

2023 MHSAA SOCCER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, January 12, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Greg Ceithaml, Holland
Jeff Engbers, Hudsonville
Ethan Felsing, Mason
Kevin Guzzo, St. Joseph (MIAAA)
Todd Heugh, Troy
Jeff Lyon, East Lansing
Ashley Mantha, Saline
Chris Morgan, Ann Arbor
Chris Riker, Portage (Representative Council)

Jaime Smith, Maple City
Ed Uhrik, Fenton
Bill Wilkinson, Kalamazoo
Rich Kieft (Guest/MATS)
Kelly Salter (Guest/MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Andy Frushour (Recorder)

The 2022-23 MHSAA Soccer Committee met in the John E. "Jack" Roberts MHSAA building to review topics involving soccer and the tournament series. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision-making process and the charge of the Soccer Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the soccer coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

SAFETY

The 2021-22 NFHS RIO Injury Surveillance Study was provided to the committee. On the heels of the Damar Hamlin medical emergency, the need for a standardized pregame "Medical Timeout" was discussed. This kind of meeting among trainers, coaches and other medical personnel is common before Friday night football games, but not as much with other sports. A consistent set of Medical Timeout speaking points, pregame PA script for the fans, and introduction of athletic trainers to the visiting coaches would be good for all sports, especially at the sub-varsity level. The MHSAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee will be talking about this topic at its next meeting.

FALL SURVEY REVIEW

As part of its annual fall Update Meeting tour and AD In-Service program, a survey was conducted with administrators across the state. Eight of the survey responses were presented to the committee, including relaxing all-star and travel rules, admission for scrimmages, changing the small school enrollment allowance, providing online CAP, requiring CPR for junior high coaches and mandating an online course for first-time officials.

SOCCER ITEMS

A 2022-23 change in the classification process for MHSAA sports was reviewed. The process led to a significant change in the Division lines for 2022-23 soccer seasons. For the boys, 444 teams were split evenly into four Divisions compared to 467 the previous year, while 448 teams were used for classifying the girls versus 456 the previous year.

The Three Half Rule was instituted for the first time during the boys season. Feedback has been almost unanimously positive. There are numerous instances of the rule saving the season for JV and freshmen teams, with more school teams expected to benefit in the future. The rule has also helped teams dealing with mid-season injuries. While not the intended purpose of the rule, and not seen by this committee as a violation of the spirit of the rule, the Three Halves are widely used to help develop younger players. It allows some players to get a taste of playing at the varsity level, while receiving most of their playing time at the lower level. The continued emphasis on participation over wins at the sub-varsity level is important in order to keep coaches from unnecessarily using varsity-level players in

JV and freshman contests. In addition, the new penalty for violating the Three Half rule was also reviewed. Sitting the next game forces coaches to actively monitor the number of halves played each night.

A common participation topic at the high school level is the intersection of the MHSAA Limited Team Membership rule and the proliferation of year-round non-school programs, specifically clubs part of MLS NEXT and ECNL. This topic is not new, but the sentiment for students to pick one or the other has gotten stronger. There is no push to grant more waivers or exemptions to allow students to participate in both at the same time. The committee suggested the MHSAA actively promote the advantages of high school participation, listing benefits school coaches could use when counseling students who are forced to decide between the school or club experience.

Statewide participation at the Junior High/Middle School level is still minimized by club soccer. Schools are hesitant to sponsor school teams because of the limited season, while students affiliated with non-school club teams get more competition opportunities.

Sportsmanship has always been a hot-button topic in soccer. Coming off the recent World Cup, where professionals often surrounded and argued with officials, it is important to emphasize to players the appropriate ways to interact with officials. A number of proactive programs developed by official's associations were shared with the committee. These initiatives include: associations that conducted preseason rules/expectations meetings with teams, officials who spoke to parent groups prior to the season, and associations that offered training to teams so its student-athletes could become officials for youth games. It was noted that the retention of new, young officials is increasingly difficult based on parent behavior at youth games.

Seeding has been a topic of the Soccer Committee every year since 2015. The MPR formula continues to receive praise for identifying top teams in most situations. Many coaches push for expanded seeding, whether at the District or Regional level. While coaches tend to want more seeding there is not a preferred or favored tournament format; even then, there are plenty of coaches (and administrators) who like the current system. The Soccer Committee will monitor the new Ice Hockey seeding system this winter (seed all teams in the opening rounds of the tournament), while also tracking the Basketball Committee recommendation to seed the entire Regional. In addition, the MHSAA will work with the Michigan High School Soccer Coaches Association (MIHSSCA) Board of Directors as they develop and discuss new seeding formats. Any new format must not only be favored by coaches, but also by school administrators, all while taking into account revenue/expenses, participating team travel and fitting within administrative time constraints of the tournament such reserving host sites and assigning game officials.

The status of U.P. soccer and the experience of the L.P. Finals were also discussed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

There were no recommendations to the Representative Council.