

2024-25 MHSAA BOWLING COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rick Dodick, Bay City
Micah Gallegos, Traverse City
Brandon Malinowski, Farmington Hills
Jason Malloy, Westland
Joe Manor, DeWitt
Scott Spahr, Sturgis (MHSIBCA)
Robert Tubbs, Davison
Adam Valk, Wayland
Jason Vogel, Kent City
Sheri Yanik, Pontiac

GUESTS

Deb Alexander, Flint
Rudy Godefroidt, Hemlock
Judy Jaeger, Highland
Richard Kieft, Lansing (MATS)
Dave Kowalski, Bay City (MHSCA)
Tracy Long-Arnold, Corunna
Tom Stockton, Sterling Heights

MHSAA STAFF

Cole Malatinsky (Recorder)

The 2024-25 MHSAA Bowling Committee met in East Lansing at the MHSAA's John E. "Jack" Roberts building on March 12, 2025. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision-making process and charge of the Bowling Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members, and the coaches association. The committee was reminded that the scope of their work was to focus on growing the sport of bowling, protecting the health and safety of participants and spectators, and maintaining the proper philosophy of educational, school-based athletics.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2024-25 MHSAA REGULAR SEASON REVIEW

The committee reviewed the change to Regulation II, Section 10, allowing students to participate in both JV and varsity matches on the same day. Coaches on the committee reported that the new rule had a largely positive impact, particularly in cases where teams had limited players due to illness or other commitments. Additionally, no instances of misuse were noted.

2024-25 MHSAA POSTSEASON REVIEW

The committee reviewed three changes implemented during the 2025 postseason tournament: 1) the allowance for Regional events to be held on any two consecutive days, Wednesday-Saturday, the week of the Regional, 2) the enabling of foul lights during tournament play, and 3) restrictions on coaches standing in the bowler's area during competition.

The committee noted that the adjustment to Regional tournament scheduling, which now permits flexibility in selecting two consecutive competition days (Wednesday-Thursday, Thursday-Friday, or Friday-Saturday), was generally well received. While this change impacted ticket sales and attendance, it has helped alleviate overcrowding at some Regionals and better accommodate proprietors' business operations.

After two years of disabling foul lights during postseason tournament competition, the 2025 tournament reinstated their use. The committee viewed this change positively, as it provided consistency between the regular season and postseason while ensuring fairness, accuracy, and safety. No significant issues were reported. However, the committee unanimously recommended incorporating language from USBC Rule 5 – Fouls into MHSAA tournament documents to clarify a commonly misunderstood aspect of the rule: *A ball remains in play after delivery until the same or another player is on the approach in position to make a succeeding delivery.*

The committee also evaluated the adjustment to coaching privileges, limiting teams with two school-designated coaches in the bowlers' area to only one standing during competition. This change was implemented to improve spectator sightlines and was deemed effective in achieving its intended goal.

Finals managers from each of the four divisions were in attendance and provided reports:

Division 1 – Thunderbowl Lanes – Allen Park

Division 2 – Century Lanes – Waterford

Division 3 – JAX 60 – Jackson

Division 4 – Northway Lanes – Muskegon

The committee reviewed a historical list of MHSAA Bowling Finals host sites and year-by-year spectator attendance data as part of a discussion on future Finals venues and formats.

The committee continued discussions on potential solutions to ongoing crowding issues during the Singles Finals competition. The expansion of the Finals event to three days was once again discussed. Under the format, the combined boys' and girls' team events would remain on one day, as currently structured, but the boys' and girls' singles competitions would take place on separate days. The committee also considered the possibility of utilizing Thursday and/or Sunday as potential Finals tournament dates if an alternative format or schedule becomes necessary.

Additionally, the committee explored the feasibility of holding the boys' and girls' Finals on separate weekends. This adjustment could provide opportunities to use smaller host centers while still addressing crowding concerns. However, while separating the events offers potential benefits, it also presents logistical challenges—particularly for Upper Peninsula schools and those with a single coach for both boys' and girls' teams. A split schedule would require schools to travel on multiple weekends, leading to increased expenses and the potential need for coaches to take additional time off work.

MHSAA staff will continue evaluating potential options, and discussions on this topic will continue in future meetings.

WINTER SPORTS CALENDAR

The committee discussed the upcoming changes to the 2025-26 winter season schedule, which will affect all MHSAA winter sports. The revised calendar was designed to conclude the winter tournament series one week earlier while maintaining approximately the same start dates. In addition to shortening the season, this adjustment reduces overlap between the end of winter sports and the start of spring practices.

These potential changes were initially discussed during the 2024 meeting, and the committee reiterated its position that the start of practice should be on a Monday rather than the current schedule, which begins practice on the second Thursday before Thanksgiving. However, due to the absence of a formal proposal, the official start date remained unchanged once the changes to the 2025-26 calendar were formalized.

To address ongoing facility and scheduling challenges faced by schools at bowling centers, the committee unanimously supported a proposal to move the official start of practice to three Mondays before Thanksgiving. This change would help schools conduct tryouts more effectively, minimize disruptions caused by the Thanksgiving holiday, and avoid the confusion of not starting on a Monday.

ABSENT BOWLERS

The committee briefly discussed the rules regarding absent bowlers. Under current MHSAA rules, absent bowlers receive a zero for any missed frame. The committee reaffirmed that the current rule is fair and proposed no change.

DRESS CODE

The committee discussed the continued challenges with dress code compliance and enforcement, particularly as it relates to skirt length. The committee unanimously supported a modification to the dress code. Shorts, skorts, and skirts will still be permitted and must be fingertip length, but any girl wearing a skirt will be required to wear shorts or spandex underneath. The dress code will also be amended to add clarification that spandex and yoga pants under shorts, skorts, or skirts will be permitted. Spandex and yoga pants worn alone, without shorts, skorts, or skirts over top, will remain prohibited. These changes aim to improve clarity and consistency in enforcement while maintaining professionalism in competition attire.

The committee also emphasized the critical role of coaches in enforcing the dress code. Coaches are required to follow the dress code themselves and should ensure compliance throughout the regular season so that any issues are addressed well before the postseason tournament. To reinforce this expectation, the importance of the coaches' dress code and its enforcement during the regular season will once again be a point of emphasis in the annual coaches' rules meeting.

BALL LIMITS

Since 2022, bowlers have been limited to five balls in the bowling center during postseason tournament competition. While competitive equity was a consideration, the primary reason for this restriction was to address space limitations within bowling centers.

Following multiple issues related to the ball limit over the past two seasons and challenges with enforcement, the committee revisited the policy. After discussion, the committee unanimously approved an increase to a six-ball limit. Bowlers will now be permitted to have six balls in the bowling center, but they will still only be allowed two balls in the bowlers' area.

This adjustment aligns with current practices, as many bowlers already bring two three-ball totes. Allowing bowlers to utilize two full three-ball totes eliminates the need for tournament managers to inspect bags for compliance, simplifying enforcement, while not taking up any additional space in the bowling center. Additionally, allowing one additional ball will provide bowlers with greater flexibility to adjust to changing lane conditions working to maintain competitive equity.

COACHING PRIVILEGES & SLOW PLAY

Mid-frame coaching and misunderstanding of the coaching restrictions continue to be issues during MHSAA postseason play, which currently only allows coaching between frames. The committee unanimously supported a change to the coaching restrictions, allowing mid-frame advice from the coach but explicitly stating that all communication from the coach must stop once the ball thrown appears in the ball return. The committee also reiterated that coaches must ensure any coaching, instruction, or behavior during competition does not slow the pace of play.

LIMITS OF COMPETITION

Due to the limited availability in many bowling centers—many of which have league play on weekday evenings and Saturdays, along with open bowling schedules—many high school bowling events are held on Sundays.

Based on committee feedback, Regulation II, Section 10(A), which currently restricts students from participating in more than eight games on a day preceding a school day, is not widely known and is

frequently violated. The committee recognized the importance of allowing Sunday tournaments and noted that participating in weekend events is vastly different from attempting to bowl more than eight games after school on a weekday.

To align with policies in other sports, such as wrestling, the committee unanimously supported a proposal to amend the regulation. The proposed change would restrict students to no more than eight games on a school day (Monday-Thursday), rather than on days preceding school, ensuring consistency while maintaining student well-being.

SUBSTITUTIONS

The committee reviewed the current substitution rule, which requires a bowler to complete at least one full frame before being substituted.

After discussion, the committee unanimously supported a change allowing a starting bowler to be substituted after their first ball, rather than requiring them to complete the entire frame. This adjustment provides coaches with greater flexibility for strategic substitutions while maintaining the integrity of competition.

STRING PIN SETTING

The committee discussed the growing adoption of string pinsetters, which use strings attached to the tops of pins to reset them after each roll. These systems are gaining traction in the bowling industry due to their cost-effectiveness and reduced maintenance requirements. Compared to traditional free-fall pinsetters, string pinsetters are more affordable and easier to maintain, prompting many bowling centers to make the switch. With an increasing number of centers expected to transition to string pinsetters in the coming years, including a long-time MHSAA bowling tournament venue for the 2025-26 season, the committee unanimously approved their use at MHSAA Regional tournament sites, provided the center is properly certified by the USBC.

MHSAA TOURNAMENT OIL PATTERN

As part of a review of the current pattern, the Phantom 2, the committee was provided a year-by-year summary of MHSAA tournament oil patterns and MHSAA Finals singles event scoring. 2025 was the second year of the Phantom 2. No change will be made after two years of use, but all feedback from the committee indicates the pattern was an improvement from the original Phantom as we continue to see improved scoring for a second year. The committee will continue to discuss tournament oil patterns and related concerns at future meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MHSAA STAFF

1. Update MHSAA tournament documents to include language on USBC Rule 5 – Fouls: *A ball remains in play after delivery until the same or another player is on the approach in position to make a succeeding delivery.*
2. Under MHSAA dress code, girls will be permitted to wear shorts, skorts, and skirts, but must be fingertip length. Bowlers wearing a skirt will be required to wear shorts or spandex underneath. Yoga/spandex pants worn under shorts, skorts, or skirts will be permitted. Yoga/spandex pants worn alone, without shorts, skorts, or skirts over top, will remain prohibited.
3. The bowling ball limit will be increased to six (6) balls in the bowling center. Bowlers will still only be allowed two (2) balls in the bowlers' area.
4. Starting bowlers must throw at least one ball before being substituted, no longer requiring a starting bowler to complete one full frame.

5. Coaching and instruction will be allowed between frames. Mid-frame advice from the coach is allowed, but all communication must stop once the ball thrown appears on the ball return. Coaches must ensure that any coaching, instruction, or behavior does not slow the pace of play. (10-0)
6. Bowling centers with USBC-certified string pinsetters are eligible to host MHSAA Regional tournaments. (10-0)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Under Regulation II, Section 11(E), make the official start of practice for the sport of bowling three Mondays before Thanksgiving. (10-0)
2. Under Regulation II, Section 10(A-3), allow students to participate in no more than eight games on a school day (Monday-Thursday). (10-0)