

SCHOOL TEAMS VS. ALL-STARS

Currently each Science Olympiad member school can enter up to 15 students as a team at each tournament. The school teams with the highest overall scores advance to the next level.

There has been some interest from the inception of the Science Olympiad about the possibility of an "All-Star" team whereby the gold medal winners from one level advance to the next level. After much discussion and debate, the National Executive Board and the national captains and coaches at a meeting unanimously voted to support the existing school team approach in favor of an All-Star team for the following reasons:

1. The team concept philosophically is more acceptable to most educators rather than emphasizing individual competition, which has negative connotations to many of them. The team concept emphasizes cooperation, teamwork, and the development of team spirit. The other over-emphasizes cooperation, teamwork, and the development of team spirit. The other over-emphasizes the individual and certain events.
2. The Constitution states that one of the purposes of the Science Olympiad is to improve the quality of science education. Having a balance between content, process and technology and all of the science disciplines promotes the development of a quality K-12 balanced science curriculum. If a school were allowed (encouraged) to bring only the best airplane thrower, egg dropper, or rock hound, it would encourage the fragmented and limited instruction of isolated skills to the neglect of the whole science curriculum. And, furthermore, it would be difficult to rally school and community support to fund the advancement of one paper airplane thrower versus the support for the overall state champion. But, worse, it would damage one of the major purposes of the Olympiad and it could detract from the regional and state team's efforts and possibly be an embarrassment if all gold medals were won by individuals and not teams?
3. Finally, the management of an all-star team would be far more difficult and costly. Conceivably the worst case situation would result in 44 students from 24 schools from each state advancing to the national's which would mean 1,760 students from 960 schools for each division rather than 600 students from 40 schools.

This would not only present nightmares for tournament organizers but also for local school supporters attempting to make plans for all these students not to mention the increased cost of medals, material, and travel expense.

Still the All-Star team has merit as it recognizes the best from each state and it provides an opportunity for more students and more schools to be represented and receive awards. If a state would volunteer to attempt a modified all-star team contest, philosophical and curriculum objections would be softened or eliminated. If gold medal winners only from those teams not advancing to a state or national tournament were invited, the numbers should be reduced and soften the management argument.

Before the National Board could consider such a radical change, however, we need to have demonstrated evidence at the state level that the concept is valid and can work. How would you like to try it?