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A most unusual and bizarre high school volleyball season got a little bit more unusual and bizarre with the announcement of the state tournament pairings, released Saturday by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

Because Covid-19 has forced the season to be reduced to a maximum 14 matches, because some conferences were unable to complete a two-round league season and because conference champions were randomly seeded instead of being seeded by records or winning percentage, this year's playoffs certainly have a different feel to them.

But one constant is that despite the reduced number of teams, Randolph County will be well represented as Wheatmore, Randleman, Southwestern Randolph and Uwharrie Charter Academy will begin state title quests Tuesday.

Wheatmore, which finished 12-0 on the season and earned the Piedmont Athletic Conference championship, was given the top seed and will host wild card entry Durham School of the Arts (6-2).

Randleman (9-3), the second seed from the PAC, has the 14th seed and will travel to third-seeded North Lenoir (9-0).

In 3-A play, Southwestern Randolph, which was the second seed from the Mid-Piedmont Conference and has an overall 11-1 record, was seeded 11th and will travel to sixth-seeded Person (12-2).

UCA (9-1) earned the second seed from the Yadkin Valley Conference and was seeded 11th for the state 1-A West Regional. The Eagles will travel to sixth-seeded Blue Ridge (10-0).

The Randleman at North Lenoir start time has not been determined but other first-round action is scheduled for Tuesday night beginning at 6 p.m. For Randolph County teams.

In state 2-A East play, there were 10 conference champions - including Wheatmore - that were randomly given a seed from 1-10 and there were four conferences which earned an automatic second bid. That meant two wild card playoff berths were filled. WHS, because of the way the seeds were randomly selected, could have been a 10 seed, but instead earned the all-important top seed, which means it will host playoff games until the finals.

"I don't know if we're blessed or cursed if you look at our bracket," WHS coach Sarah Beth Campbell said of having McMichael, Goldsboro, Currituck County and Carrboro among others

in the first few rounds. "But not having to travel is a blessing. (The team) is thrilled to be home and they know they have to get past the first round to get to the second."

Campbell said there is a personal side to Tuesday's first-round match. Durham School of the Arts is coached by Dean Miller, who coached Campbell at Pfeiffer.

"It was projected we were going to play them last year, but it didn't work out that way," Campbell said. "We've been talking back and forth."

Randleman drew an unbeaten North Lenoir team.

"As soon as I heard who we were playing, I (looked at film)," RHS coach Kerry Mitchell said. "It's hard to tell on film, but I think we match up really well with them. I think a lot will depend on how we respond to the drive."

Mitchell said the trip to North Lenoir should take about three hours.

The Tigers have been strong all year, taking a 2-1 lead over Wheatmore in one match before seeing the Warriors capture the final two sets.

"If the girls will respond and do their homework like I asked them to, I like the matchup," Mitchell said.

A couple of other first-round matches in the 2-A East have 13-0 Goldsboro against 13-1 McMichael and 11-0 Croatan against 10-2 St. Pauls.

This year is certainly different than previous seasons. Each region was reduced from the normal 32 teams to 16, meaning a total of 32 teams in each classification qualified for the state tournament.

In the 3-A East Regional, there were 10 conference champions and each of those teams randomly earned a seeding from 1-10. As the second seed from the MPC, the Cougars were locked into either an 11 or 12 seed since only two conferences in 3-A earned two automatic berths because of having more than six teams in the conference. That meant the Cougars were going on the road for first-round action.

SWR could have earned the first seed from the MPC had all league teams completed its conference season, but teams were unable to get in two full rounds and league officials implemented a provision to just count the first round of conference games for playoff purposes. SWR defeated league champion Southern Alamance last week to tie for the top spot, but that match was changed to a nonleague affair because not all MPC teams completed their league schedule.

"We really had no clue where we would be," SWR coach Darby Kennedy said. "We knew we'd be traveling, but we were keeping our fingers crossed it wouldn't be to a 10-0 team."

Kennedy said she will get to work on finding information about her opponent.

"We will look at film to see what our strategy needs to be so we can be as successful as we can be against them," Kennedy said. "We want to be prepared for whatever strengths they have."

In the 1-A West Regional, which UCA is a part of, there were nine conference champions, four second-place berths and a combined three third-place and wild card entries earned. Because the YVC has nine teams, it was awarded three playoff berths.

"Moreso this year, the cool thing is you only have to be the best team for one game," UCA coach Lee Kennell said. "It's really not based on what you did all season and our goal is to be the best team Tuesday."