

## [MIAA field hockey, volleyball brackets delayed due to court injunction](#)

By THOMAS JOHNSTON, Staff Writer

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Volleyball and field hockey teams will need to wait at least another day before finding out their seeds and opponents in the upcoming MIAA state tournament.

The volleyball and field hockey brackets were supposed to be released on Tuesday, but after the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District and individual student plaintiffs filed a court injunction in Hampden Superior Court on Friday and the order was issued in favor of the plaintiffs on Monday, the MIAA announced that bracket releases will be delayed.

The court injunction was filed after the decision by the MIAA and PVIAC to punish schools that did not have their schedule properly filled out with placeholder games for the PVIAC/Western Mass. tournament prior to the Sept. 13 deadline put out by the MIAA.

The original punishment was to keep those schools — Mohawk Trail, Pioneer, Northampton, Minnechaug, Lenox, Lee, Hopkins and several Springfield schools — out of the Western Mass. tournament completely. The PVIAC and MIAA came together and decided those schools would be able to participate in the Western Mass. tournament, but each game they played would automatically count as a forfeit loss for state tournament purposes, regardless of the result.

For example, the Pioneer boys soccer team played eighth-seeded Mount Everett in the opening round of the Class D tournament and won 5-1, but the game was recorded as a 3-0 loss in the schedule. That meant the Panthers' state tournament ranking took a hit, falling from the No. 18 ranked team in the Div. 5 field to No. 27. Pioneer's ranking will likely also suffer no matter its result against Smith Academy in the semifinal round on Tuesday.

That's far from the only case. The Mohawk Trail volleyball team went 13-1 during the regular season and won the Western Mass. Class D championship, but dropped from being a top 16 seed — and thus having the chance to host a Round of 32 contest — to No. 20 in the Div. 5 rankings.

The ruling by the MIAA also changed the rankings of teams who were not involved in the decision. The Turners Falls volleyball team lost to Mohawk Trail in the Class D semifinals, but since it counted as a forfeit win on its schedule, Turners bumped up to the No. 15 seed and will likely get to host a Round of 32 contest and not have to go on the road.

The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District and individual student plaintiffs from Monson High School are fighting to reverse the decision and not have those games counted as losses. If it was to win the injunction, the rankings would need to be completely reworked, but the MIAA court to fight it.

“The order was issued without the ability for the MIAA to be heard,” the MIAA said in a press release on Tuesday. “As a result, we requested and were granted the opportunity to be heard by the judge.

“The order, as currently written, will have ramifications on the seeding process and the clear and accurate release of the state tournament brackets, affecting the seeds for multiple teams across multiple divisions in both sports,” the press release continued. “We have continually stated that we will advocate on behalf of the whole and not the one. On numerous occasions, said school district admitted to failing to comply with MIAA protocols. It is wrong that these potential ramifications would have an adverse effect on the vast majority of member schools across the state that did follow the prescribed process. That is why we are seeking further resolution on this matter.”

In the MIAA’s opposition to the motion, filed on Tuesday, the organization stated that the “plaintiffs cannot show a likelihood of success on the merits,” specifically noting that Minnechaug’s principal had admitting “in writing” that the school was aware of the MIAA’s rules on the topic.

The opposition also aimed to prove that the “plaintiffs cannot show irreparable harm,” saying that those schools mentioned will still play in the state tournaments “under substantially similar conditions they could have otherwise played.”

And finally, the MIAA’s opposition disagreed with the motion’s filing that “the balancing of harms of a preliminary injunction favors MIAA.” As noted in their press release, the organization explained to the court that “changing recorded losses to victories will disturb the power rankings, tournament seedings and game locations of literally hundreds of state-wide tournament contests.” The field hockey and volleyball state tournaments are scheduled to begin play on Thursday.

If the injunction fails and the seeds hold firm, here’s where each team in Hampshire and Franklin Counties would be seeded based on the most recent power rankings released Tuesday. With the cutoff for games already passed for volleyball and field hockey, these would be the seeds unless the court overturns the MIAA’s decision, thus forcing a complete reshuffling of the rankings.

In Div. 3 volleyball, Amherst is ranked No. 34 while Belchertown sits at No. 37. Frontier is ranked No. 6 in Div. 4 while South Hadley is ranked No. 33. In Div. 5, Turners Falls is ranked No. 15, Mohawk Trail is ranked No. 20, Smith Vocational is ranked No. 34, Mahar comes in at No. 38 and Greenfield sits at No. 44.

In field hockey, Amherst is ranked No. 33 in Div. 2 while in Div. 3, Belchertown is ranked No. 23. Frontier is ranked No. 4 in Div. 4 followed by Greenfield at No. 17, Franklin Tech at No. 30 and Smith Academy at No. 32.

The MIAA said it hopes to have the brackets released as soon as possible.

“Rest assured brackets will be released once this matter has been resolved,” the MIAA said in its statement. “Our goal is to release the field hockey and volleyball brackets Wednesday (October

30). We will provide you with an update Wednesday morning. The integrity, clarity, and accuracy of our brackets must take priority at this time.”

*Source: <https://www.recorder.com/MIAA-field-hockey-volleyball-brackets-delayed-due-to-court-injunction-57716326>*