

IHSA Esports Advisory Committee Meeting

August 31, 2023

1:00 p.m.

The IHSA Esports Advisory Committee met on August 31, 2023, in an online setting from various communities across Illinois, beginning at 1:00 p.m. Committee members present were: Patrick Davey, Chicago (Lane); James Keathley, Elgin (H.S.); Ellie Bell, Minooka; Brian Clausen, Bartonville (Limestone); Jarrod Rackauskas, Normal (Community West); Tom Hawkins, Galesburg (H.S.); and Brock Frazier, Metropolis (Massac Co.). Also in attendance were Dan Le, IHSA Assistant Executive Director; and Dan Truffa, 2023 Esports State Finals Tournament Manager.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Replace *FIFA* with *EA Sports FC* and change all references to FIFA in the IHSA esports terms and conditions, esports manual, esports informational documents, and state series awards to *EA Sports FC*.

Rationale: EA Sports and FIFA have discontinued their licensing partnership, and as a result, EA Sports is no longer using the FIFA brand on their product. EA Sports will continue to release a soccer video game under a new franchise, *EA Sports FC*, with the first installment titled *EA Sports FC 24*. The rebranded game will retain the same leagues, stadiums, and players as in the previous *FIFA* versions of the game with some additional updates from new license agreements with soccer leagues from around the world.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: In the *FIFA/EA Sports FC* controller settings, set Trainer feature to Hide (Off).

Rationale: The Trainer feature assists players with gameplay by providing controller button suggestions, highlighting shot targets, and showing the trajectory of the ball among other tips. Turning this feature off allows for competition based solely on the participants' skills without any assistance from the game.

Recommendation #2: Allow DLC (downloadable content) tracks and characters in *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*.

Rationale: While there is an additional cost of \$24.99 for a Mario Kart Booster Course Pass, one purchased copy will make the DLCs available on all Nintendo Switches being used for a Mario Kart match. There is already a cost to purchase the *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* game, and this additional expense can be considered an extension of the cost to purchase the game. Allowing DLC tracks and characters would provide more options for players, which would create more diverse competitions, and DLC options are already permitted in *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*. There is no advantage with DLC characters as they mirror the skills and abilities of the characters that come with the original copy of the game, but there would be an advantage for those who have access to DLC tracks as players can familiarize themselves with the track layouts and shortcuts.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

1. The committee members discussed the continued growth of member schools participating in the IHSA state series and its impact on the IHSA state series structure. No formal recommendations were proposed to change the current structure of the IHSA state series as a procedure is already in place that allows some rounds of *Rocket League* to be played online prior to the sectional date, which would reduce the field down to a manageable number for the in-person sectional. For console games, schools participating in the sectional would assist the host site by contributing consoles, monitors, and copies of the game as was done at multiple sectional sites in 2023. The committee acknowledged the growth and will discuss the addition of a regional round of competition to be implemented in the future and as early as the 2025 IHSA esports state series.
2. The committee discussed the current state finals schedule and ways to progress through the tournament more efficiently. No formal recommendations were proposed to modify the State Finals schedule as some of the terms and conditions recommendations that were approved in June 2023 are expected to reduce the delays experienced at the 2023 state finals.
3. The committee discussed whether PS4s would continue to be used in the IHSA state series or to transition to PS5s. No formal recommendation was made to allow use of the PS5 for the 2024 state series. The committee acknowledged that the transition to the PS5 will eventually be necessary and could be recommended early as the 2024-2025 school year. To maintain equitable competition as schools statewide are developing their esports programs, the committee discussed continuing to use PS4s for at least the 2023-2024 school year.
4. The committee briefly discussed the addition of overall team awards. The committee will continue to review results from the last two IHSA state series to determine potential scoring formats and consider how overall team awards impacts the structure and awards of the entire state series.
5. The committee discussed possible streaming options during the state series, which also included a discussion on SOPPA restrictions within districts.
6. James Keathley shared a draft of suggested ideas to assist schools in the development of their esports programs. As esports continues to grow, some schools may be looking for direction on how to begin a program. The IHSA currently has a guide for schools that will be updated with more information and resources.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 1, 2024