

2018 SOCCER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Monday, January 22, 2018, 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Matt Boersma, Eaton Rapids
John Conlon, East Kentwood
Brian Fuller, Harbor Beach
Matthew Grodzicki, Livonia
Kevin Guzzo, St Joseph
Dan Mesyar, Ludington

Chris Riker, Portage
Amy Rossow, Grand Blanc
John Ciecko, Bloomfield Hills (Guest/MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Andy Frushour (Recorder)

The 2017-18 MHSAA Soccer Committee met in the MHSAA office to review topics involving soccer and the tournament series. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision making process and charge of the Soccer Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

HEAD TRAUMA

For the fifth consecutive year the committee started the meeting with a discussion on head trauma and concussions. The numbers of MHSAA concussion reports and insurance claims were reported to the group. The awareness of this issue has increased over the years, likely because of the high-profile stories and attention from football athletes and injuries. There is increased education for players, administrators and parents. The mentality of coaches now, compared to years ago, is concussions are significant injuries and they are treated as such. High school soccer games now often have a trainer on site, and referees have learned to officiate aerial challenges tighter and are more cautious when it comes to potential head injuries. Coaches continue to devote practice time to coaching proper heading technique.

JUNIOR/HIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL

It is no secret that club soccer dominates the landscape for our middle school-aged students. Relatively few member schools offer school-based soccer. The committee discussed the merits of eliminating the Limited Team Membership rule and letting students play on school and non-school teams simultaneously; while unlikely to pass, this could be a way to get more schools to offer soccer. The committee also highlighted the purpose for school-based soccer is to give students a chance to try soccer, which may be an opportunity for those who can't afford club soccer. Participation and skill development is much more important than winning, so there was no interest in regional or statewide tournaments. Also, with such a short season and limited game dates compared to the club option, the committee suggested allowing more games to be played on non-school days.

MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

The club soccer scene not only affects middle school/junior high participation, but the year-round nature of the sport tends to deter multi-sport participation opportunities. Like other sports, the larger schools have more soccer specialization than smaller schools. The fall expansion of the US Soccer Development Academies, in addition to forcing students out of school-based soccer, is also requiring students to choose soccer specialization at an earlier age (teams now start at 12 years old). Girls Development Academies were also added this year, including a team on the west side of the state which has altered the availability of high-level high school soccer-players in the Grand Rapids area.

Academies have not yet affected statewide participation numbers, but in future years it may be harder for schools to offer freshman teams.

REGULAR SEASON AND TOURNAMENT

The 2017 committee focused much of its discussion on the wear-and-tear of the high school season. A few changes were implemented for the 2017-18 season (no OTs in the regular season), and the 2018 committee wishes to make additional incremental changes to reduce the minutes played and miles logged by Michigan high school players.

Many committee members believe an 18-game season is too much, but recognize coaches and schools can and do schedule fewer games. Coaches and trainers are aware of minutes played throughout the season, especially in heavy weeks, and adjust training schedules and playing time accordingly. The committee noted a disconnect in the multi-team tournament rules which allows for 180 minutes of game play in one day, but does not allow a format for two full games (160 minutes). Allowing two full games on a non-school day gives schools more scheduling flexibility and can reduce the number of minutes played in a day. This issue has been brought to the Representative Council before and the committee believes this is a good time to bring it back again.

The committee reviewed the 2017 discussion about the District schedule. Three rounds of games are required to complete a District bracket, and this happens in a short five-day span in the spring and over six days in the fall. This is a grueling schedule of high-intensity games, compounded in the spring by scheduling difficulties due to graduations, honors night, proms, etc. Officials' availability is also stretched thin during the week, particularly on the first night of Districts. After a year of discussion the coaches on the committee are in favor of playing the District First Round prior to the normal week of Districts. This leaves only two games – semifinal and finals – to be played in the District week. The Regional week and Finals week also feature just two games.

Over the years the committee has become more and more open to the use of seeding for the MHSAA tournament. While some would like to see seeding across a Regional geographic area, the group thinks starting with a smaller, simpler seeding format is a good initial step. The committee was updated on the seeding work of the basketball committee, and will continue to watch the direction it takes. In the meantime, the MHSAA will work with the coaches association to collect scores and schedules in the spring and fall seasons and will prepare RPI-type seeding data for the 2019 committee to review.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- The committee reviewed the four-game minimum requirement for eligibility in the postseason. There is some sentiment to raise the minimum to six or eight games, but the committee wants to see what transpires this spring with the new girls academies and revisit the topic at the 2019 meeting.
- Red and yellow card issues were also covered. Some coaches have asked for a differentiation in red cards so some reds would follow the current MHSAA disqualification rule to sit out the next day of competition while others would allow a student to compete on the next day. The committee was adamant that a red is a red, and the current penalty should still apply (just like every other level of soccer). While there was not a strong push to institute a yellow card accumulation program, MHSAA staff will work with the coaches association to survey coaches on the accumulation topic. The committee did note the severity of the yellow card substitution penalty on goalkeepers, especially in penalty kick situations, and the MHSAA may submit a rule change request to the NFHS Soccer Committee for its 2019 meeting.
- A recommendation was made and supported to allow an earlier Draw Date – Sept. 1 and April 15. Compared to the current schedule this will allow a draw about 3-4 weeks earlier in the season. The MHSAA staff will discuss internally and then write re-draw parameters should a team opt out after the draw date.

- A new national rule in 2017-18 requires visible apparel worn under the jersey and shorts to match the predominant color of the respective garment. This rule was passed after the MHSAA Soccer Committee meeting, and the Representative Council delayed the implementation of the rule. This rule is on the national committee agenda again this year and the Soccer Committee will be watching for a potential change in the rule. The committee does not see the necessity for the national rule, but if the national committee does not change it in 2018-19 the Michigan committee suggests following the national rule.
- The use of grass versus artificial turf fields in all rounds of the MHSAA tournament was discussed. In particular the discussion focused on the selection criteria for hosts, as well as northern teams that might see an artificial surface for the first time at the state semifinal level.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

At the JH/MS level allow teams to play two full games on a non-school day, and have those two count as one the 12 regular season contests. (8-0)

As part of the high school multi-team tournament rule, allow teams to play two full games and have those two count as one the 18 regular season contests. (8-0)

Require the first round of District games to be played the week before the current District week. First round games to be played on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, with the District semifinals and finals scheduled for the following week. Saturday can be used as a weather backup only in the first round. (8-0)