

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

East Lansing, January 21, 2021, 9:30 a.m.

**Members Present:**

Bonnie Binioris, Lansing  
Tom Calnen, Troy (MHSSCA)  
Rob Dilday, Utica  
Chris Galloway, Jackson  
Wendy Goodline, Coloma  
Paul Marwede, Alpena  
William McCoy, Romulus  
Matt McLouth, Decatur  
DeeJay Paquette, Munising  
Bryan Smith, Lansing  
Zac Stevenson, Traverse City  
Travis VanBemmel, Grand Rapids  
Robert Wright, Sand Creek  
Betty Wroubel, Pontiac (MIAAA)

**Members Absent:**

Charles LaClear, Flint

**Others Present:**

Martha Munsell, Fowlerville (MATS)

**MHSAA Staff:**

Andi Osters (Recorder)

The 2020-21 MHSAA Softball Committee met virtually on Jan. 21, 2021, via Zoom. 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 recently released District and Regional groupings, and discussed the work of the MHSAA Baseball/Softball Site Selection Committee. Despite numerous changes to the baseball tournament format and schedule, the group felt that a joint selection committee remains important for two reasons: (1) to encourage equal treatment of baseball and softball facilities by school districts and (2) to allow the same group of people to review all information for both sports when selecting hosts.

**OUT-OF-SEASON COACHING**

During a review of results from the 2020 MHSAA Update Meeting Survey, the committee discussed the pros and cons of the new "16 Contact Day" provision granted to spring sport coaches during the Fall of 2020. Sentiment was generally positive. Several noted the benefits of seeing first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders and new students in the fall; creating an immediate connection between these students and a spring sport. Additionally, coaches expressed that the time commitment was less this fall than compared with their previous 4-player/open gym/rotations schedule. Small school representatives noted that many students found it difficult to compete in their fall sport and attend all contact days offered by their spring sport coaches.

**INCREASING PARTICIPATION**

For the third consecutive year, committee members expressed concern about declining participation in softball, even more so in urban areas. The group noted that, in general, fewer girls are showing an interest in organized athletics (not just softball). The committee asked that the Women in Sports Leadership planning group examine this issue and perhaps make it a focus for the next conference.

## **REGULAR SEASON SUSPENDED GAMES**

The committee reviewed language adopted last year by the MHSAA Baseball Committee for handling of regular-season suspended games. Most leagues and conferences have by-laws that address specific situations, but the new language would aid those that do not have guidelines. The committee discussed how a suspended game rule would increase consistency, improve adherence to current regulation game rules and reduce unsporting gamesmanship between opponents. Consistency in the application of suspended game rules was mentioned as especially important if the sport were to ever move to a seeded postseason tournament. The intent and language of the rule was debated extensively and the committee decided to amend it so that the default of a called game not completed by rule would be a suspended game, and that only the school administrators would have the ability to agree on additional options provided in the rule.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

COVID-19 remains a present concern for schools as they prepare for the spring season. Committee members reviewed the Return to Play protocols for MHSAA softball, and made several recommendations to MHSAA staff for language related to competition. The softball community at large is confident that the sport is well-prepared to adjust to face covering and social distancing measures, which may be required for play. Committee member Bryan Smith provided an update on efforts from USA Softball to quell bat doctoring. Individuals who roll or alter softball bats can be reported to USA Softball, who then shares information with bat manufacturers. USA Softball has had some success in forcing these individuals to cease and desist with their operations.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS - NO ACTION**

1. Umpire shortage
2. MHSAA tournament host facility requirements
3. Approved bats
4. NFHS Rule Changes, Major Editorial Changes, and Points of Emphasis

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO MHSAA REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

1. Add a suspended game policy to the MHSAA playing rule adoptions for softball in the MHSAA Handbook. This policy provides that, by default, a game will be suspended any time the game is called before it reaches regulation, or if called any time with the score tied. (14-0)