

## *MTCCCA Position Statement on MPA Withdrawing from New England Competition*

The Maine Track and Cross Country Coaches Association are vehemently opposed to the withdrawal of our athletes from New England competition. This affects our association's sports more than any other. Out of the seven New England championships that the state of Maine participates in, three of them involve our coaches and athletes. Our sports are not more important than others; however, they are penalized more heavily than others by this proposal.

The most important question that the Interscholastic Management Committee should ask is whether withdrawal from New England's will substantially save individual school systems money. This should not be an opportunity to revisit whether you agree with New England participation. That decision has already been made by the body of the MPA. In other words, will the financial savings from the withdrawal from New England's offset the incredible rewards of participating in New England's? We have seen no information that it will, and in fact, have found that there is minimal financial expense by local schools. We have done our own informal survey of schools and coaches who have been participating in New England's and have found that very few school systems pay costs associated with travel, lodging, or coaching stipends. Most rely on boosters or families to pay whatever expenses are needed. In fact, it is somewhat shocking that the MPA has decided it needs to dictate to local school systems about this issue. Local school systems are already deciding whether they are going to allow their athletes to compete in New England's. If schools already have a choice about whether they are going to attend or not, mandating that all schools cannot go because of financial reasons seems absurd. Schools have already decided the circumstances with which their athletes can or cannot participate. Local financial situations have already been discussed and remedied. Ultimately, for most school systems in the state, there is very little financial burden from New England participation because they have already decided not to pay for it with taxpayer money.

Clearly, New England participation is very rewarding and helpful to our best athlete's post-secondary opportunities. The chance to compete against top notch competition with a greater degree of publicity opens doors that might never have been opened. But the positive impact of New England participation runs so much deeper than that. The level and depth of performance by athletes in our sports have reached unprecedented heights. A team that won a state championship before we began participating in New England's would not even be in the hunt now. The effects of being involved in New England's have spread throughout the track and cross country programs in the state. Our athletes have a different barometer for excellence. This has not only been felt by our best athletes and coaches but by all of them. The aspirations of our athletes and coaches have changed. Isn't that what an educational experience should provide?

In summary, the Maine Track and Cross Country Coaches Association strongly disagree with the proposal to withdraw from New England competition. The reasons behind their decisions, hopefully admirable, are misguided. Withdrawal from New England's will not save schools money. It will save athletes, parents, and coaches money, but it would seem that that choice should be up to them or their schools. Unfortunately it will also prevent our coaches and athletes from participating in an event which has had such a positive influence on our sports.

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