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AN ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVE BALANCE IN OKLAHOMA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

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By MATTHEW MCANGUS

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AN ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVE BALANCE IN OKLAHOMA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

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BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Daniel Larson, Chair

Dr. Christopher Black

Dr. Sean Daly

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Abstract

Competitive balance in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics has become a growing concern, particularly regarding differences between public and private schools. This study examines whether Oklahoma private schools experience greater tournament success than Oklahoma public schools using chi-square tests across multiple sports. Results of these analyses found that there is a trend in numerous sports of a competitive imbalance favoring Oklahoma private schools. An alternative policy of competitive balance was measured in this study called the Tournament Success Factor (TSF). A chi-square analysis of "bump opportunities" among Oklahoma public and private high schools was tested and found mixed levels of significance. A panel ordered logit model with school-level random effects was employed to estimate the effects of private status, classification, and a Rule 14 policy variable. Results indicate that private schools have a higher likelihood of advancing to later tournament rounds, although the magnitude of this effect varies by sport and class. Rule 14 policy implementation showed mixed effectiveness in mitigating these disparities. These findings suggest that current classification policies may not fully address competitive imbalance, highlighting the need for further policy evaluation and refinement.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

High school athletics are a core feature of the U.S. educational experience, and they provide many students with opportunities to learn core values such as teamwork, discipline, and commitment (NFHS, 2023). Fairness and competitive equity are also values instilled in students; however, the idea of competitive equity has been called into question recently in Oklahoma (OKCFox, 2022). This is due to the perceived athletic inequalities between public and private high schools (OKCFox, 2022). The governing body for high school athletics in Oklahoma is the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA). There are 482 member schools in the OSSAA, divided into classifications for each sport and activity. Generally, schools are placed into these classifications based on Average Daily Membership (ADM), which is the average number of students that attend a school each year. However, private schools do have the ability to select and deny students at will, creating potential inequities in the concentration of athletic talent for those schools either through the recruitment of top athletes and/or the suppression of their total ADM, leading to competition advantages of better student-athletes competing in lower classifications.

Public schools being placed into a classification with private schools of similar size could lead to a competitive advantage for private schools in that classification. As such, all processes of the OSSAA are guided by a set of rules, including a full set of criteria for classification. Rule 14 in the OSSAA handbook currently dictates the classification of member schools (OSSAA, 2025). To address these potential inequities, in addition to school size, there is a subsection within Rule 14 that dictates the criteria for placing a school one classification above what their school size would normally dictate. The criteria are as follows:

i) The school has the ability to decline admission or enrollment to a student, even if the student and the student's parents (or custodial parent or court-appointed guardian with legal custody of the student) reside within that school's public school district or designated geographic area

ii) The school is located within a fifteen (15) mile radius of a school placed in the 5A or 6A classification according to ADM

iii) Fewer than twenty-five (25) percent of the children enrolled at the school in grades nine through twelve qualify for free or reduced lunches

iv) The school's ADM in grades nine through 12 has increased by fifty (50) percent or more over the previous three school years.

In Oklahoma, these guidelines effectively only apply to private schools as it is virtually impossible for public schools to meet three out of these four criteria. Despite having these guidelines in place, the private vs public debate has continued, with public schools pushing for (and achieving) even more comprehensive changes to Rule 14. The debate has raged so heavily in Oklahoma that even judicial action has been sought. In 2023, several private Oklahoma high schools filed an injunction against the OSSAA due to the implementation of changes to Rule 14 that were created to help further close the perceived gap of competitive inequity in Oklahoma high school sports (BMCHS, et al. v. OSSAA, pp. 21-22). The injunction was granted to prevent the newest amendments from taking effect, and Rule 14 was left as amended in 2019 (the first amendments to Rule 14 were initially created in 2011). There has been another case in which legislation has been considered that would force private schools out of the OSSAA entirely and make private schools and public schools have their own separate championships (a model that

has been enacted in some other states) (OCPAThink, 2023). Clearly, there is animus on both sides, and the current model does not satisfy both public and private schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify how significant an advantage private schools have over public schools in Oklahoma in athletic competition and to discuss how successful alternative competitive balance methods might be in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics. By identifying and studying the advantages of private schools in Oklahoma, policy creation and decision-making can occur on an informed basis while also helping to maximize the competitive balance in interscholastic athletics. Several potential contributing factors that existing literature has pointed to regarding the competitive advantages of private high school athletics include recruitment of talent into private high schools, superior financial resources over public high schools, and lack of geographic enrollment boundaries (Johnson, et al., 2017).

Recruitment of athletes is a perceived advantage that private high schools have over public high schools (Epstein, 2008; Johnson, et al., 2015). Many private schools are situated around a large population center (like Oklahoma City or Tulsa, in the case of Oklahoma). Private high schools are typically more desirable than most public high schools since private schools can choose who to admit into their school. Since many private schools are geographically located around a metro area, they have a larger pool of students that they can recruit from. While there are rules to guard against this in Oklahoma (Rule 9 in the OSSAA Rules), it is typically hard to find evidence of covert recruiting tactics (Johnson, et al., 2015), and there are presumptions, based on outcomes, that some broader recruiting is occurring.

Private schools also have greater financial ability to fund their athletics due to students paying tuition and fees to attend that school. Private schools also can give scholarships to students, therefore, if a private school wants an athlete, they could entice them to enroll with the offer of a scholarship (The Lariat, 2018). With increased funding comes the ability to have superior athletic facilities, coaching staff, and training programs.

Finally, private schools lack geographic boundaries (or school districts) that require them to accept any student who lives within that area. This allows private high schools to be "boundless", which means they can accept or deny any student, regardless of the student's location (Johnson, et al., 2015).

Except for boundless school districts, scholarships and recruiting are anecdotal evidence that is incredibly hard to access. Any quantitative study that could explore these factors would be very unreliable due to validity concerns of response bias. This limits observations to factors such as school location, school demographics, and athletic competition results.

Research Question

There are two research questions answered in this study:

1. Is there a statistically significant advantage for Oklahoma private high schools over Oklahoma public high schools in athletic competition?
2. Would a Tournament Success Factor (TSF) improve competitive balance in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics vs. current policy implementations?

Alternative hypotheses are listed on the next page:

H_1 – Oklahoma private high schools have more success in postseason athletics than Oklahoma public high schools

H_2 – The Tournament Success Factor (TSF) would create significantly greater competitive balance between public and private schools than the current existing policies in Oklahoma.

While H_1 is directly tested statistically to empirically evaluate widely held perceptions of imbalance in favor of private schools, H_2 is addressed using retrospective annual analysis of the likelihood of such a TSF policy "binding" more frequently for private schools, with the logical outcome being improved competitive equity.

Significance of the Research Problem

Looking at the disparity of athletic success between public and private high schools is paramount for promoting fairness and equity in interscholastic competition. While the OSSAA has implemented some changes to promote competitive equity, evidence suggests that these changes may not be sufficient. Understanding and analyzing the factors that contribute to the success of private schools in athletics can help inform policymaking with scientific backing.

Effects of competitive imbalance in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics impact schools financially. During the playoff series in Oklahoma, top-ranked schools will typically host preliminary rounds in most sports. While hosting a game creates expense for the host site, the OSSAA reimburses these expenses. In addition, host sites will keep all the proceeds made in their concession stand and a portion of each cash ticket that is sold. Teams that must travel are also reimbursed in the postseason.

On an individual student-athlete level, championship games are held at a neutral site, often at a site on the premises of a university or well-renowned organization. Football

championships have been held at the University of Central Oklahoma for the last few years, basketball championships have been held at the University of Oklahoma for several years, baseball championships at Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark (home of the Oklahoma City Comets – AAA affiliate of the Los Angeles Dodgers) and OneOK Field (home of the Tulsa Drillers – AA affiliate of the Los Angeles Dodgers), and softball championships have been held at USA Softball Hall of Fame Stadium. This provides opportunities for student-athletes to get a tour of the facilities that are used in the higher levels of their sport and can also provide avenues for connecting with coaches and scouts at the collegiate or professional level. This opportunity may be denied to those who fail to qualify for the state championship. Competitive imbalance creates an imbalance in who gets the chance to have this experience.

Delimitations

This study focuses exclusively on interscholastic athletics in Oklahoma high schools, comparing private and public athletic success. This study did not consider middle or elementary schools, nor did it include schools outside of the state of Oklahoma. All Oklahoma high schools that are examined in this study were OSSAA member schools, as the OSSAA is the sanctioning body for athletics and activities in the state of Oklahoma.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are the availability and accuracy of the data regarding school funding and athletic performance. School funding for public and private high schools is difficult to find. Oklahoma public schools must report all their financial reports to the Oklahoma State Department of Education while private schools must report to the Internal Revenue Service. However, external booster clubs exist in many cases, which help fund athletics in many public

and private schools. This is an untraceable source of funding. Athletic performance is also hard to track due to the lack of records kept statewide. The most widely kept source of athletic performance data is state tournaments in each sport; therefore, this was the chosen approach to determine athletic performance by school.

Assumptions

It is assumed that all schools in this study are always doing their maximum potential to try and win. Essentially, a team's success in a sport during the season was against the full skill of an opponent (as opposed to an opponent who was unable to/did not play their best players).

Operational Definitions

Interscholastic Athletics: Competitive sports programs at the high school level.

Private Schools: Educational institutions not administered by local, state, or national governments; they retain the right to select their students and are funded through tuition, private grants, and endowments.

Public Schools: Educational institutions funded and administered by government agencies, free to attend for all students within the designated geographic area; selective admission is prohibited.

Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA): The governing body overseeing high school athletics and activities in Oklahoma, across both public and private schools.

Rule 14: An OSSAA regulation that determines how schools are classified for sports competitions, with recent discussions focusing on its impact on private and public school athletics.

Rule 9: An OSSAA regulation that outlines the definition of recruiting or influencing a student-athlete to transfer and enroll at another school.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, the existing literature regarding competitive balance in high school athletics is explored. This helps reveal current gaps in the research and present an opportunity for this study to help answer the question of what makes the athletics of a private high school more successful than public schools in Oklahoma. This study also explores competitive balance policies used in other states and predict the success they would have in Oklahoma. The chapter begins with background literature about competitive balance and transitions to a targeted systematic review specific to interscholastic sports.

Competitive Balance

Much of the research and analysis on competitive balance in sports comes from professional leagues, specifically Major League Baseball. In 1956, Simon Rottenberg published *The Baseball Players' Labor Market*, which introduced the Uncertainty of Outcome Hypothesis (UOH) (Rottenberg, 1956). The UOH is an idea that sports leagues thrive upon uncertainty in games and league play. Uncertain games drive fan engagement and interest, which drives revenue and overall league success. However, the UOH requires a basis of competitive balance to function. If teams or leagues are not competitively balanced, there is less uncertainty of outcomes, as it is easily reasoned that a team with more talent will be better than a team with lesser talent. Walter Neale expanded on Rottenberg's work in 1964, with arguments regarding that teams are joint products (competitors and business partners) and that the value of a league is based upon the mutual interdependence of teams within it (Neale, 1964). These theories still hold true in professional sport, and to a degree, even collegiate sport. However, competitive balance in high school athletics has a much different purpose than at any other level of competition. High school athletics are primarily for the athlete's benefit, rather than a school or an organization.

Interscholastic athletics are designed to be part of a student's educational experience and teach life lessons that kids take with them to adulthood. In professional and collegiate sports, competitive balance is seen from an economic perspective, while in interscholastic athletics, competitive balance is primarily from a utilitarian perspective in the sake of fairness for all athletes. Competitive balance is sought in any level of competition, from the professional level to even the high school level. However, different dynamics surround the method of achieving competitive balance depending on the level of competition. The greatest amount of literature that exists around competitive balance is at the professional level. Professional leagues differ greatly from the high school level, as league structure plays a role in competitively balancing teams. Methods like salary caps, salary floors, reverse draft order, etc., exist to try and competitively balance professional sports teams. This is best summarized by Richard Evans' review of statistical measures of competitive balance (Evans, 2014). Evans breaks down statistical measurements of competitive balance into three buckets: concentration, dominance, and a combination of concentration and dominance. For this study, measures of concentration are unimportant for a couple of reasons: 1. High school teams often play other teams at varying rates during the regular season outside of their classification, and 2. High school associations more typically use postseason "success" as a metric for competitive balance. With very few metrics outside of wins and losses, it is incredibly difficult to determine which teams had easier or harder regular seasons. In postseason play, all teams within a classification play to determine who is the best in that classification or "league". Ergo, using dominance-based statistical measures is the best way to determine if there is a difference between public and private schools in Oklahoma athletics. The dominance-based methods reviewed in Evans' paper are as follows:

1. Descriptive Statistics (counts, percentages, frequency, averages, etc.)

2. Time series association
3. Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI)
4. Lorenz Curve and Gini Coefficient
5. Surprise index for teams

The goal of this study is to review Oklahoma public and private schools as a group, rather than individual teams. Time series association, HHI, Lorenz Curve, Gini Coefficient, and the surprise index are all metrics that are being used to measure the dominance of a specific team.

In Evans' paper, he discusses four different statistical methods that fall into the time series association category: correlation coefficient, adjusted churn, autoregressive win percentage, and top 4 recurrence. It is stated that "it is problematic to apply the measures… or leagues that change in size" (Evans, 2014). In Oklahoma interscholastic athletics, classifications (or leagues) change each year. School sizes may grow or decrease, and private schools may be bumped up a class level or even down a class level if they are significantly less successful than in the past. Therefore, using time association with classes in high school athletics will create issues due to the variability of teams within each class from year to year, especially after the amendments to Rule 14 were instituted.

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) is used to measure concentration in an industry, but has been adapted to measure the dominance of teams over several seasons. This was shown via titles won in a period, the total number of top or bottom positions in a table, and virtual league appearances (measuring teams that are in different leagues from each other). The only viable statistical method for this study is virtual league appearances, since this is independent of the number of teams in a league. However, we are not comparing across different classes (where teams do not play), but comparing two groups, in which both play each other. Furthermore,

Evans described a study done by E. Eckard that compared college football teams across conferences to each other. In this study, sports writers helped assess the performance of teams, and metrics were derived from those assessments to create a list of the top 10 and top 20 teams in college football at that time. In Oklahoma interscholastic athletics, there is a much lower availability of data; therefore, creating metrics to do an analysis of a virtual league would be nearly impossible. In addition to this, Owen, Ryan, and Weatherston (2007) discuss the use of HHI as a measure of win concentration in the MLB. The MLB has expanded the number of teams throughout time, which had to be controlled by normalizing the HHI. Perhaps the most relevant case to the schedule of high school sports is the discussion of the First Division of New Zealand Rugby Union's National Provincial Championship (NPC), where teams only play each other once before the playoffs (as high schools play smaller schedules in nearly every sport). The number of teams in the league also changed during the period of analysis. Even with normalization, the analysis on competitive balance was difficult to interpret. In Oklahoma high school athletics, the number of teams in a classification does not always remain static, and the teams that are placed into a classification are not always the same year-to-year.

The Lorenz curve and Gini coefficient are used to find how dominant teams are and rank them from most successful to least successful, or vice versa. However, this method has the same issue as time series association – this method of analysis is problematic when used with open leagues or leagues that have varying numbers of contestants in them. Goossens (2006) reviews European soccer with Gini coefficients and Lorenz curves. To control for promotion and relegation, Goossens selects teams that appeared each year in the top soccer league in a country throughout the period of analysis. These teams were analyzed in each country's league in appearances in the top 3 and becoming champions. In Oklahoma, there would be an incredibly

small, if nonexistent, sample size of schools that have stayed in a particular classification throughout the period of analysis. This would make using a Gini coefficient and a Lorenz curve nearly impossible for analysis.

Finally, the Surprise Index is used to measure competitive balance by team and help determine what league size leads to the most balanced league. The Surprise Index is also used in cases to determine interest from fans. The most common application of this is to professional sports, where fan engagement and interest tie into the success of a professional league. This is not nearly as relevant for high school athletics. In addition, class sizes are already defined by the rules of the OSSAA. After the addition of the Rule 14 amendments, classification sizes could vary more, but only marginally. Teams change year by year, but the classification size will typically not.

Descriptive statistics is the best methodology for reviewing the competitive balance in athletics of public and private schools in Oklahoma. This helps drive a comparison between public and private school athletics in Oklahoma, based on the availability of data. The greatest available data for high school athletics is State Champions and State Runner-Ups. Therefore, descriptive statistics was deemed the most useful for analyzing counts and frequencies.

In this study, to test for significance, a chi-square test is conducted using categorical data (private or public) vs frequencies of championships and success. This blends the use of descriptive statistics and categorical and frequency statistical tests to help answer the first research question.

Related Literature

The literature search was performed through OU Libraries, as they aggregate sources across several databases. To assist in finding relevant information, the publication date of the article was limited to the year 2000 or later, written in English, and peer-reviewed. To be included as relevant literature, there were certain criteria that needed to be met, which are listed below:

- Focused on interscholastic athletics; collegiate and professional level sports have vastly different environments and competitive balance measures
- Data and research based on United States high schools

To begin the process of searching for related literature, key terms were identified and used to search. Key terms in each search are below:

- Competitive Balance **AND** High School – 6 found, 5 relevant
- Competitive Equity **AND** High School – 38 found, 0 relevant
- Competitive Balance **AND** Interscholastic – 5 found, 5 relevant

Articles were also searched for by hand from reference lists, which yielded five more relevant articles. Relevant articles are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 - Bibliographic Summary

Author	Design	Sample Description (if applicable)	Commentary
Johnson, J. E., Giannoulakis, C., & Scott, B. F. (2017). Interscholastic Competitive Balance: An Examination of State Athletic Association Administrators. *Journal of Sport Management*, *31*(3), 256–274.	Case study approach with a combination of semi-structured interviews and secondary information	Exec. Directors from state athletic administrative bodies in six Midwest US states	Interscholastic competitive balance is hard to define except for a state-by-state basis; at the interscholastic level, competitive balance is more about fairness for participants rather than from an economic perspective (i.e. pro sports)
Johnson, J. E., Lower, L. M., Scott, B. F., & Manwell, A. K. (2018). The public/private divide: an analysis of American law relative to recruiting and transfer policies in interscholastic athletics. *International Journal of Sport Policy & Politics*, *10*(3), 493–508.	Case law analysis of private schools engaging in recruiting and transfer violations that were banned by state associations	23 cases were found 1975-2016 that met the inclusion criteria for the study; cases originated in 15 different US states	Litigation will usually result in the courts siding with upholding competitive balance and the protection of education; as long as state associations create competitive balance measures that are fair and reasonable, they can expect to be defended legally
Scott, B. (2017). Assessing the Legality of State Tournament Bans in Interscholastic Athletics. *Physical Educator*, *74*(4), 789–794.	Review of an NJ school violating athletic administration bylaws and suing for injunctive relief	N/A	Courts sided with the athletic administration body and upheld the ban of a NJ high school from basketball postseason due to violation of bylaws; sets a precedent of punishments handed down from athletic administrations will be upheld in court
Fraina, M., Forsyth, E., Whisenant, W., Johnson, J., & Eicher, A. (2022). A Mixed-Methods Approach to Identifying Ethical Issues Pertinent in Interscholastic Athletics. *Physical Educator*, *79*(2), 157–188.	Four-phased mixed methods nonexperimental descriptive study	170 athletic directors affiliated with the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Administration	Described issues that athletic administrators find pertinent and of increasing importance in the next five years (published in 2022); broken down by section (geography of US)
Scott, B. F., Johnson, J. E., Lower, L. M., & Wanless, E. A. (2019). Competitive balance in interscholastic basketball: An examination of policy and non-policy factors. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education, 13*(3), 191–213.	Quantitative study using basketball results on policy (competitive balance methods) variables and non-policy (school characteristic) variables	768 teams from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio from 2014-2016	Found that current existing competitive balance methods for interscholastic basketball are ineffective in IL, IN, MI, and OH; can be used as justification for implementation or alteration of existing policies

Johnson, J. E., Pierce, D. A., Tracy, D. R., & Haworth, G. J. (2014). *The Public vs. Private Debate: A Case Study of Indiana Interscholastic Sport and the Tournament Success Factor*. *Global Sport Business Journal*, 2(3), 44-49.	Mixed methods case study that reviewed the Tournament Success Factor (TSF), a competitive balance measure, in Indiana to determine its effectiveness in promoting competitive balance between public and private high schools in each sport	623 Indiana state champions and 627 Indiana state runners-up from 1997-2013	The Tournament Success Factor (TSF) is applied to all high schools, public and private; however, the TSF worked as a competitive balance measure as more private high schools won championships, so they were affected more often than public schools
Johnson, J. E., Scott, B. F., & Manwell, A. K. (2019). *An Examination of Competitive Balance and Dominance within Interscholastic Football*. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 5(1), 21-28.	Descriptive, non-experimental design that uses archived data to examine success in interscholastic football	1,994 state champion and runner-up high school football teams in each US state from 2012-2016	Midwest and East Coast private school football teams were more successful to public school counterparts in their state; population, rurality, geography, and policy did not predict a state champion; national policy is not best practice to promote competitive equity
Johnson, J. E., Tracy, D. R., & Pierce, D. A. (2015). *National Review of Interscholastic Competitive Balance Solutions Related to the Public-Private Debate*. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 1(1), 29-51.	Descriptive qualitative analysis to understand the landscape of interscholastic sport and competitive balance policies in each state	51 commissioners or executive directors from each state	Methods to improve competitive balance in US high schools include multipliers, recruiting restrictions, separate playoffs, tournament success factors, various socioeconomic factors, or combinations of these factors
Epstein, T. L. (2008). *Prep Plus: Evaluating the Motivations for and Effects of Enrollment Multipliers and Other Measures in High School Sports*. *Texas Review of Entertainment & Sports Law*, 10(1), 1-22.	Review of competitive balance methods and description of their implementation in various states	N/A	Empirical evidence from Missouri shows that the multiplier as a competitive balance method does not work; if considered, litigation may not support state associations in the adoption of a multiplier
Harter, J. F. R. (2024). *School Characteristics and Interscholastic Tournament Success*. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 10(1), 24-45.	A descriptive, quantitative study that reviewed numerous factors of schools and performed correlation analysis of these factors to predict state championships and if they would be impacted by a Tournament Success Factor	434 Indiana high schools in the boys' basketball state tourney from 1993-2023	There is no link between state championships and the socioeconomic factors of schools, however, there was found to be a correlation between the socioeconomic aspects of schools and making the state tournament; this was found to be especially profound in smaller schools

Key Relevant Research

These sources provide background information to help guide and support this study that seeks to find if private high schools in Oklahoma have an athletic advantage over public high schools and what method of competitive balance would be the most successful in Oklahoma to ensure that private and public high schools are equally competitive.

Johnson, Giannoulakis, and Scott (2017) examined how state high school athletic association administrators conceptualize and assess competitive balance across interscholastic sports. Using survey data from administrators nationwide, the authors found that competitive balance was rarely defined strictly by equal win-loss records. Instead, administrators emphasized broader outcomes such as postseason access, the avoidance of dominance by a small number of schools and maintaining member school satisfaction. Results indicated that administrators were more concerned with perceived fairness and long-term program viability than with statistical parity alone. In Oklahoma, debates surrounding public-private competitive balance reflect the same administrator-level tension identified in this study; even when competitive imbalance is widely perceived, policy responses are constrained by governance norms and legal considerations.

Johnson, Lower, Scott, & Manwell (2018) analyze the legal foundations of the public-private divide in interscholastic athletics, focusing on recruiting and transfer regulations across states. The authors demonstrate that private schools often operate under different legal constraints than public schools, particularly regarding admissions selectivity and the ability of students to move in, which can create competitive advantages. This article relates to discussions of competitive balance in Oklahoma, where debates over private-school success frequently center on open enrollment, transfer rules, and perceived recruiting advantages. The legal analysis

helps contextualize why OSSAA policies must navigate constitutional constraints while attempting to equalize competition between public and private institutions.

Scott (2017) evaluates the legality of state tournament bans imposed on schools that violate athletic association rules, emphasizing due process and equal protection concerns. The article highlights how punitive measures intended to promote competitive balance can face legal challenges if applied inconsistently or without sufficient procedural safeguards. For Oklahoma high school athletics, this research is relevant because the OSSAA is currently facing a legal battle over the application of Rule 14. Scott's analysis highlights the importance of aligning competitive balance policies with legally defensible enforcement mechanisms to avoid litigation while maintaining the integrity of interscholastic competition.

Fraina et al. (2022) employed a mixed-methods design, combining surveys and qualitative interviews, to identify ethical issues in interscholastic athletics. Quantitative results showed that school administrators perceived competitive imbalance as one of the most pressing ethical concerns, particularly when dominance was sustained by resource disparities in a school district rather than athletic merit. Qualitative findings revealed frustration among coaches and administrators who believed that governance structures failed to adequately address structural inequities. To relate to Oklahoma, this study shows that competitive balance is not merely a statistical issue, but also an ethical one that influences trust in OSSAA governance.

Scott et al. (2019) investigated competitive balance in interscholastic basketball by analyzing both policy-based factors, such as classifications and competitive balance methodology, and non-policy factors, such as coaching stability and community investment. Their results indicated that while policy mechanisms explained some variation in competitive outcomes, non-policy factors were often stronger predictors of sustained success. Schools with

stable coaching staffs and strong feeder systems consistently outperformed similarly classified peers. Although the study did not focus on Oklahoma specifically, the findings closely mirror patterns observed in Oklahoma high school basketball, where a small number of programs frequently dominate postseason play within classifications. These results suggest that OSSAA's reliance on enrollment-based classification alone may be insufficient to address competitive imbalance in basketball, as deeper organizational and community-level advantages persist.

Johnson et al. (2014) presented a case study of Indiana's Tournament Success Factor (TSF), a policy that reclassified schools based on sustained postseason success. The study found that TSF effectively redistributed dominant programs into higher classifications, reducing championship concentration among a small subset of schools. However, results also revealed significant resistance from affected schools and ongoing debate regarding fairness and punishment of success. While Oklahoma has not implemented a TSF-style system, the Indiana findings are highly relevant. It is hotly debated whether repeated success by certain schools reflects competitive imbalance or program excellence. This study provides empirical evidence that success-based reclassification can reduce dominance but also illustrates the political and administrative challenges Oklahoma would likely face if similar reforms were proposed.

Johnson, Scott, and Manwell (2019) analyzed competitive balance in interscholastic football using longitudinal championship data. Their results demonstrated that championship outcomes were disproportionately concentrated among a relatively small group of schools, with private schools often overrepresented relative to their population size. The study concluded that structural advantages, as opposed to random variation, played a major role in sustained football dominance. These findings strongly resonate with Oklahoma high school football, where historical championship data similarly show repeated success among select programs. Although

data from Oklahoma was not directly analyzed in this article, the national patterns identified in this study provide a strong empirical rationale for examining whether outcomes in Oklahoma high school football reflect structural imbalance rather than competitive parity.

Johnson et al. (2015) conducted a national review of competitive balance policies related to the public–private debate, synthesizing evidence from multiple states. The authors found that no single policy solution fully resolved competitive imbalance. However, states that employed multi-layered approaches tended to reduce dominance more effectively than those relying solely on enrollment classification. For Oklahoma, these findings are particularly relevant. OSSAA currently relies heavily on enrollment-based classification, with limited use of supplemental balance mechanisms (as the amendments to Rule 14 apply only to private schools). This study suggests that Oklahoma's competitive balance challenges may persist precisely because its policy toolkit is relatively narrow compared to other states.

Epstein (2008) evaluated enrollment multipliers, including "Prep Plus," through a legal and policy lens, assessing both motivations and effects. The analysis found that multipliers were often adopted in response to public perceptions of private-school dominance, but empirical support for their effectiveness was mixed. In some cases, multipliers reduced championship concentration; in others, they simply shifted competitive advantage. These findings are directly applicable to Oklahoma, where enrollment size is the primary classification metric, but multipliers have been discussed before. Epstein's results caution that while multipliers may appeal as a straightforward solution, the consequences of using multipliers could be ineffective and lead to legal repercussions.

Harter (2024) empirically examined the relationship between school characteristics and interscholastic tournament success, finding that enrollment size, socioeconomic status, and

geographic location were significant predictors of postseason achievement. The results indicated that schools with greater resources were more likely to experience sustained tournament success, independent of sport-specific factors. Although the study did not isolate Oklahoma, its findings are highly relevant given Oklahoma's pronounced rural-urban divide and wide variation in school resources. The results suggest that OSSAA competitive balance analyses should incorporate structural school characteristics when evaluating whether current classification systems adequately promote equity across Oklahoma high school athletics.

Summary

The existing literature on high school competitive balance is currently lacking. National studies have been conducted to investigate factors affecting competitive balance, but due to profound differences between states, an in-depth analysis of competitive balance must be made on a state-by-state basis. This study provides an extensive examination and analysis of the recent history of competitive balance in Oklahoma high school athletics and how an alternative method of creating competitive balance would perform in Oklahoma.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Introduction

In this chapter, the sample, measurement protocols, research design, data collection, and data analysis is reviewed. Instrumentation is less emphasized, as this was primarily an empirical analysis of existing quantitative data sources. This approach was used to answer two research questions:

a. Do Oklahoma private schools have a competitive advantage in interscholastic athletics over public schools?
b. Would a Tournament Success Factor (TSF) successfully help promote competitive balance in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics?

Several of the ideas presented in *The Public vs. Private Debate: A Case Study of Indiana Interscholastic Sport and the Tournament Success Factor* by Johnson, Pierce, Tracy, and Haworth (2019) helped inspire the design and methodology in this study.

It should also be noted that other competitive balance solutions currently exist in other states, but considering recent litigation, the TSF was selected as the primary analysis method. In a recent lawsuit, the OSSAA motioned to approve changes to Rule 14 to end the litigation brought against them by five private schools. The change to Rule 14 was to classify all schools by their Average Daily Membership (ADM) rather than using a combination of success and socioeconomic factors. As of the time of this writing, a hearing had not been scheduled to determine the fate of the Rule 14 amendments.

Sampling

The sample includes all 482 member schools of the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA). In the OSSAA, 455 of the member schools are public schools and 27 are private high schools. The results of these teams from the state tournament in each OSSAA-sponsored sport from 1996-2025 was used for analysis.

Research Design

This study is a quantitative analysis of secondary data from state tournament results in the State of Oklahoma from 1996-2025. Oklahoma was selected as the state of study as a national standard of competitive balance in interscholastic athletics would be hard to standardize due to "elements unique to each state" (Johnson, et al., 2013). This idea is echoed in *An Examination of Competitive Balance and Dominance within Interscholastic Football*. *Journal of Amateur Sport* by Johnson, Scott, and Manwell in a 2019 study. Some private high schools that compete in the OSSAA today did not exist in 1996. Therefore, some of the results for high schools will be null before they became members of the OSSAA.

Data Collection

Data was manually collected from existing state tournament brackets on OSSAA's website (ossaa.com). Each state tournament in Oklahoma is made up of at least quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals (which includes eight teams). A book of data that lists top eight finishes by percentage and count of private schools from 2003-2019 was provided by the OSSAA, which was created by Chris Wilfong (Wilfong, 2021). Any further missing data was manually collected from local and state newspapers, most notably The Oklahoman, which covers each state event that is put on by the OSSAA, each year.

Data Analysis

To answer the first research question, a chi-square test was conducted using observed frequencies of the number of times that private and public schools have made top 8 in each OSSAA-sponsored sport's state tournament. The frequencies of championships won was analyzed using a chi-square test. This design was used as it follows the policy used in Rule 14 from 2011-2025. This determines whether there is a significant difference in success between Oklahoma public and private high schools in interscholastic athletic performance.

To determine if the Tournament Success Factor (TSF), which is currently used in Indiana, would be successful in promoting competitive balance in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics, a comprehensive review of each state tournament for each sport was conducted from 1996-2025. Using this data, the TSF was applied to each school, which helped create a model that shows how schools would have moved up and down throughout the defined study period, based upon athletic success in each sport. For this study, since data availability of game results for is sparse outside of state tournaments in Oklahoma, having a TSF applied to a school is defined as reaching the state championship game in a sport two years in a row. Therefore, if a school made a state championship game in a sport two years in a row, it is defined as a "bump opportunity", where a TSF would be applied and the school would have been bumped up had Oklahoma had a TSF in place. This is very similar to the model Indiana uses, as winning semi-state (which in Oklahoma, is winning a state tournament semifinal) two years in a row would bump a team up in any sport (IHSAA, 2023). A chi-square model was created from this data to assess if there is a significant difference in the frequency of "bump opportunities" between public and private schools.

A second model was used to predict the probability of successful performance over time based upon factors of a school being private or not, their classification, the existence of the Rule 14 amendments at the time, and interaction effects between these factors. This involves a ranked-ordered logit model with random-effects panel adjustments for school. This was named Model 2 and follows this analytical procedure.

Panel ranked ordered-logit model (tournament level outcome)

Here we treat "tournament level reached" as an **ordered categorical** dependent variable and allow repeated observations over time.

Outcome definition

Let t index year/season. Define an ordinal outcome: $L_{ist} \in \{0,1,2,3,4\}$

for example:

- 0 = did not qualify for state tournament / top-8
- 1 = quarterfinalist (top-8)
- 2 = semifinalist (top-4)
- 3 = runner-up
- 4 = champion

Latent-variable ordered logit with panel structure

Introduce an unobserved latent performance variable L^*_{ist}:

$$L^*_{ist} = \mathbf{x}'_{ist}\boldsymbol{\beta} + \alpha_i + \eta_s + \tau_t + u_{ist},$$

where:

- $\mathbf{x}_{ist}$includes covariates such as Private$_i$, class, Rule 14 period indicator, and interactions
- α_i= school effect (panel component; can be random effects in ordered logit)
- η_s= sport fixed effects

- τ_t= year fixed effects
- u_{ist}follows a logistic distribution for ordered logit

Observed categories are generated by thresholds (cutpoints) $\kappa_1 < \kappa_2 < \cdots < \kappa_J$:

$$L_{ist} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } L^*_{ist} \le \kappa_1 \\ 1 & \text{if } \kappa_1 < L^*_{ist} \le \kappa_2 \\ \vdots & \\ J & \text{if } \kappa_J < L^*_{ist} \end{cases}$$

Ordered-logit probability statement

For $j = 0, \ldots, J$, the cumulative probability form is:

$$\Pr(L_{ist} \le j \mid \mathbf{x}_{ist}, \alpha_i) \;=\; \Lambda\big(\kappa_j - \mathbf{x}'_{ist}\boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha_i - \eta_s - \tau_t\big),$$

where $\Lambda(z) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}}$is the logistic CDF.

Equivalently, the category probability is:

$$\Pr(L_{ist} = j \mid \mathbf{x}_{ist}, \alpha_i) = \Lambda\big(\kappa_j - \mathbf{x}'_{ist}\boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha_i - \eta_s - \tau_t\big) - \Lambda\big(\kappa_{j-1} - \mathbf{x}'_{ist}\boldsymbol{\beta} - \alpha_i - \eta_s - \tau_t\big).$$

Stated explicitly consistent with above OLS approach, i.e. similar predictor structure:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{x}'_{ist}\boldsymbol{\beta} = \beta_1\,\text{Private}_i + \beta_2\,\text{Class}_{ist} + \beta_3\,\text{Rule14}_t + \beta_4\text{Sport}_s + \beta_5(\text{Private}_i \times \text{Rule14}_t) \\ + \beta_6(\text{Private}_i \times \text{Class}_{ist}) + \beta_7(\text{Rule14}_t \times \text{Class}_{ist}) \\ + \beta_8(\text{Rule14}_t \times \text{Class}_{ist} \times \text{Private}_i). \end{aligned}$$

Results were evaluated based on both whether they are statistically significant and how large the differences actually are. For the models that count TSF "bump opportunities," the results showed how the expected number of these opportunities changes based on factors such as whether a school is private or public and its classification, while keeping other factors the same. Special focus was placed on whether private schools tend to have more repeated postseason success and whether that pattern changes across different school sizes. Statistical significance

was judged using a standard 0.05 threshold, and predicted values were used to show whether any differences are meaningful in real-world terms.

For the models that examine tournament performance over time, the results showed whether certain factors increase or decrease the chances that a school advances further in the state tournament, such as reaching the quarterfinals, semifinals, championship game, or winning a title. Because these results are not directly reported in simple outcome units, predicted probabilities were used to clearly show how factors like being a private school, school classification, and policy periods affect the likelihood of reaching each level of tournament success.

Overall, these findings were used to determine whether private schools consistently perform better in postseason play and whether a Tournament Success Factor could help reduce competitive imbalance in Oklahoma high school athletics.

Chapter 4 - Results

This chapter details the results and outputs from analyses that were detailed in Chapter 3. Tables included in this chapter highlight schools that are in each classification for each sport, Chi-square analysis of championship proportions, a sensitivity table to gauge athletic dominance by group, Chi-square analysis of "bump opportunities" related to the TSF, and the TSF panel regression.

The number of schools placed into each classification in each sport is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of Schools by Classification

Sport	Classification							
	6A	5A	4A	3A	2A	A	B	C
Baseball	32	32	64	64	64	96	121	
Boys Basketball	32	32	64	64	64	64	157	
Boys Cross Country	32	40	59	54	71	222		
Boys Golf	32	40	56	80	272			
Boys Soccer	32	32	32	34				
Boys Swimming	32	35						
Boys Tennis	32	32	46					
Boys Track	32	40	56	64	96	192		
Boys Wrestling	32	38	38	70				
Football	32	32	32	32	64	64	48	32
Girls Basketball	32	32	64	64	64	64	157	
Girls Cross Country	32	40	56	56	72	224		
Girls Golf	32	40	56	80	272			
Girls Soccer	32	32	34	32				
Girls Swimming	32	32						
Girls Tennis	32	32	47					
Girls Track	32	40	56	64	96	194		
Girls Volleyball	32	32	32	50				
Softball FP	32	32	64	64	64	96	123	

These numbers are based on the 2025-26 school year, as prior data regarding classifications is very difficult to find. While numbers in smaller classifications fluctuate slightly

year-to-year, these numbers stay relatively similar over time (as most schools do not see dramatic increases or decreases in population). This table serves as a reference for results of the models tested in this study. Many schools that participate in "smaller" sports (such as swimming, volleyball, tennis, etc.) are typically larger schools, as they have a larger student body to choose athletes from and greater resources to sponsor those activities.

Table 3 details the counts of championships won by public and private Oklahoma high schools throughout the study period.

Table 3: Championship Proportions by School Type

Sport	Public Titles	Private Titles	Total	Private Proportion
Baseball	198	14	212	0.066
Boys Basketball	182	22	204	0.108
Boys Cross Country	117	35	152	0.230
Boys Golf	98	52	150	0.347
Boys Soccer	59	26	85	0.306
Boys Swimming	43	4	47	0.085
Boys Tennis	53	45	98	0.459
Boys Track	162	20	182	0.110
Boys Wrestling	122	0	122	0.000
Football	230	26	256	0.102
Girls Basketball	200	8	208	0.038
Girls Cross Country	111	41	152	0.270
Girls Golf	121	14	135	0.104
Girls Soccer	57	28	85	0.329
Girls Swimming	47	1	48	0.021
Girls Tennis	43	55	98	0.561
Girls Track	166	14	180	0.078
Girls Volleyball	28	65	93	0.699
Softball FP	195	4	199	0.020

The results of the chi-square goodness-of-fit are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of Proportions of Championships

Sport	Chi-Square	P-Value		Binomial P-Value	
Baseball	0.40	0.5257		0.3019	
Boys Basketball	10.36	0.0013	**	0.0026	**
Boys Cross Country	87.28	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Boys Golf	239.64	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Boys Soccer	100.36	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Boys Swimming	0.75	0.3858		0.2687	
Boys Tennis	301.24	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Boys Track	9.99	0.0016	**	0.0032	**
Boys Wrestling	7.24	0.0071	**	1.0000	
Football	10.04	0.0015	**	0.0027	**
Girls Basketball	1.21	0.2709		0.9008	
Girls Cross Country	131.30	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Girls Golf	5.81	0.0160	*	0.0196	*
Girls Soccer	120.15	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Girls Swimming	1.12	0.2891		0.9372	
Girls Tennis	473.03	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Girls Track	1.61	0.2042		0.1353	
Girls Volleyball	726.94	<0.001	***	<0.001	***
Softball FP	4.85	0.0276	*	0.9963	

** significant at the $\alpha < 0.05$ level, ** significant at the $\alpha < 0.01$ level, *** significant at the $\alpha < 0.001$ level*

The results of the chi-square test showed that several sports throughout the data collection had a significant imbalance in the number of championship titles won by private schools and public schools in Oklahoma. From 1996-2025, private schools won significantly more titles than expected in boys' basketball, boys' cross country, boys' golf, boys' soccer, boys' tennis, boys' track, football, girls' cross country, girls' golf, girls' soccer, girls' tennis, and girls' volleyball. A binomial test was included to assess the nature of imbalance in favor of private schools, as it is a one-tailed test as opposed to the two-tailed test of the chi-square analysis.

Using the assumed proportion of participation from public and private Oklahoma high schools (~94.4% public schools, ~5.6% private schools), a sensitivity table of the proportion of

schools participating was created to expound on the findings from Table 3. It is certain that the 482 schools that currently exist in the OSSAA today did not all compete in each sport, each year or were even open in 1996. However, detailed data of participating schools for each sport and each year does not exist, therefore, the sensitivity table helps support the findings from the chi-square analysis. The sensitivity table is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Private Championship Proportions and Thresholds of Representation

Sport	Private Titles Proportion	Chi-Square	Chi-Square P-Value		Private Representation Threshold of Non-Significance
Girls Volleyball	0.6989	726.94	<0.001	***	59.95%
Girls Tennis	0.5612	473.03	<0.001	***	46.30%
Boys Tennis	0.4592	301.24	<0.001	***	36.40%
Boys Golf	0.3467	239.64	<0.001	***	27.55%
Girls Soccer	0.3294	120.15	<0.001	***	23.90%
Boys Soccer	0.3059	100.36	<0.001	***	21.85%
Girls Cross Country	0.2697	131.3	<0.001	***	20.60%
Boys Cross Country	0.2303	87.28	<0.001	***	17.05%
Boys Basketball	0.1078	10.36	0.0013	**	7.25%
Boys Track	0.1099	9.99	0.0016	**	7.25%
Football	0.1016	10.04	0.0015	**	7.05%
Girls Golf	0.1037	5.81	0.016	*	6.30%
Girls Track	0.0778	1.61	0.2042		4.70%
Baseball	0.066	0.4	0.5257		4.00%
Boys Swimming	0.0851	0.75	0.3858		3.40%
Girls Basketball	0.0385	1.21	0.2709		2.00%
Softball FP	0.0201	4.85	0.0276	*	0.80%
Girls Swimming	0.0208	1.12	0.2891		0.40%
Boys Wrestling	0	7.24	0.0071	**	0.10%

** significant at the $\alpha < 0.05$ level, ** significant at the $\alpha < 0.01$ level, *** significant at the $\alpha < 0.001$ level*

Several sports would require private schools to have a significantly larger proportion of schools participating in them for the share of titles they have won to be non-significant (ex. 59.95% in volleyball, 46.3% in girls' tennis, 36.4% in boys' tennis). As seen in Table 2, girls' swimming is the smallest sport in Oklahoma, in which only 64 schools participate. If all 27 private schools included in this study participated, we can assume that theoretical maximum

representation private schools could make up is 42.2% of schools in a given activity in a given year.

Table 6 below details the chi-square analysis of bump opportunities for public and private schools in the largest sports throughout the data analysis period.

Table 6: Chi-Square Analysis of TSF Bump Opportunities

Sport	No Bump Opportunity (Public)	Bump Opportunity (Public)	No Bump Opportunity (Private)	Bump Opportunity (Private)	Statistic	P Value	
Baseball	2957	203	164	8	0.864	0.353	
Boys Basketball	3824	169	245	20	6.437	0.011	*
Football	4179	219	262	24	6.356	0.012	*
Girls Basketball	3498	213	127	7	0.064	0.801	
Softball FP	2728	190	14	1	0.000	1.000	

** significant at the α < 0.05 level, ** significant at the α < 0.01 level, *** significant at the α < 0.001 level*

For teams that make the state tournament (or at least the quarterfinals of the sports listed in the table), it is found that private schools would bump more often than public schools would in the sports of football and boys' basketball. We can also assume that once the quarterfinals are reached, that private schools are more successful at reaching the state championship game than public schools in those sports as well.

On the next page, Table 7 shows the results from the panel regression.

Table 7: TSF Panel Regression					
Term	Estimate	Standard Error	Statistic	P Value	
(Intercept)	1.781	0.06	29.486	0	***
sportBoys Basketball	-0.034	0.059	-0.58	0.562	
sportFootball	-0.03	0.061	-0.497	0.619	
sportGirls Basketball	-0.029	0.059	-0.498	0.618	
sportSoftball FP	0.02	0.06	0.325	0.745	
rule_14	-0.022	0.064	-0.343	0.732	
class3A	-0.001	0.065	-0.015	0.988	
class4A	-0.011	0.067	-0.158	0.874	
class5A	0.227	0.076	2.996	0.003	**
classA	0.026	0.065	0.407	0.684	
rule_14:class3A	-0.008	0.093	-0.089	0.929	
rule_14:class4A	0.022	0.091	0.239	0.811	
rule_14:class5A	-0.187	0.096	-1.947	0.052	
rule_14:classA	0.06	0.091	0.658	0.511	
rule_14:private	0.391	0.202	1.94	0.052	
class3A:private	0.235	0.168	1.398	0.162	
class4A:private	0.621	0.203	3.055	0.002	**
class5A:private	-0.005	0.228	-0.024	0.981	
classA:private	-0.711	0.441	-1.612	0.107	
rule_14:class3A:private	-0.383	0.281	-1.363	0.173	
rule_14:class4A:private	-0.895	0.319	-2.801	0.005	**
rule_14:class5A:private	-0.35	0.335	-1.046	0.296	
rule_14:classA:private	-0.09	0.543	-0.166	0.868	
sd.id	0.363	0.018	20.371	0	***
sd.idios	0.985	0.01	101.838	0	***

** significant at the $\alpha < 0.05$ level, ** significant at the $\alpha < 0.01$ level, *** significant at the $\alpha < 0.001$ level*

The panel regression showed that private schools in class 4A had a greater difficulty of advancing in the state tournament, after the Rule 14 amendments were implemented. Schools in Class 5A , controlling for sport, private status, and policy, were found to have more ease in advancing in the state tournament. It should be noted that Classes 6A and 2A and below were

removed from the panel regression, due to having a low number of private schools placed in them. A full list of schools by ADM can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion

While this study does not seek to explain the structures that create this perceived competitive imbalance, it serves as a guide to highlight the imbalance that exists in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics. As the number of public and private schools differ from state-to-state, along with a myriad of other factors (school sizes, existing policies, etc.), analysis of competitive balance within interscholastic athletics must be performed at a state-level rather than a national level (Scott et al., 2019). Competitive balance analysis typically focuses on economic impacts in professional sport, which is much less important in interscholastic athletics. While there is still a degree of fan enthusiasm that comes from uncertainty of outcomes (which is a factor in ticket sales and television subscriptions), interscholastic athletics concerns itself more on fairness and equity for athletes in competition (Johnson, et al., 2017). This study also keyed in on researching an alternative competitive balance method, the Tournament Success Factor (TSF). The currently existing competitive balance policy in Oklahoma has evolved since its conception in 2011 but currently sits on the precipice of non-existence due to a lawsuit. This stems from its bias of only applying to private schools. While other states have adopted policies such as separate playoffs and enrollment multipliers, these measures still stand biased against private schools, and create an opportunity for further litigation based upon the fact that these policies are still biased against private schools (Epstein, 2008). The TSF is purely activated upon the success of a school, public or private. This impartiality guards a state association from legal ramifications due to a bias in competitive balance policy (Johnson, et al., 2023).

The results from the models tend to show a trend of private school dominance in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics when it comes to winning championships in several sports, which follows trends that were described in the literature. While this study did not focus on

explaining reasonings for this imbalance, the literature points towards resource imbalance and geography as the greatest driver (Johnson et al., 2018 & Harter, 2024). It should be noted that that there were sports that did not contain a significant imbalance, such as baseball, boys' swimming, girls' swimming, girls' basketball, and girls' track. Furthermore, Oklahoma public schools were found to win significantly more than Oklahoma private schools in boys' wrestling and fast pitch softball. In a 2014 study, Indiana had not seen a private school win a championship in swimming or cross country, which parallels and deviates from the trend shown in Oklahoma (Johnson, et al., 2014). Oklahoma private schools are not extensively successful in swimming, but are much more so in cross country. This highlights the differences between states in different sports, and the reasoning for analysis at a state level.

The proportion of Oklahoma private and public schools that compete in each sport varies, sometimes annually. However, these fluctuations are generally small. Table 4 is based on the number of championships that were won by private schools. In sports that had a p-value of <0.001, the lowest representation was 17.1% of schools competing in that sport needed to be private for the proportion of championships won to be insignificantly imbalanced. Table 4 helps show the cutoffs, or perhaps the disparity, between public and private schools in Oklahoma, athletically.

To study a hypothetical application of the TSF in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics, a rather rudimentary model was created. If a school appeared twice in a row from 1996-2025 in the state championship game of a sport, then that was quantified as a "bump opportunity." A count of these were kept for public and private schools for each sport throughout the period and a chi-square analysis was performed. The results showed that private schools would have been bumped up significantly more often than public schools in football and boys' basketball. This is

expected, as Table 3 showed a significant imbalance at the $p < .01$ level. However, an important distinction must be made, as this model only included teams once they had reached the state tournament (or the final eight if the state tournament began with more teams). This is due to the TSF not applying until eight teams are left in the tournament.

The panel regression details the difficulty of advancing in the state tournament, based upon factors such as class, sport, public/private, and the existence of the Rule 14 amendments. This model showed that private schools in Class 4A advanced easier before Rule 14 was amended, but it became more difficult to advance after 2011 when the amendments went into effect. This could potentially be explained by the movement of schools up from Class 3A to 4A. Many private schools are placed were placed in the Class 3A-2A range before Rule 14 being amended. When the amendments went into effect, private schools were artificially moved up a class, which placed them into Class 4A and Class 3A in many activities, unless they were typically unsuccessful in a sport. It should be noted that private schools may have less observations after the amending of Rule 14 due to the requirement of the same level of success, but in a higher classification. However, with effects from private school athletic success still prevailing after Rule 14's newest inception, this leads to the generalization that some form of competitive imbalance still existed. The regression also showed Class 5A is easier to advance in, however, the size of Class 5A versus smaller classes could impact this result.

Implications of the Tournament Success Factor

While the results suggested that a TSF in Oklahoma would have at least some form of success in achieving competitive balance, it is important to highlight some implications of implementing a TSF. Firstly, it would be expected that administrators and coaches from highly successful athletic programs would be staunchly against the implementation of the TSF,

stemming from arguments about punishing success. This was the case in Indiana. The Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) Commissioner at the time, Bobby Cox, provided thoughtful arguments against these criticisms, which included a change in perspective of what success is and highlighting the fact that the TSF would apply to a smaller subset of schools (Johnson, et al., 2023; Johnson, et al., 2014). In addition to this argument, the movement of schools into higher classes would provide the opportunity for other schools to experience greater success, which benefits a greater number of student-athletes.

Secondly, there is a logistical implication of the TSF that schools would have to contend with. Numerous OSSAA-sponsored activities in Oklahoma are district-based, which means that schools play a certain number of assigned teams each regular season. A movement in classification for a school would impact who district opponents could be, creating a potential increase in driving distance and expenditures for a school. Nonetheless, schools are reimbursed from the OSSAA for expenditures related to hosting or travelling in postseason play. While this does not account for regular season travel, it does provide financial relief in the most travel-heavy part of a team's year.

In addition to logistical challenges, if a school has the same coach for boys' and girls' basketball, and those teams are in separate classes, this could create a situation where the coach cannot attend a game. However, only Classes 6A and 5A play basketball in a district format. Smaller classes play a school-scheduled regular season, where classification does not matter until the postseason. Most other activities have limited overlaps, where multi-sport coaches would not have to face this challenge.

Overall, a TSF appears to promote competitive balance but does have challenges like all methods of creating competitive balance do. While there is no perfect solution for competitive

balance, the TSF does guard against legal challenges, which is one of the largest issues that interscholastic competitive balance in Oklahoma has faced. The implementation of a TSF in Oklahoma would require support from schools, which could be challenging to initially obtain.

Limitations of the Study

This study has a few limitations, most stemming from data availability. Firstly, data was not available for all schools in each sport regarding season results and classification placement. This led to not being able to pinpoint when schools joined the OSSAA and began competing or what classifications schools were in. While this has a smaller impact on the overall model of assessing competitive balance, it limits conclusions that can be drawn in regard to classification specific competitive balance.

Related to data availability, postseason data for certain sports were limited to champions and runners-up, which limited the number of sports that posthumous TSF models shown in this study could apply to. Access to a full list of team sports and their tournaments throughout the analysis period would have helped build a better model to highlight the extent of the impacts a TSF would have had on each sport in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics, and allowed for stronger conclusions to be drawn about its overall success.

For the purposes of studying a retroactive TSF model in Oklahoma, the count of “bump opportunities” was used to provide a comparison between public and private schools. This comparison does not accurately reflect the TSF as it as applied in Indiana, since teams that would “bump up” would have to play in a class higher than before. This would have impacted the count of “bump opportunities”, however, it is impossible to know which teams would have returned to their original classification in two years or stayed in the classification above. In addition, school

fixed effects could not be used in the panel regression to the appearance of schools numerous times throughout the study period.

Related to this idea, after the Rule 14 amendments were enacted, it is unknown if a private school was already "bumped up" to a higher classification or not when they appeared in the dataset. This would possibly mute some effects as the binding of the Rule 14 amendments could cause private schools to disappear from the dataset due to playing more difficult competition 2011 and beyond. For private schools that did appear, it is unknown whether they were already "bumped up" in a higher classification or due to being unsuccessful, placed in a classification that their ADM dictated. This limits the significance of the findings, as the probability of advancement in a specific classification could be different due to the implementation of the Rule 14 amendments.

Finally, some data for classifications recently had a very small quantity, due to recent classification changes. In 2024, football added divisions below the 6A level, which split Classes 2A, A, and B into two divisions. The subsequent year, baseball added divisions for Class 2A and Class A, also splitting into two divisions. While this is a small timeframe of the analysis period, the decision was made to remove this data, since classes that originally had one championship and state tournament would now have two with the same teams. This would create a bias in the data, as eight teams would have made the quarterfinals that would not have made it naturally before.

Recommendations for Future Study

Data availability and record-keeping has significantly improved as technology has improved. State tournament information is now widely available and shared on the internet,

which allows for archiving for future use and reference. Community-based record keeping has also grown, such as iwasatthegame.com, which keeps records of regular season and postseason results. In the future, as these records are kept, a study like this could utilize these better records and fill in gaps from this analysis. The TSF windows could also be expanded to beyond two years to better capture sustained success, as the original Rule 14 amendments determined success on a five-year and three-year basis. Furthermore, a review and analysis of classification-level data could provide insights into not only which sports have the greatest imbalance, but which classifications. This would help inform policy-making better and allow for decision-makers to understand where decisions that are made need to have the most impact.

In regard to political and societal shifts in interscholastic sports, there will also be a need to consider impacts of NIL and transfers when analyzing competitive balance in high school competition. Oklahoma recently began providing a tax voucher program that provides tax breaks for qualifying families who send their child to a high school that charges tuition (Oklahoma Tax Commission, 2026). This would provide a greater enticement for families to enroll their child at a private school, as compared to before. Along with this, in 2021, Governor Kevin Stitt in Oklahoma signed a bill into law that allowed students to begin profiting off NIL opportunities (KFOR, 2022). This opened the door for schools and communities to begin paying high school student-athletes. As noted in this study, previous literature has pointed to a resource disparity between schools, which one could assume would lead to a difference in NIL resources as well. There is also concern for potentially negative impacts for student-athletes as bad actors could affect a student-athlete's future and the stressful nature of "pay-for-play." State associations could also see an increased risk for litigation as they create guidelines to protect the sanctity and meaning of interscholastic athletics (Sanderson, 2026). While these are more recent issues, it is

certainly plausible that these factors will have at least a marginal impact on competitive balance in interscholastic athletics and should be considered in future studies.

Conclusion

This study's purpose was to help provide analytical basis to claims of competitive disparity in Oklahoma interscholastic athletics between public high schools and private high schools. Analyses performed in this study highlighted that some form of imbalance between public and private high schools exist in several sports. While the amendments to Rule 14 were created in 2011 to help address this, it was predominantly targeted towards private schools, which led to legal challenges. As of this writing, the amendments to Rule 14 have been suspended, leaving no form of competitive balance in place currently. This reasoning led to the research and application of the TSF model seen in this study. The TSF would be highly defensible in a court of law, but there may be greater difficulty in convincing members in a state association of its adoption (Johnson et al., 2014). The results from the application of a TSF to schools in Oklahoma indicated that sports with a strong competitive imbalance would perhaps stand to gain greater competitive balance with the application of the TSF system. While no system is perfect, the TSF would be an improvement in the fact that it is unbiased in its application, and reassigns schools that become incredibly successful compared to their peers.

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Appendix

2025-2026 OSSAA ADM FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES

#	School	ADM
1	Broken Arrow	5998.56
2	Union	4709.11
3	Mustang	3725.64
4	Jenks	3624.71
5	Owasso	3027.59
6	Yukon	2933.38
7	Edmond Santa Fe	2731.06
8	Edmond Memorial	2717.38
9	Moore	2619.06
10	Westmoore	2558.96
11	Edmond North	2510.63
12	Bixby	2393.92
13	Norman North	2318.20
14	Deer Creek (Edmond)	2274.86
15	Enid	2103.38
16	Norman	2026.90
17	Southmoore	2004.96
18	Putnam City West	1910.10
19	Putnam City	1899.20
20	Northwest Classen	1846.50
21	Choctaw	1845.82
22	Stillwater	1784.30
23	Bartlesville	1685.00
24	Sand Springs	1680.47
25	U. S. Grant	1650.40
26	Piedmont	1567.84
27	Putnam City North	1491.20
28	Ponca City	1456.81
29	Eisenhower	1444.20
30	Capitol Hill	1434.40
31	Muskogee	1368.55
32	Sapulpa	1338.25
33	Tahlequah	1317.60
34	Claremore	1311.41
35	Booker T Washington	1286.30
36	Midwest City	1261.40
37	MacArthur	1227.30
38	Lawton	1224.20
39	Del City	1143.30
40	East Central	1113.20
41	Carl Albert	1079.50
42	Edison Prep	1059.00
43	Coweta	1055.55
44	Santa Fe South	1041.30
45	Shawnee	1016.01
46	Durant	1012.78
47	El Reno	995.51
48	Will Rogers	962.40
49	Duncan	954.06
50	McAlester	951.61
51	Altus	946.37
52	Memorial (Tulsa)	945.70
53	Nathan Hale	943.10
54	Guthrie	941.17
55	Collinsville	913.57
56	Noble	890.75
57	Guymon	860.00
58	Pryor	853.73
59	Southeast	851.30
60	Bishop Kelley	850.70
61	Classen SAS at NE	794.90
62	Newcastle	793.46
63	Glenpool	784.04
64	Bishop McGuinness	783.04
65	Elgin	774.94
66	Grove	773.38
67	John Marshall	771.00
68	Blanchard	768.03
69	Western Heights	763.38
70	Ada	757.03
71	Douglass	722.80
72	Chickasha	721.61
73	Woodward	702.38
74	Ardmore	698.99
75	Tuttle	678.85
76	McLain	676.20
77	Tecumseh	668.82
78	Poteau	668.49
79	Skiatook	664.10
80	Weatherford	658.11
81	Stilwell	636.14
82	Harrah	629.72
83	Cache	626.62
84	Hilldale	611.18
85	Elk City	603.41
86	Broken Bow	598.87
87	Miami	589.77
88	Clinton	587.65
89	Wagoner	587.20
90	Sallisaw	585.11
91	Bridge Creek	556.77
92	Bethany	551.20
93	Ft. Gibson	544.51
94	Catoosa	518.34
95	Oologah-Talala	518.15
96	Harding Charter Prep	517.53
97	Cushing	508.02
98	Cleveland	500.46
99	Madill	499.98
100	Mannford	481.54
101	North Rock Creek	476.86
102	McLoud	473.08
103	Pauls Valley	472.98
104	Bristow	471.84
105	Sulphur	460.09
106	Jay	457.24
107	Perkins-Tryon	451.58
108	Purcell	439.71
109	Muldrow	430.87
110	Plainview	430.29
111	Locust Grove	424.06
112	ASTEC	423.86
113	Inola	421.93
114	Seminole	421.81
115	Mount St. Mary	415.21
116	Idabel	413.31
117	Byng	407.90
118	Central (Tulsa)	405.40
119	Berryhill	401.86
120	Verdigris	398.20
121	Lone Grove	394.78
122	Kingfisher	391.78
123	Vinita	391.67
124	Star-Spencer	390.80
125	Eufaula	389.44
126	Harding Fine Arts Acad	386.48
127	Pathways	385.70
128	Jones	382.94
129	Stigler	377.66
130	Dove Science (OKC)	376.21
131	Crooked Oak	374.71
132	Metro Christian	374.11
133	Checotah	371.55
134	Marlow	367.74
135	Anadarko	364.64
136	Daniel Webster	362.80
137	OK Christian School	361.00
138	Kingston	358.57
139	Dewey	353.72
140	Sequoyah (Claremore)	352.78
141	Holland Hall	348.30
142	Heritage Hall	345.69
143	Washington	342.83
144	Cascia Hall	342.50
145	Little Axe	340.97
146	Dickson	338.27
147	Blackwell	336.17
148	Bethel	333.99
149	Westville	332.09
150	Roland	330.13
151	Dove Science (Tulsa)	329.62
152	Okmulgee	326.91
153	Victory Christian	326.10
154	Chandler	321.54
155	Perry	320.59
156	Lincoln Christian	317.18
157	Chisholm	315.49
158	Lindsay	315.10
159	Sperry	315.10
160	Lexington	314.12
161	Casady	314.00
162	Kiefer	309.07
163	Crossings Christian	305.70
164	Millwood	304.42
165	Heavener	299.04
166	Henryetta	297.52
167	Sequoyah (Tahlequah)	296.00
168	Hugo	295.68
169	Holdenville	288.13
170	Community Christian	287.00
171	TSAS	286.11
172	Silo	286.07
173	Valliant	283.11
174	Prague	282.79
175	Marietta	279.89
176	Spiro	276.74
177	Tishomingo	275.02
178	Adair	274.90
179	Alva	274.13
180	Salina	270.38
181	Beggs	265.93
182	Rejoice Christian	259.00
183	Atoka	258.87
184	Wyandotte	256.66
185	Morris	256.49
186	Kellyville	255.82
187	Antlers	255.17
188	Davis	253.58
189	Keys (Parkhill)	253.02
190	Comanche	244.23
191	Meeker	242.85
192	Hennessey	240.09
193	Kansas	239.30
194	Christian Heritage	238.98
195	Kipp Tulsa	238.80
196	Chelsea	237.85
197	Dibble	237.35
198	Newkirk	236.10
199	Dale	235.82
200	Coalgate	234.13
201	Stroud	226.73
202	Hartshorne	225.91
203	Vian	224.36
204	Chouteau-Mazie	223.66
205	Okemah	221.20
206	Calera	218.00
207	Howe	216.90
208	Wilburton	216.69
209	Colcord	216.54
210	Latta	216.41
211	Colbert	216.10
212	Oktaha	214.87
213	Commerce	214.67
214	Warner	214.31
215	Stratford	213.93
216	Watonga	213.67
217	Panama	213.16
218	Luther	212.22
219	Cashion	212.17
220	Caney Valley	212.15
221	Hinton	210.42
222	Riverside	209.00
223	Pocola	208.81
224	Fairview	202.84
225	Frederick	201.97
226	Hooker	200.96
227	Wynnewood	200.69
228	Haskell	200.15
229	Preston	196.09
230	Tonkawa	195.05
231	Walters	194.95
232	Mangum	194.26
233	Hobart	188.84
234	Morrison	186.60
235	Pawhuska	186.37
236	Sayre	186.16
237	Minco	185.54
238	Oklahoma Union	185.06
239	Nowata	184.16
240	Hulbert	184.04
241	Pawnee	183.77
242	Summit Christian	175.37
243	Crescent	173.57
244	Konawa	172.41
245	Tushka	170.53
246	Porter Consolidated	169.90
247	OK Christian Academy	168.54
248	Wewoka	168.50
249	Fairland	167.30
250	Ketchum	167.11
251	The Academy	165.28
252	Vanoss	164.89
253	Merritt	164.02
254	Central (Sallisaw)	163.13
255	Cordell	162.35
256	Mounds	160.77
257	Dewar	159.67
258	Quapaw	158.60
259	Wilson	157.37
260	Apache	155.24
261	Amber-Pocasset	153.85
262	Wright City	151.63
263	Wister	150.75
264	Hominy	150.41
265	Liberty	149.85
266	Talihina	149.21
267	Okarche	148.21
268	Wayne	148.14
269	Southwest Covenant	148.00
270	Empire	148.00
271	Elmore City-Pernell	147.68
272	Barnsdall	146.28
273	Velma-Alma	145.48
274	Regent Prep	144.00
275	Mooreland	143.63
276	Healdton	142.06
277	Waurika	141.93
278	Ripley	140.52
279	Haworth	139.16
280	Laverne	138.10
281	Foyil	137.80
282	Caddo	136.92
283	Drumright	136.82
284	Arapaho-Butler	136.69
285	Fletcher	134.44
286	Carnegie	133.92
287	Verden	133.79
288	Thomas-Fay-Custer	133.77

2025-2026 OSSAA ADM FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES

#	School	ADM
289	Afton	133.75
290	Hydro-Eakly	133.48
291	Burns Flat-Dill City	129.92
292	Rush Springs	129.65
293	Allen	129.29
294	Canadian	128.81
295	Yale	128.07
296	Savanna	127.78
297	Gore	124.37
298	Wellston	123.11
299	Rock Creek	122.95
300	Garber	122.55
301	Hollis	121.14
302	Navajo	119.76
303	Oklahoma Bible	119.50
304	Riverfield Country Day	119.00
305	Cyril	118.80
306	Cherokee	118.37
307	Turpin	118.26
308	Canute	118.16
309	Waukomis	117.56
310	Alex	116.44
311	Porum	115.76
312	Pioneer-Pleasant Vale	114.98
313	Drummond	114.77
314	Snyder	113.63
315	Weleetka	113.55
316	Central High	113.42
317	Arkoma	113.01
318	Okay	111.74
319	Quinton	111.10
320	Ninnekah	110.92
321	Cave Springs	110.87
322	Rattan	110.75
323	Strother	108.57
324	Depew	108.44
325	Webbers Falls	108.11
326	Ringling	108.06
327	Pond Creek-Hunter	107.25
328	Turner	105.97
329	Union City	105.05
330	Seiling	103.61
331	Clayton	103.13
332	Stonewall	103.02
333	Woodland	102.71
334	Texhoma	102.67
335	Okeene	102.61
336	Crossover Prep Acade	102.00
337	Cameron	101.73
338	Shattuck	101.14
339	Keota	100.71
340	Wetumka	98.33
341	Canton	97.55
342	Wesleyan Christian	96.70
343	Boise City	96.54
344	Sterling	96.48
345	Glencoe	96.03
346	Geronimo	95.37
347	Coyle	94.16
348	Davenport	92.60
349	Copan	92.03
350	Red Oak	91.43
351	Gans	91.29
352	Roff	91.04
353	Binger-Oney	90.45
354	Crowder	89.92
355	Indianola	86.35
356	Prue	86.29
357	Welch	84.99
358	Calumet	84.99
359	Bennington	84.84
360	Medford	84.36
361	Kremlin-Hillsdale	83.67
362	Timberlake	83.59
363	Ringwood	83.49
364	Caney	83.18
365	Macomb	83.00
366	Geary	82.88
367	Whitesboro	82.34
368	Frontier	82.21
369	Stringtown	82.01
370	Cheyenne	81.97
371	Ryan	81.70
372	Sentinel	80.13
373	South Coffeyville	80.11
374	Kiowa	79.94
375	Covington-Douglas	79.92
376	Hammon	79.52
377	Moss	79.47
378	Wilson (Henryetta)	78.51
379	Bray-Doyle	78.18
380	Tyrone	78.13
381	Earlsboro	78.05
382	Varnum	78.00
383	Tipton	77.86
384	Sasakwa	77.85
385	Olive	77.67
386	Ft. Cobb-Broxton	77.55
387	Thackerville	77.24
388	Ft. Towson	76.85
389	Stuart	76.15
390	Mt. View-Gotebo	75.95
391	Haileyville	75.48
392	Soper	74.80
393	LeFlore	74.78
394	Grandfield	74.75
395	Buffalo	74.67
396	Vici	74.39
397	Battiest	74.17
398	Asher	74.11
399	Boswell	73.80
400	Granite	73.62
401	Oaks	72.87
402	Watts	71.77
403	Beaver	71.55
404	Schulter	71.10
405	Buffalo Valley	70.92
406	Lomega	70.70
407	McCurtain	70.47
408	Maysville	69.73
409	Oilton	69.31
410	Fargo-Gage	69.27
411	Tupelo	69.22
412	Maud	68.97
413	Carney	68.90
414	Indiahoma	68.02
415	Coleman	67.63
416	Smithville	67.39
417	Big Pasture	67.26
418	New Lima	66.98
419	Bowlegs	66.76
420	Waynoka	65.18
421	Leedey	64.75
422	Blair	64.54
423	Mill Creek	64.00
424	Paden	63.49
425	Mulhall-Orlando	63.13
426	Mason	62.42
427	Chattanooga	61.95
428	Dover	61.93
429	Milburn	60.38
430	Achille	60.37
431	Agra	57.50
432	Goodwell	57.36
433	Sharon-Mutual	56.62
434	Lookeba-Sickles	56.58
435	Bluejacket	56.41
436	Springer	56.38
437	Cimarron	56.10
438	Pittsburg	56.08
439	Paoli	56.07
440	Butner	54.83
441	Kinta	54.49
442	Midway	54.45
443	Balko	53.09
444	Shidler	52.56
445	Moyers	52.13
446	Corn Bible Academy	52.00
447	Duke	51.53
448	Arnett	50.62
449	Wapanucka	50.57
450	Eagletown	50.17
451	Bokoshe	48.67
452	Erick	47.91
453	OK School Blind	47.27
454	Braggs	46.32
455	Cement	42.32
456	Calvin	41.15
457	Legacy Christian Scho	41.00
458	Hillsdale Christian	39.60
459	OK School for Deaf	39.11
460	Burlington	38.94
461	Temple	38.60
462	Deer Creek-Lamont	37.97
463	Graham-Dustin	37.47
464	Fox	36.61
465	Lawton Academy AS	35.00
466	Olustee-Eldorado	33.59
467	Reydon	32.44
468	Ft. Supply	31.57
469	Gracemont	31.07
470	Sweetwater	30.58
471	Wynona	30.21
472	Forgan	29.46
473	Taloga	27.97
474	Aline-Cleo	27.49
475	Billings	27.05
476	Lone Wolf	26.89
477	Hanna	26.62
478	Yarbrough	23.25
479	Wanette	18.35
480	Felt	14.60
481	Freedom	10.85
482	Hardesty	8.00

Emerson and Putnam Heights do not participate in any OSSAA activities and are not listed on the ADM sheet.

Appendix A