

JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

MHSAA, February 8, 2017, 9:30 a.m.

Members in attendance:

Damon Amey, Saginaw
Steve Babbitt, Blissfield
Jeff Dassance, Eaton Rapids
Ken Dietz, Watervliet
Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids
Bryan Masi, Northville
Steve Newkirk, Clare
Edward Tomlin, Detroit
Matthew Verley, Grand Rapids
Jeff Yorke, Millington

Members absent:

Ted Davis, Midland
Don Gustafson, St. Ignace

MHSAA Staff

Cody Inglis

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School committee met for the second of two 2016-17 meetings to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

The Junior High/Middle School committee started its meeting with the MHSAA Multi-Sport Task Force. After meetings this year of both MHSAA committees it became apparent that very similar topics were being discussed. The two MHSAA groups compared common themes, priorities and potential collaboration opportunities. Additional resources developed by the Multi-Sport Task Force will be used by the Junior High/Middle School committee to both inform and educate parents, students, coaches, officials and administrators of the benefits of school based educational athletics.

After coming back together as a committee, a review of the JH/MS committee's responsibilities and discussions from the October meeting was done. An aggressive agenda was presented and reviewed.

Review of MHSAA JH/MS Sport committee discussions

The JH/MS committee completed a thorough review of MHSAA sport committee discussions that involved JH/MS issues or topics. These included a review of MS Competitive Cheer rules, regulations and rounds which was heavily discussed at the Competitive Cheer committee level. No action was taken. Additionally, the committee discussed at length two issues, contest limits and the MHSAA limited team membership rule that impact all JH/MS sports in the MHSAA.

MHSAA JH/MS game and contest limit discussion

In the October meeting of the JH/MS committee there was much discussion about MHSAA contest limits in JH/MS sports across the board in the MHSAA. There was no action taken on this issue because the committee wanted to get input from some of the other sport committees and how JH/MS sport contest limits were perceived in their sports. The sentiment that came from sport committees is that there was support to open up the option for contest limits to be expanded in MHSAA JH/MS sports. Discussion and feedback from committee members focused on the challenges of opening up contest limits to potentially compete with non-school youth sports most of which have far greater maximum game and contests that are allowed. Other challenges that the committee discussed included the different current MHSAA rules on contest limits in each MHSAA JH/MS sport. Some sports are days of competition, while other sports are games or contests. This uniqueness by MHSAA sport presents challenges for the JH/MS committee to forward a proposal regarding each sports contest limits. All agreed that while a modest increase was needed in each sport that it would be best to have each individual sport committee determine

this number. Additionally, the JH/MS committee felt strongly that there should be no increase in the 13 week JH/MS season. The committee urged the MHSAA, athletic directors and JH/MS school coaches to “guard the gate” of potential excess while opening it enough to allow moderate increases in contest limits. This will take continued education and support from educational athletics advocates like athletic directors and coaches with parents and student-athletes. A recommendation will be forwarded to the MHSAA Representative Council representing the sentiments of the committee to expand each sport’s maximum contest limits in both number of games or days of competition, as well as increasing the amount of multigame events not followed by a school day.

MHSAA JH/MS Limited Team Membership rule discussion

The MHSAA limited team membership rule was also reviewed for the JH/MS level after much discussion at the October meeting. Committee members had a renewed lively discussion on this topic and it was clear that geography, school size, the emphasis placed upon JH/MS athletics at a school and the league and conference schedule all played a part in the perception about this rule. In general, smaller schools with less outside non-school options for student-athletes had more viable offerings and sports in JH/MS. This allowed them to have multiple teams at different JH/MS levels in different sports. Larger suburban and metropolitan schools indicated that increased pressure from outside non-school opportunities were pitting school based sports versus non-school based sports with the parents and students in the middle. The JH/MS committee agreed to look at opening up the rule to allow team sport athletes in the same sport and the same season two outside events while playing for their school team. A recommendation was made to push a proposal to the MHSAA Representative Council with JH/MS football being excluded from the rule as committee members felt strongly about too many games in football in the rather condensed fall season. The goal of this proposal would be to bring non-school athletes into school based athletics sooner and as an option to include non-school competition in their experience.

MHSAA JH/MS Regional or Statewide competition discussion

The committee discussion continued from the October JH/MS committee meeting on “regional” or statewide tournaments for JH/MS sports that could be sponsored by the MHSAA. A review of some potential ways to get students into school based sports earlier was included, as well as working on suggestions for what sports might work better to get a tournament format started by the MHSAA. Individual sports, at first glance continued to be a more tenable option for starting any potential MHSAA JH/MS championship or season ending tournament. Discussion about the regional or statewide competition in JH/MS segued to discussion about MHSAA presenting sponsorships of existing JH/MS tournaments around the state. Continued future discussion of MHSAA sponsorship of regional or statewide tournaments will continue to be discussed by the JH/MS committee in the future as their seemed to be intrigue about this “out of the box” idea.

Discussion on “Presenting Sponsorship” of JH/MS tournaments

The JH/MS committee continued to focus much of their attention on two new MHSAA concepts – regional strike teams and presenting sponsorship of JH/MS tournaments. The committee was given time to look over an MHSAA document on what the “Presenting sponsor” concept is and how it would be used this spring in a “pilot program” in some MHSAA member school leagues and conferences. The MHSAA will support with “money and messaging” existing league and conference JH/MS events, tournaments and contests. This will start this spring in some JH/MS track events. The committee identified 5-6 leagues and conferences to be used as pilot programs this spring. MHSAA staff will coordinate with those leagues and conferences to ensure that they are able to host the event with the MHSAA “branding” as well as the additional

responsibilities connected with these spring events. Other key concepts of the “Presenting Sponsorship” plan include:

- The MHSAA will provide a grant of \$500 to \$1000 for the leagues and conferences that host these sponsored events depending upon the size and scope of the tournament.
- MHSAA will provide banners onsite.
- MHSAA will provide printed materials to hand out to patrons, parents and student-athletes.
- Public Address announcements will be developed and presented onsite with an emphasis on sportsmanship, multi-sport participation, health and safety and educational athletics.

The JH/MS committee worked to determine other needs for host schools and requested that JH/MS committee members could be onsite for the pilot program roll-outs to help with handing out materials and answering questions about JH/MS programs. Additionally, the desire of the committee would be to have an MHSAA student advisory program student from the area there as well to be an ambassador. Finally, the potential development of an MHSAA trophy or medal for these events was suggested as an additional way to “brand” the event for the MHSAA. These additional suggestions will be considered as a part of the “pilot program” or for future implementation.

Discussion on MHSAA “Regional Strike Teams”

JH/MS Committee response was overwhelmingly positive about the “Regional Strike Team” concept. The Regional strike teams would extend MHSAA outreach to JH/MS member schools as well as help recruit and retain officials. These two main focus areas of regional strike teams led to much discussion as to what are the job responsibilities of strike teams. Some areas that were discussed included:

- Teams would be under the direct supervision of MHSAA staff (primarily Mark and Cody)
- Team would consist of 4-6 people who could include school personnel, who may be recently retired, officials, former coaches and others who are connected with educational athletics.
- Teams will help coordinate and deliver programs and initiatives that would include programming on reasons to join the MHSAA at the JH/MS level, coordinating the presenting sponsorship program, sportsmanship presentations and parent programs on educational athletics.
- Teams will coordinate officials’ initiatives like recruitment at assignor, league and school levels.
- Teams will help coordinate training and encourage and support camps and clinics at the local level.

The JH/MS committee discussed these topics and responsibilities and had some general suggestions and feedback which includes:

- Developing and giving out MHSAA “swag” and apparel for the MHSAA regional strike team members
- Involving student-advisory member students whenever possible in these strike teams as a way to get student-athlete involvement and buy-in.
- Potentially expanding the program in the future by coming up with MHSAA “liaisons” or “ambassadors” for different geographic areas. These ambassadors could help with general issues and concerns for different areas around the state that they are familiar with and could mediate issues and report to MHSAA staff for regular debriefing times.

- Going to non-school youth sports programs and tournaments in the geographic area and offering to work with these programs and making sure that they understand MHSAA rules and regulations. Additionally, this area could be a time for officials recruiting and registration to get officials into school based officiating and registered with the MHSAA.

JH/MS Committee proposals

- **During the junior high/middle school sport season in any MHSAA sport except football, allow a member of the school team in that sport to participate in a maximum of two (2) non-school meets or contests in that sport while not representing his or her school. An event held on not more than three (3) consecutive calendar days is considered a single meet. (7-3)**
- **Urge each MHSAA sport committee to examine an expanded number of middle school games and dates in that sport, without extending the length of the 13-week season. This would also include expanding the number of multigame events allowed on the same day not followed by a day of school from two to four. (10-0)**