

Schedules can make Flyin' to the Hoop a tough choice

20 regular-season games for teams in Ohio leave few nonleague spots.

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The Wayne High School boys basketball team, like its counterparts in the Greater Western Ohio Conference, has six games it controls in scheduling each season.

After 14 GWOC games are planned — 10 counting for divisional races and four crossover games — the Warriors can only schedule six on their own without violating the Ohio High School Athletic Association game-limit rule.

Because of that, when opportunities like this weekend's Flyin' to the Hoop event at Kettering's Trent Arena and other showcases or tournaments arise, coach Travis Trice has to scrutinize what works best.

"You just have to make sure you plan for it," Trice said. "If you have a good group of juniors or seniors, you want to make sure you keep some spots open for bigger games."

Each Ohio team, including nine from the Greater Dayton area, playing in the Saturday-through-Monday Flyin' to the Hoop is limited to 20 regular-season games by the OHSAA. While some private or prep school counterparts can schedule as many as they would like — and some play upwards of 50 per season — the area schools have to decide whether a Flyin' spot is worth sacrificing another game on their schedule.

That decision has become easier as Flyin' has grown, area coaches said, but the limit could explain why some marquee teams in the Miami Valley and throughout the state are absent from the lineup.

"This year we chose the Flyin' to the Hoop, but we hadn't played there in a few years," said Dunbar coach Pete Pullen. "We decided to do that over some other games."

The choice can be more difficult for teams with highly sought-after recruits. Those teams are often invited to multiple tournaments throughout the country because of those recruits' reputations, but the limit doesn't change.

The rule can make in-season tournaments difficult, as the unknown number of games in bracket play can distort the schedule. Pullen said Dunbar was forced to drop another regular-season game a few years ago when a run in an out-of-state tournament ended in the consolation final after four games.

"We didn't plan for that," Pullen said. "We had to come back and cancel another game."

Some teams are making the local Flyin' a priority. Trice said Wayne signed a three-year contract with the event to continue its participation.

"You want to have a good handle on what (players) you have before you schedule too far in advance," Trice said. "There are only so many openings."