

OFFICIALS REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

East Lansing, October 4, 2021

Members Present:

Eric Albright, Midland
Mike Bakker, Fenton
Donta Favors, Detroit
Todd Gooding, Kalamazoo
Leroy Hackley, Muskegon
Kelli Hart, Lansing
John Hartley, St. Clair Shores
Chris Hartman, Kingsford
Mary Haslinger, Flint
Matt Stapleton, Frankfort
Jon Studley, Alpena
Marci Tawney, Lowell

Members Absent:

Jesse Brown, Jackson
Nicole Norris, East Lansing
Shanear Trice, Lansing
Loren Ristovski, Taylor

Staff Present:

Tony Bihn
Brent Rice
Ryan Wieferich (Recorder)

The 2021-22 MHSAA Officials Review Committee met to review topics involving high school officiating. After introductions were completed, the committee reviewed the terms of appointment to the Officials Review Committee, as well as the charge and mission of the group relative to the MHSAA decision making process.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Representative Council Action Review: MHSAA staff provided the committee with information regarding Representative Council action from the May Council meeting which covered the newly implemented officials' ratings, football sideline officials switching sides at the half and adding a fourth umpire to the quarterfinal of the baseball tournament.

Discussion Items: A brief update was provided from the entirely virtual 2021 NASO Officiating Summit. The MHSAA and Grand Rapids were the scheduled host for the in-person event this year but were moved to 2026. The topics of this convention of officials ranged widely and included both new content and recorded presentations and information from past Summits. This year's virtual Summit @ Home was provided entirely free, and it remains online for access by any official.

In conjunction with the Officiating Summit was the MHSAA Officiate Michigan Day, also held entirely virtual due to pandemic concerns. MHSAA officials participated in a number of live, pre-recorded sport-specific breakouts, general officiating sessions and panel discussions covering the topics of handling situations, legal issues for officials and race in sports officiating.

Committee members were also apprised of the Assigners and Association Leadership meeting topics and focus on the importance of local officiating leaders effectively spreading messages and information from the MHSAA office to ensure that expectations by schools and others of officials from across the state are consistent.

Officials Recruitment and Retention: MHSAA staff presented registration demographics for MHSAA officials and trends for the past decade. The committee was given data that showed a slight uptick in registrations from last year, though current projections still remain lower than pre-pandemic numbers.

The committee was provided information as to recruitment efforts directed at local high schools to recruit, train and mentor new officials in the MHSAA Legacy Program. The use of complimentary vouchers was reiterated as a good option for schools with interested students. In an effort to be more efficient with resources, it was explained that schools, assigners and association leadership may request vouchers from the MHSAA office.

Staff reminded committee members of an ad hoc committee consisting of people within MHSAA schools with an officiating background was created prior to the pandemic to develop a framework and content for curriculum to be made available to schools that wish to create officiating courses as part of their programs. This ad hoc committee will reconvene again after the first of the year for further proceedings.

Officials' game fees were discussed, including feedback presented by staff regarding a comparison of fees from Midwest states – both regular season and postseason. Committee members were provided data indicating the average regular season fees in each sport. A more detailed breakdown of fees was provided to schools, assigners and officials at the end of last school year.

It was mentioned that a single late fee date for all sports and all seasons may be a hinderance to an official registering or taking on a new sport. The ability to set late fees by sport might also provide relief for some officials that are unsure of their work or family schedule so far in advance of their season. This is especially punitive against winter and spring officials. It was suggested that sports played in different seasons under the same registration (*i.e., swim, cross country and track and soccer*) have the late fee date set according to the latest season for that registration. It was recommended that the MHSAA staff set the late registration deadline by sport as applicable.

Other Policy Considerations: The committee discussed volleyball and swim uniforms. The NFHS recently included the use of cyan and grey uniforms for volleyball officials, upon state adoption. Some committee members provided input that the current white uniforms for volleyball and swim officials are easily stained, reveal undergarments and do not provide much ventilation. Concerns regarding the shades of available colors and each official matching were mentioned.

An extensive discussion occurred on the potential use of video review to ejections when they are clearly in error. The committee emphasized that any addition of video review be limited to clear misidentifications, ejections directly caused by a rule misapplication and flagrant actions against an official or opponent. The importance of any review originating with the school's athletic director was also underscored.

Committee members discussed whether there is a need to have an official as a designated representative on MHSAA sports' rules committees. The committee appeared receptive to the idea that an official should be on the committee and briefly discussed whether that position should be a voting or non-voting position. It was discussed that the input was the most important aspect and that it may be best to have an official being a visiting member of each sport committee, similar to representatives of the Michigan Athletic Trainers Society. It was recommended for staff members to add an official specifically designated to represent officials on each sport committee as a non-voting member.

The selection of basketball district officials was discussed. Eric Albright provided a positive review of the draft process utilized last season. The committee discussed whether this process should continue and whether officials should be assigned in crews. One concern for the assignment of crews was that officials may be left out of assignments if they are not part of a submitted crew. The diversity of crews in race and gender was also mentioned. It was recommended that assignments by crews be permitted if officials wish, and that all other crew assignments be put together by the MHSAA office and basketball assignment committee. It was further suggested that the draft be extended to Zone 3 selections and that assigners be invited to the draft to assist in the assignment process.

Jon Studley brought a concern to the committee regarding the composition of football finals crews. He suggested moving away from the selection of a crew consisting of a mix of officials from zones seven and eight. Instead, it was suggested that the combination with Zone 8 be rotated with other zones around the state annually. Travel concerns, crew demographic composition and the number of officials representing areas of the state were discussed. It was recommended that further discussion take place amongst staff for future consideration.

There was considerable discussion regarding the Non-Act of God Cancellation Policy. It was suggested that the current policy discourages schools from trying to maintain teams which are struggling with participant numbers. The importance of a balance between providing opportunities for students and honoring contractual commitments to officials was considered. Most of the discussion surrounded the appropriate amount of time necessary for a school to cancel, with suggestions ranging from maintaining 10 day to reducing the time to 48 hours.

Recommendations to the Representative Council:

1. Permit the use of Smitty “bright blue” uniforms (with horizontal MHSAA logo) for volleyball and swim officials, as long as all officials present are wearing the same color uniform. The default uniform color remains white. (12-0)
2. Permit the use of video review by MHSAA staff to overturn an ejections and subsequent penalties when there is a clear misidentification, a participant is ejected as a direct result of a rules misapplication or when incontrovertible video evidence shows that an ejection or suspension for flagrant contact with an opponent or official was in error. (11-1)
3. Reduce the number of days to five in which a contract may be cancelled under the Non-Act of God Cancellation Policy without payment due to the officials scheduled.