

The CGGBL Board is aware of a petition that was created on Change.org regarding components of our recreation league. We appreciate the weekly feedback we receive from talking to parents, players, and coaches and the inquiries we receive through e-mail. We wanted to take a moment this evening to be as transparent as possible with you on why things are the way they are to start this season, but also let you know what we are doing to overcome some of these roadblocks. We also want to celebrate our growth and some positive upcoming changes for our league. This letter will seem a little lengthy, but we want to share our perspective and expand on what we are doing for our community. We hope that it shows you the level of engagement we have in this program and the commitment we all have to girls' basketball in Center Grove.

First, let's address the primary concern our league is currently facing; a lack of court space for both practices and games. Last year, our rec league had 227 girls enrolled in our program, this year we jumped up to 322. **That is an increase of 95 girls in one year and that is something to celebrate!** More girls are becoming interested in playing basketball due to the success our Center Grove Trojans Girls Basketball program that made it to the semi-state last year, and also great women's college basketball games with superstars like Caitlin Clark, Paige Bueckers, Mackenzie Holmes, and many more. Last year, we were already low on available space for practices and games, and now with that big increase in enrollment, it got even harder. Despite the difficulties that we are encountering, we always strive to provide a great experience for our players, their families, and our volunteer coaches. While we have had to lower practice times to forty-five minutes and reduce scheduled game times to fifty minutes, we also tried to do some positive things to ensure girls are on the court and are getting as much playing time as possible. **First, we do not put a limit on the amount of registrations we take. If any girl in our school district wants to play basketball, we want her to have that opportunity.** We want our players to learn the rules of the game, fundamentals of the game, how to be a good teammate, and most importantly; have fun. Even with the issues we have of finding court space for our teams, we will never opt to have a limit on the number of girls who can enroll. Next, **we were purposeful in creating enough teams to have around eight players for quality playing time.** Finally, **each one of our leagues this year has an even amount of teams so that there are no teams on a bye week.** We want girls on the court every Saturday playing in a game and not having to sit out a week.

We can confidently say that we have explored every option for court space in the school district. Everything is booked. We have even inquired in with churches and other facilities with basketball courts offering to pay for court time only to be told that their schedules are also full. It is not just boys and girls' basketball teams using the elementary gyms, middle school gyms, and the Student Activities Center (SAC) at the high school. Many school clubs and extra-curricular programs are also reserving the indoor spaces making scheduling sometimes difficult. For comparison, the boys' basketball league has 761 boys in their league. They too are having an extremely hard time finding space for their practices and games. They have had to go to ten player teams vs. our eight player teams in order to get everything scheduled. In reviewing the gym schedules, we have noticed that the boys have also had to reduce some of their practices at the middle schools down to forty-five minutes this year as well. We also want to add that any time we have reached out to the boy's league for help with rescheduling practices that have fallen on a holiday or due to school closures for weather, they have always done whatever they can to assist us. Many people are not aware, but we are a non-for-profit organization made up of volunteers. **We do not have authority to demand space within the school district. We build relationships with community leaders in hopes that they will work us and support the needs of our rapidly growing league.**

With all of that said, here are some solutions that we have been working on and have planned for this season. The boys' season starts earlier than ours which results in them concluding earlier than ours. **Once the boys season concludes, more gym space at the elementary schools is going to open up which will allow us to move back to one hour practices.** We are sending communication out to coaches soon to start organizing the revised practice schedule. The downside to this is that some practice times will slightly change. For some teams, the venue for your practice will also change. We will do our very best to keep practices on the same night that they are currently scheduled because that was one of the main things we looked at when drafting teams for the season (player availabilities to practice). Right now, we currently have two elementary schools (CGES and MGES) for our rec league games and the SAC on Saturday mornings from 8:30am to 9:30am for our Kindergarten league games. After week five of our season, we lose availability in the SAC, but will pick up availability at PGES. Our goal is to hopefully expand our game times and make adjustments with a third elementary school. We are thankful for our partnerships with the leadership teams at Maple Grove Elementary and Center Grove Elementary. We have been in contact with them for months about possible solutions and what they could do to assist us. While we were not able to get the time limits we initially requested, both schools expanded our time limit to allow us to get all games in (with no bye weeks) if we reduced game windows from one hour down to fifty minutes. We are thankful to the custodial staff at both schools that are working additional hours on a sixth day to help accommodate our game schedules. Finally, one of our six elementary schools is currently not able to be used for practices or games. **SGES is building a new gym that should be completed by this fall. We already have an agreement in place with the boys league that SGES will go to the CGGBL.** This will greatly assist us with the scheduling issues we are currently facing.

Our board has also had numerous discussions about possibly moving our season to different months and/or expanding the season. Here are the issues we are facing in those areas. Currently, our season starts with practices in December, Hoopsfest on the first Saturday in January, and then games starting the following week. Our single elimination tournaments conclude the season on the weekend before Spring Break starts. The biggest issue with moving games to start in December or lengthening it to run from December through early March is still court availability. If more space were to become available (like SGES), we would have no issues discussing a longer season. Next, we know that some other rec league programs operate in the fall and end in December before Christmas. If we did this, we run into the problem of conflicting with many other sports. The current schedule and season length (8 games plus a tournament for 1st through 6th) that we use gives our girls the opportunity to play other sports in both the fall and the spring without too many conflicts.

Let's talk **Overtime**. Implementing an overtime rule/policy was stated in the title of the petition. While we have an overtime policy in place for all tournament games to help determine a winner, we do not have the same policy in place for regular season games. After hearing about the online petition, we reached out to the author and her family to discuss this topic and to hear her point of view. **We value feedback not only from our parents and coaches, but from our players as well. After a great conversation, all agreed that this is an area that should be changed and improved upon.** The primary reason for not having any overtimes during the regular season was to stay on schedule so that we exit the gyms at the agreed upon times. So far through three weeks of games, we have not had any tie games in any of our leagues. **Therefore, starting this weekend, any game ending in a tie will be granted a two minute overtime period to help decide the winning team.** The boys league currently has a policy of a 2 minute overtime and then ending the game in a tie if the score is still tied after that overtime. We

will mirror this policy moving forward. We are thankful for the insight and feedback given to help make the program better.

We are hopeful that this rule adjustment in combination with additional gym availability opening up in a few weeks will help keep the positive momentum going. **We are committed to doing the very best that we can for each and every girl in our rec league and travel program.** While there still obstacles to overcome, we also have made some great improvements from last year. Over the summer, the CGGBL board unanimously agreed to upgrade the rec league jerseys to a quality identical to our travel teams. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the upgraded jerseys and will continue with them moving forward! We also made the decision to give each girl in our program a brand new 28.5 indoor/outdoor basketball. We wanted girls to have a basketball that they can practice with all summer and bring to summer camps and our open gyms. Finally, as we did last year, every girl participating in our rec league will receive a thank you gift at the conclusion of their season. Last year, we did t-shirts for all players and coaches. Our goal is to provide a new and different gift each year so that girls who participate in the program are not getting the same thing each year.

For Championship Saturday on March 16th, all games will be livestreamed by Kevin Conrad and the CG Sports Network! This **FREE** livestream will allow family and friends to watch any of our four championship games. As we have done in previous years, we will send out the link to share with everyone the week prior to the games. We have already confirmed the dates with Kevin and are thankful for his continued partnership with our program! We have also looked at trying to secure a larger venue for Championship Saturday. Last year, we requested to hold the championship games at either MSN, MSC, Vandy Gym, or the West Gym and was accepted only to discover that none of these gyms have goals that will lower. Our First Grade and Second Grade leagues play on eight foot goals. We did not want to host the first two games in one location and then the final two at a different location, especially with the livestream and awards ceremonies we have that day. **Championship Saturday is also our chance to recognize the Mental Attitude Award winner and Most Improved Award winner from all forty teams in our leagues. These ceremonies are also a part of the free livestream.** The boys currently hold their championship games at one of the middle schools, but their tournaments do not start until 3rd grade (so no need for them to lower the goals).

In closing, please know that the CGGBL team is committed to doing the very best we can for all girls involved. Coach Stuckmeyer and Coach Sanders both have daughters in the program. **Every member of our team has had at least one girl previously in the program or one currently in the program, so we all are also parents who want the best for our daughters.** We want the girls to love the game of basketball. We want them grow in their understanding of the rules, concepts, and fundamentals. We want them to build friendships and have a lot of fun achieving these goals. **We can confidently say that we are doing everything we can to make this the best youth sports program available.** There are many things that are out of our control right now, but we will continue to focus on the things that we can control. We ask for your patience, understanding, and partnership. We are always open to feedback and appreciate all of our friendships in the community. It is truly an exciting time to be a part of girls and women's basketball.

We also want to say best of luck to our **(#2 – 4A) Center Grove Trojans** girls' basketball team as they start tournament play in the Mooresville Sectional this week. Please go out and support this team as they make a run for the 4A State Championship this year! **GO TROJANS!**