

BASEBALL / SOFTBALL COMMITTEE

East Lansing, February 2, 2016

Committee Members:

Steve Babbitt, Blissfield
Bill Blakely, Richland
Mitch Bohn, Sanford
Tom Calnen, Troy (MHSSCA)
Bryan Carpenter, Vermontville
Ken Dietz, Watervliet
Dave Engbers, Holland
Luke Eppel, Mt. Pleasant
Jeff Hammond, Union City
Kris Isom, Adrian
Chris LaMange, Grand Rapids

Troy Lynch, Auburn
Tim McDonald, Bay City (MHSBCA)
Brian Osborn, Fowlerville
Eric Pierce, West Bloomfield
Kim Reichard, Holt
John Young, Westland

Guest:

Jim Lioy, Sturgis

Staff:

Andrea Osters
Mark Uyl (Recorder)

The 2015-16 MHSAA Baseball / Softball Committee met in the MHSAA office building to review topics involving the MHSAA tournament series in baseball and softball.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

National Federation Topics: Discussion took place regarding National Federation playing rules and equipment. The majority of the conversation dealt with baseballs and the NCAA's recent move to the flat-seamed baseball in response to the BBCOR bat standards. The flat-seamed baseball has added more offense back into the game at this level, and the committee wished to gather more data and monitor the situation as it relates to baseballs used at the high school level. A brief report was provided on softball bats and potential bat tampering issues, and staff provided a report on bat testing done at the MHSAA Softball Finals. Additional discussion centered on the 2016 NF rule changes and MHSAA concussion protocols along with local policies regarding return to practice/play procedures.

Health and Safety: The committee had a robust conversation on the topic of baseball pitching limitations and the national trend to move toward a "pitch count" limitation. Members were provided data, articles and information on the recent joint venture between Major League Baseball and USA Baseball on the "Pitch Smart" program. There was unanimous support from the committee to move from an innings limitation (current rule) to a pitch-count limitation. The committee directed staff to convene a small sub-group to meet by next fall to work on the specific details of a pitch-count limit approach. The Representative Council will receive a report on this sub-group's work in December of 2016.

Tournament Procedures: Staff provided a report on Upper Peninsula District issues with the rapid growth of softball-only schools in Divisions 3 and 4. This creates a large number of softball schools in the UP Districts with far fewer baseball schools in those same groups. Rationale was provided on the District groupings for 2016, along with feedback received from those UP schools involved that highlighted the unique issues in the UP. Other topics such as the Friday District option and host site expectations in both baseball and softball were also discussed.

Tournament Format Alternatives: A long conversation took place regarding the MHSAA tournament format and pressure it places on baseball teams, especially, when it comes to the five games in eight days for the Regional and Final levels. There is concern regarding weather issues with the Regional-Quarterfinal-Semifinal-Final games scheduled so closely together. An alternative format was discussed that would increase the Regional to three rounds of play (instead of two) starting with mid-week single games (Regional Quarterfinal) followed by Saturday Regional Semifinals and Finals in baseball, only. The proposal discussed would eliminate the traditional Tuesday Quarterfinal round and the four Regional champions would advance directly to the Semifinals in baseball. This proposal would better space the tournament over the final two weeks and would eliminate a real concern with weather given how closely the Regional-Quarterfinal-Semifinal rounds of play are currently scheduled. While there was excitement for this alternative approach from the baseball perspective, softball representatives did not support any change as they like the current format and do not have the concern about weather delays and how it impacts their pitching and pitching depth.

Finals Venue: The committee was provided a report on the new Finals site at Michigan State University and plans for making a good experience even better in East Lansing in 2016.

Out of Season Coaching: The group discussed recent changes to the out-of-season coaching regulations with focus given to rotations now being allowed within a facility. There was strong support of the recent improvements to the rule.

Other Topics: Members of the committee briefly reviewed and discussed the recent change regarding 6th grade students on 7-8 grade teams, seeding plans and Michigan points of emphasis for the upcoming baseball and softball seasons.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. For the Baseball tournament only, change the Regional to three rounds of play (instead of two) starting with Tuesday single games at 64 sites for all District champions (Regional Quarterfinal) followed by the Saturday Regional Semifinals and Finals. This would eliminate the traditional Tuesday Quarterfinal round for Baseball and the four Regional champions would advance directly to the

Semifinals. Softball would keep the current schedule with Saturday Regional play followed by the Tuesday Quarterfinal played at 16 sites. The net effect would be baseball playing on its own the Tuesday/Wednesday following Districts, baseball and softball being played together at Saturday Regional sites and softball playing on its own at Tuesday Quarterfinal sites before both sports come together again for all Semifinal and Final games. (9-7)