

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
Girls Competitive Cheer Committee Meeting
East Lansing, January 23, 2019
9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Tim Erickson, Rockford
Brian Gordon, Novi
Chad Hottle, MIAAA
Greg Lattig, Mason
Sonya Latz, Elsie
Anna Ramirez, CCCAM

Stacy Smith, Caledonia
Jessica Trefry, Michigan Center

Members Absent:

Danyel Prielipp, Marion
Brooke Sharrad, Flint

Staff:

Kathy Vruggink Westdorp (Recorder)

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The MHSAA Girls Competitive Cheer Committee reviewed its responsibilities as a standing sport committee and the process of making recommendations to MHSAA staff and the MHSAA Representative Council. In addition, the Girls Competitive Cheer Committee reviewed the charge of the Girls Competitive Cheer Sub-Committee which met on January 17, 2019. This Sub-Committee studied the technical aspects of girls competitive cheer and made recommendations which were submitted to the Competitive Cheer Committee for additional review.

A draw for the order of competition at the MHSAA Competitive Cheer Finals was done by committee members, and the Girls Competitive Cheer Tournament Manager's Materials and Participating School Information were also reviewed. In addition, the minutes from last year's Competitive Cheer Committee and the Competitive Cheer Sub-Committee were perused. District and Regional sites were reviewed and members of the Committee also received 2018-19 Competitive Cheer clarifications and interpretations.

COACHING REQUIREMENTS

Committee members reviewed information regarding coaching requirements and deadlines for 2018-19. Coaching requirements include that the athletic director or principal of each school shall attest that all high school coaches (sub varsity or assistant coaches, paid or volunteer) complete an MHSAA rules meeting in their sport. High school administrators are also required to attest that all varsity head coaches have a valid current cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification and each head coach of a varsity high school team, hired for the first time at any MHSAA member high school after July 31, 2016 shall have completed either Level 1 or Level 2 of the MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program (CAP). Committee members heard the high percentage of compliance that occurred with MHSAA member schools for all of these initiatives.

HISTORY OF GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER

Information regarding the history of girls competitive cheer was shared with the Competitive Cheer Committee including how the MHSAA first was committed to have girls competitive cheer meet the definition of a sport. To that end, a format was created by Michigan cheer coaches and athletic administrators with the purpose of providing consistent rules, while allowing teams to perform all aspects of cheer techniques and styles designed to promote athleticism. Additionally, meeting the criteria of a sport provided by the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education, was imperative. Girls competitive cheer has provided a great opportunity for girls to participate in a sport in which participation and spectatorship has soared.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL ACTION

A summary of Representative Council action which included Handbook changes and sports changes was provided which included information regarding a "sport-specific" transfer rule which has been adopted, with full effect in 2019-20. Also included was new insurance language specific to the activity of sideline cheerleaders at interscholastic athletic events. To be covered by MHSAA purchased insurance, the activity of sideline cheerleaders at interscholastic athletic events must not exceed the safety norms of MHSAA girls competitive cheer.

GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER COMPARATIVE CONCUSSION INFORMATION

Committee members reviewed comparative information from the MHSAA Head Injury Reporting System by sport and year. Comparative data indicates that in 2017, participation in girls competitive cheer was 6720 students and in 2018, participation was 6715. From the 2018 data, there were 20 concussions per 1000 participants in girls competitive cheer, which was a reduction in concussions from the 2017 data. Further information shared included that most of the injuries occurred during practice (either at the middle or end of practice) at the varsity level.

EXPANDING PARTICIPATION AND ENHANCING HEALTH AND SAFETY

The MHSAA Competitive Cheer Committee was charged with providing insight into various ideas to promote the health and safety of the participants in girls competitive cheer. The MHSAA Girls Competitive Cheer Committee was charged with reflecting how participation numbers could be increased, as well as providing regulations to enhance the health and safety of all participants. Included in the discussion was conversation regarding limiting stunting time during practice, offering safety sessions at camps and clinics and providing additional safety clinics. It was suggested that participation numbers would improve if the amount of gymnastics skill work required was limited and the need for hiring gymnastics instructors was curtailed. Also considered, was review of the current rounds of competition and the feasibility of restructuring the rounds to provide less emphasis on gymnastics skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMPETITIVE CHEER SUB-COMMITTEE

The MHSAA Competitive Cheer Sub-Committee meets for the purpose of annually reviewing current competition and safety rules and to propose changes and additions to the Competitive Cheer Manual. The committee focuses on the technical aspects of competitive cheer and advises the full committee and ultimately the Representative Council of the rules that may need review, revision or update. Review of the recommendations that come from the Competitive Cheer Coaches Association of Michigan also occurs and discussion occurs regarding each of the technical proposals. The recommendations from the MHSAA Sub-Committee are as follows:

1. Allow non-braced static inversions at the high school level only. Non-braced static inversions with the following stipulations in place:
 - a. The original base or spotter maintains constant contact with the flyer. Constant contact may be in any form and is not limited to hand/hand or hand/arm and/or hand/foot.
 - b. Prior to the static inverted position, the flyer must originate from below shoulder level.
 - c. The inversion must dismount to the cheering surface, cradle, any waist level position, or a non-inverted stunt at shoulder level.
 - d. Twists from inversions are illegal.
 - e. Inversions released to extended level are illegal.
2. Restructure Round Two from the MHSAA Competitive Cheer Format starting in the 2020-21 season. Add requirements of a flexibility skill and the precision drill to Round 1. The second round would include tumbling bonus, performed in unison by a majority of the team. Each round will match in number of competitors. This applies to middle school and high school girls competitive cheer.

DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMPETITIVE CHEER COMMITTEE

The MHSAA Competitive Cheer Committee continues to discuss several topics regarding the evolution of girls competitive cheer as a sport. This includes whether girls competitive cheer should have a requirement of the same number of athletes in each Division and round of competition. Additional conversation included whether the changes for the middle school and sub-varsity (who now follow the same rules as the varsity teams in terms of mandated numbers) resulted in any changes in competitive cheer opportunities. Conversation included that in several sports, there are teams that are not able to participate at all without the required numbers, while competitive cheer teams may still participate in all rounds of competitive cheer (with penalty) without the required numbers. This committee encourages that all coaches make a commitment to participation for all athletes on their teams and make ethical choices to increase participation in all rounds of competitive cheer.

Additional discussion included the restructuring of the various rounds. There was some sentiment that all the rounds were important and that Round 2 often separates the “good from the great” and is the most athletic round. Others indicated that by removing Round 2, there would be resources saved and more participation. In essence, what needs to be determined is how a format change can improve the sport and the long time effects of doing so. This should be viewed more as a process; not an outcome. Additional opinion was not to eliminate any requirements but, change the focus of the time differently by reformatting the rounds with player participation and safety as a primary focus.

Discussion included other proposals that came from the Competitive Cheer Coaches Association and the sub-committee which included altering the score sheet for jumps, adopting a graduated choreography chart, allowing inverted exits and entrances without having the hands in contact with the mat, changing suspended rolls and allowing positioning in the draw of girls competitive cheer regionals and finals.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A continuance of the practice of having a spring/summer editing group of coaches and judges review the Competitive Cheer Manual and further update the Manual was recommended. This practice would include a review of non-safety and safety related violations, and lend further clarity and parameters to existing rules. This would also involve the inclusion of girls competitive cheer recommendations approved by the MHSAA Representative Council and discussion of ways to provide a format for greater participation at all levels. Additionally, this group would be charged with adding any other new updates to the Girls Competitive Cheer Manual.

2017-18 GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER TOURNAMENT INFORMATION

The 2018-19 Competitive Cheer Tournament will hold Districts on Friday and Saturday, February 15 and 16, 2019. There will be six Districts in four Divisions which will each have four teams progress to eight Regionals the following week on Saturday, February 23, 2019. Four teams from each of the eight Regionals will move to the Finals at the DeltaPlex in Grand Rapids on Friday, March 1 and Saturday, March 2, 2019. This will include four separate sessions of competitive cheer. The Competitive Cheer Committee also reviewed the 2019 plan for assigned seating at the DeltaPlex which includes tickets specified for school seating and spectator seating and embraces the concept for assigned school and spectator seating to assist with the large crowds at the DeltaPlex.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

The Girls Competitive Cheer Committee makes the following recommendations to the Representative Council:

1. Allow non-braced static inversions at the high school level only with the following standards in place:
 - The original base or spotter maintains constant contact with the flyer. Constant contact may be in any form and is not limited to hand/hand or hand/arm and/or hand/foot.
 - Prior to the static inverted position, the flyer must originate from below shoulder level.
 - The inversion must dismount to the cheering surface, cradle, any waist level position, or a non- inverted stunt at shoulder level.
 - Twists from inversions are illegal and inversions released to extended level are illegal.
 - Inversions released to extended level are illegal. (7-0)

2. Review and possibly restructure the MHSAA Girls Competitive Cheer format as early as the 2020-21 season. This may be done by evaluating current requirements, and using a task force that will follow MHSAA protocol while keeping the safety of athletes and continuing to increase participation numbers (at all levels) as the primary focus. (8-0)