conduct a survey of the classification system for secondary sports competition in the state of Montana. Specifically, this study attempted to determine high school administrators', athletic directors' and coaches' opinions regarding the classification system in Montana and what changes, if any, should be made in the current system. The study compared the classification systems used by other states with similar population and large geographic areas to the present classification system in Montana. With the results of the survey and the comparisons, this study attempted to determine the best classification system for secondary sports competition in Montana.

This study was delimited to high school administrators, athletic directors and coaches who were employed by school districts in the state of Montana. It was also delimited to one survey per school throughout the state. Questionnaires were sent to administrators, athletic directors and coaches in the 182 schools in the state. The questionnaire was completed and returned by 172 of these people. The other ten people were contacted and responded by telephone to give a 100 percent return.

The questionnaire was developed by the author to collect data concerning classification of sports competition in the state of Montana. The findings of the study support the following conclusions: (1) there is a need for reclassification of sports competition in secondary schools in Montana; (2) classification should be based on school enrollment; (3) there should be a four-class system for all sports for boys as well as for girls; (4) for economic reasons, there should be a limit on distance of travel and (5) the schools should be reclassified more often.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The classification system of Montana high schools set up by the Montana High School Association has been questioned by some of its members. Inequities such as travel, number of schools in different classifications, size of schools in the same class, girls' leagues not set the same as boys' leagues and other problems are often cited.

Because of these problems, brought to the attention of the researcher by his colleagues, there was a need for a survey of all member schools to ascertain the opinions of the majority of the schools regarding realignment. This, coupled with the fact that 1977, was designated by the Montana High School Association as a year for reclassification, led the researcher to conclude that a study at this time on classification would be timely and most helpful to the Association and the state.

#### Statement of the Problem

The general problem of this study was to develop a classification system for secondary sports competition in the state of Montana. Specifically this study attempted to determine:

1. High school administrators' opinions regarding the classification system in Montana, and what changes, if any, should be made in the current system.

2. High school coaches' opinions regarding the current classification system in Montana, and what changes, if any, should be made in the current system.

3. Athletic directors' opinions regarding the current classification system in Montana, and what changes, if any, should be made in the current system.

4. Current classification systems used by states with similar populations and large geographic areas.

5. The best classification system for secondary sports competition in Montana, based on the above data.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms used in this study were defined by the investigator for the purpose of this study.

High school administrators. High school administrators included both high school principals and district superintendents in Montana.

High school coaches and athletic directors. High school coaches and athletic directors referred to the head coaches in the major sports, and athletic directors of high schools in Montana.

Classification system. Classification system was the term designating the alignments the schools are placed in for sports competition in Montana.

Major sports. Major sports were defined as football, boys' and girls' track, boys' and girls' basketball and wrestling.

#### Delimitations

This study was delimited to high school administrators, athletic directors and head coaches of major sports in the state of Montana. A separate questionnaire concerning the classification system was sent to executive secretaries, commissioners and director generals of states with population and geographic features similar to Montana's. The following is a list of these states: Colorado, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. This study was conducted in March, 1976. Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota and Wyoming did not return any information.

#### Limitations

This study was limited to the opinions of the people answering the questionnaire. A further limitation was the way in which they interpreted the questionnaire. Another limitation was the background and professional preparation of the investigator, and his preparation of the questionnaire. In regard to the comparison with other states, a limitation was that although they had similar situations, they were not always the same and they may also have a need for reclassification.

### Justification of the Study

There was a need to look into the present classification of Montana high schools for sports competition. A number of schools in Montana are increasing rapidly in enrollment, while others are relatively unchanged or declining. Some schools are faced with opponents whose enrollment are two and three times greater than that of their own schools, therefore, there is a need for equalization in the area of sports competition.

Travel is another major factor. This problem can never be solved completely because of the sparse population of Montana. Hopefully, it can be lessened.

Classification is a never-ending process. As stated in the Montana High School Association handbook, "The Board of Directors shall look into classification every four years or sooner if the need arises." It has been three years since the last reclassification. In order to be knowledgeable concerning the needs of Montana schools for the next reclassification, an assessment of the factors involved must be completed now if the results are to be of any benefit.

At present, lines of alignment of classes AA, A, B and C are not strictly on an enrollment basis. They are presently set up on past league alignment, distance of travel, and natural rivalries, with some concern as to population. Perhaps it would be possible to

devise a classification system based entirely on enrollment figures, and thereby eliminate the need for major reclassification every four years.

This study should be of interest to school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, and fans interested in the most equitable classification system for Montana.

#### Questionnaire Construction

A questionnaire was designed and developed by the investigator to easily obtain the desired information, and to be a rapid and efficient method of gathering data. The questionnaire obtained information considered important by the investigator. Questions were developed with the knowledge of the classification system of Montana schools as observed by the investigator over the past five years as a coach in Montana. Doctors Evans, Serdahely, and Suvak, and the graduate research class of fall quarter, 1975, at Montana State University aided in developing the questions.

#### Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Is the current classification system with its present alignments the most equitable system?
2. Should enrollment be the major factor in determining classification?



3. Should mileage be a major factor in determining classification?

4. Should natural rivals determine leagues?

5. How many classes should there be in Montana?

6. Should the classes be the same for all sports?

7. Should the classes be the same for boys' and girls' competition?

8. Is there really a need for reclassification of sports competition in the state of Montana at this time?

#### Population

The survey population was high school administrators, head coaches of major sports, and athletic directors of all schools in the state of Montana.

#### Data Collection

The questionnaire was developed by the investigator and a pilot study was done utilizing members of the graduate physical education curriculum class of winter quarter, 1976, at Montana State University as subjects.

The questionnaire was sent to the one hundred eighty-two high schools in Montana in March of 1976. A cover letter was sent with the questionnaire to explain its use. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was enclosed. A request was made to return the questionnaire.

within five days after receiving it. (See Appendix A). A follow-up letter was mailed in order to insure an adequate number of returns. An additional questionnaire was included with the follow-up letter. After the first follow-up letter, there were ten unanswered questionnaires. The ten schools were contacted by telephone and the results collected to give 100 percent return on the questionnaire.

#### Data Results

The results of the questionnaire were tabulated, totaled and percentages computed. The Sigma VII computer at Montana State University Computer Center was used for making computations under the direction of Dr. Albert Suvak.

The data was then presented in tables under four categories. The four categories were superintendents, principals, athletic directors and head coaches.

The data was then presented in a second set of tables under the classifications of the four classes of Montana schools. The four classifications are AA, A, B and C.

A third set of tables indicated how the states with similar population and geographic areas classify the schools in their states. From data obtained in the questionnaires and with background from a review of states with similar geographic problems, a summary was tabulated and conclusions and recommendations were established.

Chapter four presents a recommended classification system for sports competition in the state of Montana, based on the results of this survey.

## Chapter 2

### SURVEY OF RELATED STATE CLASSIFICATION STRUCTURES

It occurred to the author that other states in the west would have classification issues that would correspond to those in Montana. He selected eleven states with similar populations and large geographic areas. A letter requesting a copy of the guidelines used for sports' classification within the state was sent to each of the eleven states. Seven states replied. This chapter presents the response to this request.

The state of Colorado has three classes, as follows:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
A	175 and under
AA	176-550
AAA	550 and over

The classifications are based on the total enrollment of each school as of October 1st of the preceding year. Four-year high schools count their total enrollment and three-year high schools add one-third of their enrollment figures to their total to determine their classification. Schools that have only boys enrolled double their total for their classification. A school may choose to be in a class above that indicated by their enrollment figures, but must remain in the higher classification for a minimum period of three years. The Board of Control may reclassify a school if in their opinion the best interests of the schools and state association

would be better served by doing so. The rules can be set aside because of extenuating circumstances, such as geography or fluctuating enrollment. Schools in Class A, which play football and have an enrollment of less than one hundred, may play eight-man football. If their enrollment is over one hundred for two consecutive years, they must play eleven-man football at the beginning of the third year.

North Dakota used the following two-class system for football, basketball, cross country, wrestling, girls' gymnastics and boys' and girls' track:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
A	325 and over
B	324 and under

A school with an enrollment between two hundred and three hundred twenty-four may elect Class A if they wish, but must give a two-years notice of the desired change. They must remain in the chosen Class A for a minimum of three years. Boys' and girls' tennis, golf and swimming are not included in the classifications.

Nebraska classifies according to the enrollment on the sixth day of school. Boys' and girls' enrollment are classified separately, as follows:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
A	32 largest schools
B	64 next largest
C	128 next largest
D	145 remaining schools

Utah uses the following four-class system:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
1A	199 and under
2A	200-599
3A	600-1399
4A	1400 and over

Washington has the following classifications for baseball, basketball, football, track and wrestling:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
AAA	1000 and over
AA	401-1000
A	151-400
B	150 and under

In golf and tennis, there are two classes, with Class AAA remaining the same as above, but Class AA covering any enrollment under one thousand. Cross country, track and wrestling have three classes, with Classes AAA and AA remaining the same as above and Class A covering an enrollment under four hundred. Class B schools play eight-man football.

Idaho's four-class system stands as follows:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
A1	800 and over
A2	300-799
A3	125-299
A4	124 and under

All of the schools will remain in their class for three years. Any needed changes will be made in 1979.

In Texas, classes are assigned on a two-year basis, based on

enrollment, using the following five-class system:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
AAAA	1135 and over
AAA	520-1134
AA	235-519
A	125-234
B	124 and under

Schools must play in the class for which their enrollment qualifies them; there are no exceptions. The school districts that are adjacent to each other may not cross other other school districts to be assigned to another district or conference. A school with less than one hundred enrollment may enter a team in six or eight-man football.

Four of the seven states that responded utilized a four-class system based on enrollment. Texas, having the largest area and population, had the strictest classification rules and was the only state in the survey which considered the distance the teams travel.

## Chapter 3

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data presented in this chapter was collected from all one hundred eighty-two member schools of the 1975-76 Montana High School Association. Questionnaires were sent to all of the member schools. One hundred seventy-two questionnaires were returned for a 94.5 percent response. The remaining ten schools were contacted by the investigator and the questionnaires were answered by telephone to give a final return of 100 percent.

The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed according to school classification (AA, A, B, C), superintendents, principals, athletic directors and coaches. The responses to the questionnaire are presented in number of responses and percentage form. All the questions in Appendix A and this chapter are presented as they were on the questionnaire.

As a point of interest, the one hundred eighty-two schools are listed by classification in Appendix C. The questionnaire was sent to the schools with the instructions that they might be answered by the person receiving them or passed on to someone on the staff who was acquainted with the classification system. The questionnaire was answered by fifty-one superintendents, thirty-one principals, fifty-seven athletic directors and forty-three coaches. It should be noted that many of the athletic directors are also coaches.



Question 1. Is the present classification in your area satisfactory?

The reaction to Question 1, as shown in Table, as responded to by classification (AA, A, B, C), shows that Classes AA and A generally were content with the present classification of their area, while Classes B and C were widely split.

Table 1  
Response to Question 1 By Classification

Class	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	0	0	4	29	2	14	5	36	3	21
A	5	16	4	13	3	9	10	31	10	31
B	1	2	11	27	9	22	12	29	8	20
C	7	7	24	25	15	16	31	33	18	19
Total	13	7	43	24	29	16	58	32	39	21

The response to Question 1, as shown in Table 2, as responded to by superintendents, principals, athletic directors and coaches, shows that coaches were the least satisfied with the classification system in their areas.

Table 2

Response to Question 1 by Superintendents, Principals,  
Athletic Directors and Coaches

	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	6	12	11	22	4	8	16	31	14	27
Prin.	1	3	6	19	8	26	10	32	6	19
A.D.	0	0	18	32	5	9	21	37	13	23
Coach	6	14	8	19	12	28	11	26	6	14
Total	13	7	43	24	29	16	58	32	39	21

Question 2. On what basis do you feel schools should be classified for sports competition? (A) School enrollment, (B) Natural rivals, (C) Travel, (D) Quality of competition?

The majority of the participants in the survey agreed that school enrollment should be a factor in classification, 45 percent agreed, and 43 percent strongly agreed.

Table 3

Response to Question 2-A, School Enrollment, by Classification

Class	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	0	0	1	7	0	0	7	50	6	43
A	0	0	0	0	2	6	17	53	13	41
B	1	2	1	2	4	10	25	61	10	24
C	2	2	2	2	9	10	33	35	49	52
Total	3	2	4	2	15	3	82	45	78	43

Table 4

Response to Question 2-A, School Enrollment, by Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors, and Coaches

	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	2	4	2	4	2	4	24	47	21	41
Prin.	0	0	0	0	5	16	18	58	8	26
A.D.	1	2	0	0	5	9	21	37	30	53
Coach	0	0	2	5	3	7	19	44	19	44
Total	3	2	4	2	15	8	82	45	78	43

Thirty-five percent agreed that natural rivals should be considered while 37 percent were neutral.

Table 5

Response to Question 2-B, Natural Rivals, by Classification

Class	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	0	0	2	14	6	43	5	36	1	7
A	4	13	6	19	7	22	13	41	2	6
B	3	7	3	7	14	34	16	39	5	12
C	6	6	15	16	41	43	29	31	4	4
Total	13	7	26	14	68	37	63	35	12	7

Table 6

Response to Question 2-B, Natural Rivals, by Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors and Coaches

	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	1	2	5	10	16	31	24	47	5	10
Prin.	2	6	5	16	11	34	11	34	3	9
A.D.	8	10	10	18	20	36	14	25	4	7
Coach	2	5	6	14	21	49	14	33	0	0
Total	13	7	26	14	68	37	63	35	12	7

Sixty-nine percent conceded that they would like to see some attention paid to the distance of travel.

Table 7

Response to Question 2-C, Travel, by Classification

Class	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	1	7	1	7	3	21	6	43	3	21
A	0	0	3	9	7	22	16	50	6	19
B	0	0	1	2	8	20	16	39	16	39
C	3	3	3	3	26	27	44	46	19	20
Total	4	2	8	4	44	24	82	45	44	24

Table 8

Response to Question 2-C, Travel, by Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors and Coaches

	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	2	4	1	2	11	22	23	45	14	37
Prin.	0	0	1	3	7	22	14	44	10	31
A.D.	0	0	4	7	18	32	20	36	14	25
Coach	2	5	2	5	8	19	25	58	6	14
Total	4	2	8	4	44	24	82	45	44	24

The response on the basis of quality of competition was 34 percent were neutral and 34 percent agreed that it should be considered.

Table 9

Response to Question 2-D, Quality of Competition, by Classification

Class	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	2	14	0	0	3	21	5	36	4	29
A	2	6	6	19	7	22	15	47	2	6
B	1	2	4	10	14	34	14	34	8	20
C	5	5	14	15	38	40	28	29	10	11
Total	10	5	24	13	62	34	62	34	24	13

Table 10

Response to Question 2-D, Quality of Competition, by Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors and Coaches

	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	4	8	9	18	14	27	17	33	7	14
Prin.	3	9	1	3	12	38	11	34	5	16
A.D.	3	5	8	14	22	39	19	34	4	7
Coach	0	0	6	14	14	33	15	35	8	19
Total	10	5	24	13	62	34	62	34	24	13

In the response to Question 2, it should be noted that school enrollment was considered to be the major factor in determining the classification for sports competition.

Question 3. (A) Should the classification system be the same for all sports? (1) Yes (2) No: (B) If yes, how many classification systems do you propose? (C) If no, answer Question 4.

In responding to Question 3-A, 62 percent of the participants favored the same classification system for all sports. Thirty-eight percent thought the system should vary with the different sports.

Table 11

Response to Question 3-A, Same System for All Sports,  
by Classification

Class	Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%
AA	9	64	5	36
A	22	69	10	31
B	23	56	18	44
C	59	62	36	38
Total	113	62	69	38

Table 12

Response to Question 3-A, Same System for All Sports,  
by Superintendents, Principals, Athletic  
Directors and Coaches

	Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%
Supt.	39	57	22	43
Prin.	19	61	12	39
A.D.	39	68	18	32
Coach	26	60	17	40
Total	113	62	69	38

Of the 62 percent who favored the same classification for all sports, 2 percent felt there should be a one-class system, 3 percent approved a two-class system, 11 percent a three-class system, 70 percent supported the four-class system and 14 percent thought there should be a five-class system.



Table 13

Response to Question 3-B, Number of Classes, by Classification

Class	Number of Classes									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	88	1	12
A	0	0	1	5	2	10	13	62	5	24
B	1	5	0	0	2	10	12	57	6	29
C	1	2	2	3	9	16	43	74	3	5
Total	2	2	3	3	13	12	75	69	15	14

Table 14

Response to Question 3-B, Number of Classes, by  
Superintendents, Principals, Athletic  
Directors and Coaches

	Number of Classes									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	1	4	0	0	3	11	23	82	1	4
Prin.	0	0	1	6	0	0	12	75	3	18
A.D.	0	0	1	3	6	16	24	63	7	18
Coach	1	4	1	4	4	15	16	62	4	15
Total	2	2	3	3	13	12	75	69	15	14

Question 4. Circle the number of classifications you feel there should be (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or more) in the following sports:

(A) football, (B) boys' basketball, (C) girls' basketball, (D) wrestling, (E) boys' track and field, (F) girls' track and field, (G) boys' gymnastics, (H) girls' gymnastics, (I) boys' swimming, (J) girls' swimming, (K) boys' cross country, (L) girls' cross country, (M) boys' golf, (N) girls' golf, (O) boys' tennis, (P) girls' tennis.

The 38 percent who preferred different classification systems for the various sports in Question 3 responded to Question 4 as shown in the following tables.

For football, 76 percent of the participants wanted to remain with the four-class system. Ten percent chose the three-class system, another 10 percent favored five classes and 3 percent, six classes.

Table 15

## Response to Question 4-A, Football, by Classification

Class	Number of Classes											
	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
AA	0	0	0	0	1	20	2	40	2	40	0	0
A	0	0	0	0	1	10	7	70	1	10	1	10
B	0	0	0	0	2	11	15	83	1	6	0	0
C	0	0	0	0	3	9	28	80	3	9	1	3
Total	0	0	0	0	7	10	52	76	7	10	2	3

Table 16

Response to Question 4-A, Football, by Superintendents,  
Principals, Athletic Directors and Coaches

Class	Number of Classes											
	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Supt.	0	0	0	0	1	5	17	77	2	9	2	9
Prin.	0	0	0	0	1	8	11	92	0	0	0	0
A.D.	0	0	0	0	2	11	13	72	3	17	0	0
Coach	0	0	0	0	7	10	52	76	7	10	2	3
Total	0	0	0	0	7	10	52	76	7	10	2	3

The four-class system was still the favorite for boy's basketball, with 54 percent. Three percent were for a one-class system, 6 percent for two classes, 25 percent for three classes and 13 percent for five classes.













































































































































