

**MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.
SOFTBALL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

East Lansing, January 15, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Chris Galloway, Jackson
Wendy Goodline, Coloma
Charles LaClear, Flint
Stephen Loonsfoot, Shepherd
Nancy Malinowski, Farmington Hills
Casei Marlan, Mason
Paul Marwede, Alpena (MHSSCA)
Cheri Ritz, Wayland
Bryan Smith, Lansing
Zac Stevenson, Traverse City (phone)
Travis VanBemmel, Grand Rapids
Betty Wroubel, Pontiac (MIAAA)

Members Absent:

Tom Calnen, Troy

Others Present:

Meaghan Rourke, MATS

MHSAA Staff:

Andi Osters (Recorder)

The 2019-20 MHSAA Softball Committee met on Jan. 15, 2020, at the MHSAA office in East Lansing. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision making process and charge of the Softball Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the softball coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

TOURNAMENT PROCEDURES

The committee reviewed District draw options, including the provision for District groups to play District semifinal and final games on Friday instead of Saturday. Citing several disagreements between schools during the 2019 season, committee members agreed that District tournament hosts should obtain written agreement from all participating teams if the District is to be played on the Friday. Said agreement should be received prior to the District draw.

SEASON LENGTH & CONTEST LIMITATIONS

Discussion took place regarding the 38-game season maximum limitation, and the possibility of establishing a weekly contest limit. Committee members noted both teams and umpires prefer double-headers to single-game contests, and spring weather often forces teams to make up games in the later weeks of the season. Single-game formats may also lead to smaller teams, as less personnel would be needed. Ultimately, it was decided that the current limit of 38 contests per season with no weekly cap seems satisfactory for the sport.

JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

Growing the game of softball within junior high and middle school athletic programs continues to be a challenge. Committee discussion on this topic quickly turned philosophical, as the merits of school-based athletics for young student-athletes seem to be 'losing ground' when compared with other non-school options. Several contributing factors were identified for declining numbers in school-based spring softball: travel softball and Little League seasons being held concurrently, too many other sport options for girls during the spring season, and the Limited Team Membership regulation.

EQUIPMENT

Committee members talked about the increased usage of wrist playcards by pitchers and catchers, and to a lesser extent other defensive position players. In order to address a growing concern over pace of play related to these devices, the committee recommended a Point of Emphasis for the MHSAA Softball Rules Meeting related to pace of play and time between delivered pitches.

UMPIRES

For the second year, a lengthy discussion took place regarding the continued declining number of softball umpires. The committee was briefed on new post-contest ejection protocols, and the potential for new parent ejection protocols in 2020-21. Softball umpires disclose that there are three reasons why they stop (or never start) umpiring: (1) regular season double header game times often conflict with work schedules, (2) pay is too low for long games, and (3) poor sportsmanship from parent spectators. Committee members expressed an interest in expanding the “free registration voucher” program beyond two current high school students – perhaps to provide schools with additional vouchers for two adults from their school communities.

REGULAR SEASON SUSPENDED GAMES

The committee reviewed new language proposed for handling of regular-season suspended games. Overall, feedback was positive. Most leagues and conferences have by-laws that address specific situations, but the new language would aid those that do not have guidelines. It was recommended that the document be edited to include contest limitation information: if a game is suspended, it does not count as an additional game when resumed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS - NO ACTION

1. 2019 Update Meeting Question #10: Employment/ownership of sport training facilities by school coaches
2. Multi-sport participation
3. Defensive facemasks, NOCSAE standards
4. Limiting the length of break between games of a doubleheader
5. 2018-19 MHSAA Head Injury Report for Softball
6. NFHS Rule Changes, Major Editorial Changes, and Points of Emphasis

NO RECOMMENDATIONS TO MHSAA REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL