

## **2024 MHSAA SOFTBALL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Thursday, January 11, 2024, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Stephanie Caruso, Detroit  
Ken Dietz, Watervliet  
Mike Gruppen, Jenison  
Martha Munsell, Fowlerville (MATS)  
Jami Neubecker, Grand Blanc  
Jack Nummerdor, Norton Shores  
Ron Poyer, Chesaning (MHSSCA)  
Bryan Smith, Lansing

Michael Thompson, Frankfort  
Jennifer Thunberg, Freeland  
Adam Valk, Wayland  
Tom Vrugink, Hudsonville  
Betty Wroubel, Pontiac (MIAAA)

### **MHSAA STAFF**

Andi Osters (Recorder)

The 2023-24 MHSAA Softball Committee met in the John E. “Jack” Roberts MHSAA building to review softball topics and the tournament series. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision-making process and the charge of the Softball Committee. Agenda items from correspondence, staff, committee members, and the softball coaches association were compiled.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **FALL UPDATE MEETING 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. All survey responses were presented to the committee, with discussion focused on three specific questions: additional divisions in sports sponsored by more than 550 schools, winter calendar options, and emerging sports.

### **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT DATES**

The Upper Peninsula Athletic Committee recommended that the softball and baseball committees review the options for participating schools related to when semifinal and final District games are played. For small schools with dual-sport athletes who also compete in track, students are often faced with a choice: compete at the MHSAA Track Finals or compete at the MHSAA District Softball tournament (both are held on the same Saturday). In recent years, schools have been given the option to play these softball games on Friday, if all participating teams agree at the District draw meeting. To provide additional flexibility, the committee proposed permitting semifinal and final contests to be played on Thursday (if all participating teams agree).

### **SITE SELECTION COMMITTEE**

The committee reviewed the work of the Softball Site Selection Committee and the tournament groupings for the upcoming season. It was noted that facility concerns related to district and regional host sites are often not relayed directly to the host school. In conjunction with the MHSSCA, staff will compile anecdotal feedback on sites and incorporate the information into pre-meeting materials for the Site Selection Committee. Ideally, this step will allow committee members to provide feedback to those sites in their area in need of facility improvements and lead to better conditions at all high school softball fields.

## **2024 NFHS RULE CHANGES**

A significant rule change (NFHS Rule 6-1-2(c)) related to pitching mechanics and footwork will require additional training and resources for both coaches and umpires. Staff agreed that the 2024 Softball Rules Meeting should include robust coverage of the new rule and encouraged constituents to exercise patience during the first season of implementation of the new rule.

## **TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE – ADDITIONAL DIVISIONS**

The 2023 Fall Update Meeting Survey questions related to the addition of divisions include all sports sponsored by 550 or more schools. For the 2023-24 school year, 585 MHSAA member schools sponsor softball. Lengthy discussion took place on the merits of additional divisions – not just in softball but also in other sports. There was consensus to table the topic for now, especially considering that softball is the smallest (in terms of the number of sponsoring schools) among the group of sports being considered for additional expansion.

Discussion also occurred on emerging sports, maximum competition limits, seeding in head-to-head sports, and current bat specifications.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

1. Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, permit schools to play District softball tournament semifinal and final games on either Thursday or Friday if all participating teams agree. If one school dissents, the default tournament date will remain Saturday. (11-0)