

2019 SOCCER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Tuesday, January 22, 2019, 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Bell, Freeland
Kelly Conlon, Byron Center
Dee Crowley, Lowell
Ken Delaney, Coldwater
Dave Feldman, Bloomfield Hills
Josh Glerum, Zeeland
Matthew Grodzicki, Livonia
Doug Guenther, Saginaw

Kevin Guzzo, St. Joseph
Steve Horn, Williamston
Chris Riker, Portage
Mike Thayer, Bay City
Paige Mielke, Novi (Guest/MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Andy Frushour (Recorder)

The 2018-19 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 charge of the Soccer Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

SAFETY

Health and safety was once again the lead topic for the Soccer Committee. Concussion education and awareness for coaches continues to be strong. In addition, at the recent national coaches conference the number of headgear solutions seemed to be at an all-time high, particularly items that focus on padding the back of the head. It was also noted that the first generation of kids who were affected by US Soccer's rules limiting heading in the youth game will be reaching our high schools very soon.

PARTICIPATION

High school soccer participation has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years, but participation at the junior high/middle school level continues to be de-emphasized due to non-school, year-round club soccer options. Some committee members argue for a more relaxed Limited Team Membership rule. Why wouldn't we let students play school and club at the same time? Allowing this may encourage kids who solely play club to try a school-based team and get a taste of the fun culture of playing for your school. In a time when we have lost most freshman teams, would this allow kids to get more involved at an earlier age, which may then carry over to more high school participation? Others counter that if we focus on the loyalty of teammates at the high school level why wouldn't this be an issue at the JHMS level as well. There is also a bigger concern for overuse injuries with younger students. There is a delicate balance between allowing more participation with non-school teams, and guarding the gate to make sure school-based sports maintain an appropriate perspective. There is also sentiment that coaches should work with local clubs on these issues, and the MHSAA should do the same with youth soccer leaders at a statewide level.

SEEDING

Since 2015 the committee has talked about a seeding format for the postseason tournament. In recent years the committee has closely followed the basketball and hockey committees which have developed and recommended seeding systems, but none have been approved by the Representative Council. Last spring 393 coaches responded to a Michigan High School Coaches Association seeding survey. Results showed 67% of coaches preferred seeding to a blind draw, 76% preferred seeding all District teams instead of just the top two teams, and 82% preferred seeding via a computer rating model versus

a vote by coaches. Game scores were collected on MHSAA.com during the 2018 girls and boys seasons, and the resulting Michigan Power Rating (MPR) data was shared with the coaches association and the committee. While some members want to see seeding at the Regional level, noting seeding at the earliest rounds of the tournament does not solve the issue of “stacked” Districts, the committee did recommend a seeding process that would include the following details...

- At the District level only, seed the top two teams and place them on opposite sides of the bracket. Seeded teams are not guaranteed byes or home games.
- Seeds determined by the MHSAA’s MPR computer formula. MPR is based 25% on winning percentage, 50% on opponent’s winning percentage and 25% on opponent’s opponent’s winning percentage.
- Only games between MHSAA tournament teams are to be included in the formula.
- Teams must have at least eight results to be considered for one of the two seeds.
- Shortened games (at multi-team tournaments) each count as a W-L-T.
- The draw will be conducted and published by the MHSAA on the Sunday 10 days prior to the start of the District tournament (and include all results through that Saturday).

HANDBOOK AND NFHS RULES

Currently, while in season, students can go to college identification (ID) camps as long as they do not participate in scrimmages or games (Limited Team Membership rule). ID camps are used by college soccer coaches to invite students to campus and watch them train and play in a competitive environment. Many ID camps, however, are held in the spring during the high school girls season. The committee asked a number of questions about the rule. Does this put Michigan girls at a disadvantage? Should the rule change to allow girls to participate in college ID camps, visits and play dates? Should the same two-event allowance be given for soccer players that we give to athletes of individual sports? By making this change for soccer does it open it up to other sports as well?

Anecdotally, the fall boys season saw record yellow and red card numbers for dissent and abusive language. The effect of yellow card accumulation rules were discussed, specifically noting how games are officiated differently around the state, the difference between cautions for dissent versus fouls, and how a coach should have already handled a player who had received four or five cautions during a season. Poor sportsmanship is not unique to soccer, but handling dissent will continue to be an MHSAA point of emphasis with soccer officials and coaches.

REGULAR SEASON AND TOURNAMENT

Multi-team tournaments for soccer are only allowed on non-school days. The committee likes the lacrosse language that also allows multi-team tournaments on days not followed by school. They would like to see the wording added to the soccer rule, which would effectively allow tournaments on a Friday.

In 2000, when the U.P. was still part of the statewide tournament, the Representative Council passed a “Geographic District” rule which split the northern-most Division 1 District into a northern half and southern half with the two winners meeting in the District Final. The same system is still used today in both Divisions 1 & 2, and is praised (particularly by the southern schools) for mitigating travel time and expenses. The 13 schools in these two Districts were surveyed in 2015 and 2017, with a slight majority preferring the geographic draw format versus a full blind draw. In 2018-19, three schools have switched Divisions between 1 & 2, disrupting the even balance of teams in the north and south. There may be even more movement in the future. The 13 schools were surveyed again in 2019, with 8 of the schools now preferring a blind draw to make the format consistent with the other 62 Districts.

In 2008 the Representative Council passed a rule requiring District and Regional games played on ACT/SAT testing days to start after 5:00. Soccer is the only sport with this stipulation. The rule seems especially awkward on the Girls District Saturday when games cannot start until 5:00, but MHSAA Finals, Regional and Districts are being held throughout that same day in all other spring sports.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Poor weather and field conditions at the start of the girls season, which doesn't allow students to fully stretch out legs, leading to lingering injuries.
- A request to allow assigners to see MHSAA officials ratings. Coaches feel this will make their effort to rate officials more impactful.
- The severity of the yellow card substitution penalty on goalkeepers, especially in penalty kick situations.
- Update on the new officials uniform being used in Missouri, Kentucky and Illinois.
- Overview of the new calendar for the "shortened" boys seasons in 2019, 2024 and 2025.
- Always allowing the waiver for JHMS leagues that wish to play 30-minute halves instead of 15-minute quarters.
- Positive review of the earlier draw date enacted in 2018-19.
- Review of the new District schedule starting this spring, specifically about the cooperation between competing teams to find a game date and time in the first round.
- Schools with east-west fields should continue to be allowed to host tournament games.
- No momentum for using Golden Goal in the MHSAA tournament.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. At the District level only, seed the top two teams and place them on opposite sides of the bracket. Seeded teams are not guaranteed byes or home games. Seeds will be determined by the MHSAA's MPR computer formula. The random draw will be conducted and published by the MHSAA on the Sunday 10 days prior to the start of the District tournament (and include all results through that Saturday). (12-0)
2. Amend the Limited Team Membership rule for soccer to allow students to compete in scrimmages at a maximum of two college ID camps (including visits and play dates) during the season. (12-0)
3. Change the multi-tournament rule language from "only be held on non-school days" to "only be held on non-school days or days not followed by school." (11-0)
4. In the northern-most Districts in Division 1 and 2, eliminate the "geographic" draw which places the southern teams and northern teams on opposite sides of the bracket. These two Districts will use a blind draw to make consistent with the other 62 Districts, and the team on the top line will host each game throughout the entire bracket. (12-0)
5. Remove the rule requiring District and Regional Final games to start after 5:00 p.m. if held on an SAT or ACT national testing day. (11-0)