

2025-26 MHSAA BOWLING COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jason Heerema, Grand Rapids
Brandon Malinowski, Farmington Hills
Jason Malloy, Westland (Rep Council)
Hunter Myers, Delton Kellogg
Scott Spahr, Sturgis (MHSIBCA)
Pete Tomassoni, Iron Mountain
Suzy Thayer, Jackson

GUESTS

Deb Alexander, Flint
Rudy Godefroidt, Hemlock
Judy Jaeger, Highland
Dave Kowalski, Bay City (MHSCA)
Tracy Long, Royal Oak
Marci Pionk, Ionia (MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Kiersten Anstead
Cole Malatinsky (Recorder)

The 2025-26 MHSAA Bowling Committee met on March 11, 2026 at the MHSAA's John E. "Jack" Roberts building in East Lansing. The meeting began with introductions of committee members and a review of the purpose and responsibilities of the committee within the MHSAA decision-making process. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members, and the coaches association. Committee members were reminded that their work should focus on promoting the growth of the sport of bowling, maintaining the philosophy of educational athletics, and ensuring safe and fair competition for all participants.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

REVIEW OF 2024-25 MINUTES AND REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL ACTION

The committee reviewed the minutes from the 2025 Bowling Committee meeting and the actions taken by the Representative Council following the committee's recommendations.

Discussion included the practice start date, which now begins three Mondays prior to Thanksgiving, aligning with the previous committee recommendation approved by the Representative Council. The committee noted that beginning practice on a Monday has helped provide greater clarity for schools and bowling centers while allowing additional time for tryouts.

The committee also briefly discussed the change under Regulation II, Section 10 (A), allowing students to participate in no more than eight games on a school day, Monday through Thursday. It was noted that many regular-season tournaments are held on Sundays due to bowling center availability. Committee members indicated that the rule appears to be working as intended and aligns with the realities of facility scheduling.

DRESS CODE

The committee reviewed the MHSAA bowling dress code and feedback received from tournament managers and coaches. The recent change to the girls dress code requiring shorts or spandex to be worn under skirts was reported to be largely well received. Discussion focused primarily on maintaining consistent compliance and enforcement during both the regular season and postseason, particularly as some bowlers may be attempting to wear shorter skirts now that shorts are required underneath. It should be noted that skirts, shorts, and skorts must still meet the fingertip-length requirement, even with the new rule, and that will once again be emphasized going into next season.

BOWLING BALL LIMIT

The committee reviewed the six-ball limit for MHSAA postseason competition. Members noted that the change from the previous five-ball limit has been a positive adjustment, simplifying enforcement and aligning with common equipment practices among bowlers.

COACHING RESTRICTIONS

The committee discussed the adjustment to the coaching restrictions allowing mid-frame coaching, provided that communication from the coach stops once the bowler's ball appears in the ball return. The committee discussed feedback from tournament managers and coaches regarding how the rule is being interpreted and its impact on pace of play.

STRING PINSETTERS

Following the 2024-25 committee's approval to allow MHSAA Regional tournaments to be held in bowling centers using USBC-certified string pinsetters, the committee reviewed two Regional tournaments conducted in facilities with string pinsetters. Both tournaments were reported to be well run, and no issues were identified. As more bowling centers transition to this equipment, the committee discussed the continued allowance of certified string pinsetter facilities to host MHSAA Regional tournaments. At this time, no changes to the current policy are anticipated.

FINALS REVIEW

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 – Skore Lanes – Taylor

Crowding in both the competition and spectator seating areas continues to be the primary concern among Finals managers and coaches. MHSAA staff will continue to evaluate facilities to ensure adequate space for participants and spectators. Efforts will include providing sufficient seating for bowlers and coaches in the competition area and adding bleacher seating where possible to improve sightlines for spectators.

FINALS TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE

The committee reviewed current attendance trends at the MHSAA Bowling Finals and the challenges associated with strong spectator turnout. Generally speaking, most 50-lane facilities with estimated occupancy limits between approximately 500 and 700 people, depending on facility layout and fire code requirements. The MHSAA is fortunate to have great partnerships with current host venues; however, at all four locations total attendance, including participants and spectators, has approached or exceeded the comfortable operating capacity of the facility.

The discussion focused on potential adjustments that could improve safety and crowd management while maintaining a positive experience for bowlers, coaches, and spectators and ensuring the long-term sustainability of host facilities. Several concepts were presented for consideration. One option included separating the Boys and Girls Finals to different weekends, which would reduce crowds and potentially allow for future expansion of qualifiers. However, this approach would require schools with both boys and girls qualifiers to travel on two separate weekends, resulting in additional missed class time for students and missed work for coaches, potentially increasing costs for participating schools and the MHSAA, and requiring host centers to dedicate an additional weekend to the event.

Another concept discussed involved moving the Finals to a Monday–Tuesday schedule while maintaining the current combined Boys and Girls format. This approach would attempt to reduce

spectator attendance through weekday scheduling while preserving the existing tournament structure. Attendance data presented during the meeting indicated that weekday events tend to draw fewer spectators, suggesting that a weekday format could reduce attendance to levels that better align with facility capacity limits. Benefits of this option include maintaining the current two-day structure, improving flexibility in securing host sites, and potentially reducing operational costs. Challenges include students missing school, coaches and parents missing additional work time, and the possibility that some community members may be unable to attend due to weekday scheduling.

No action was taken at this time. The Michigan High School Interscholastic Bowling Coaches Association will solicit input from its membership regarding potential options, and MHSAA staff will continue discussions with bowling center proprietors regarding possible changes and preferred weekday scheduling compared to the traditional Friday–Saturday format. The committee will continue to evaluate these options as it considers potential adjustments for future Bowling Finals.

GIRLS PARTICIPATION ON BOYS TEAMS

The committee reviewed existing policy regarding girls who participate on boys bowling teams and the eligibility requirements for participation in the MHSAA Girls Tournament. Currently, a participating school must have four girls team competitions during the regular season for its bowlers to be eligible for the Girls Tournament, including the Girls Singles Tournament. As a result, a girl who competes on a boys team at a school that does not have a girls program is not eligible for the Girls Singles Tournament unless she participates in at least four girls competitions during the regular season. This requirement has led some schools to make scheduling adjustments, including scheduling or forfeiting league or conference contests or seeking out girls-only events solely to meet the four-event eligibility requirement. Additionally, under the current interpretation, a girl who participates in the Boys Team Tournament is not eligible to compete in the Girls Singles Tournament.

Staff presented a proposed change to the interpretation that more closely aligns with current policy in Girls Wrestling, which also has separate team and individual tournament series and allows girls to participate on the boys team during the Team Wrestling Tournament series and then compete in the Girls Individual Tournament series. Under the proposal, a girl bowler may continue to compete on both boys and girls teams during the regular season but must be designated in only one lineup at any given event; there is no change to current practice in that regard.

For postseason competition, a girl would be allowed to participate in either the Boys or Girls Team Tournament and then enter either the Boys or Girls Singles Tournament, but not both. The committee discussed whether the proposed language would improve clarity and ease scheduling for coaches and administrators. The committee also considered the potential impact the change may have on girls participation. Some concern was expressed that allowing girls to bowl on the boys team during the regular season without requiring participation in girls events could reduce efforts to grow girls programs. While the committee unanimously approved the change, MHSAA staff will closely monitor girls team sponsorship and participation numbers to evaluate any impact this change may have on participation.

LANE ASSIGNMENTS

The committee discussed current policies regarding lane assignments, which restrict more than one bowler from the same school from being assigned to the same pair of lanes during the MHSAA Singles Tournament. The rationale for the discussion was that placing two bowlers from the same school on the same pair could make coaching easier, especially for those schools with only one coach, by limiting the spread of players throughout the facility.

After discussion, the committee confirmed that the current policy—allowing only one bowler per pair from each school—remains the fairest approach and does not create an undue burden on coaches.

BAKER GAME FORMAT

The committee reviewed the current Baker format used during team competition. Discussion focused on the possibility of switching from the current alternating-lanes format to a collegiate-style Baker format, in which teams bowl the first game on one lane and then switch lanes for the second game of the Baker set.

While there was some support for moving to the collegiate-style Baker format to potentially improve pace of play, the committee ultimately decided not to change from the current alternating-lanes format. Members noted that the change might not produce the intended results due to the wider variation in team skill levels at the high school level compared to collegiate competition.

MHSAA TOURNAMENT OIL PATTERN

As part of its review of the current tournament oil pattern, Phantom 2, the committee was provided with a year-by-year summary of MHSAA tournament oil patterns and scoring from the MHSAA Finals Singles event. The 2026 tournament marked the third year of use for the Phantom 2 pattern. As a result, no change will be made at this time, and Phantom 2 will again be used for the 2027 MHSAA Tournament.

Members of the committee have begun working with Kegel to modify and improve the Phantom 2 pattern. The proposed Phantom 3 pattern will be posted on the MHSAA website and used as a test pattern during the 2026–27 regular season. Pending feedback from those using the pattern and committee approval at the 2027 meeting, Phantom 3 could be implemented beginning with the 2028 MHSAA Tournament.

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AEDS)

A committee guest from the Michigan Athletic Trainers' Society (MATS) briefly discussed the availability and use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in bowling centers, along with ongoing efforts to ensure AED availability at all off-campus athletic events.

While significant progress has been made, continued efforts remain necessary. One committee member noted that through a partnership between their local league schools and the local proprietors association, they were able to apply for a grant and pool resources to secure AEDs for all of their local bowling centers. The committee emphasized the importance of continued efforts like this to improve safety at bowling venues.

RECOMMENDATION TO MHSAA STAFF

1. Updated interpretation for girls participation on boys teams during the MHSAA tournament:
 - Regardless of a girl's participation during the regular season, a girl may participate as a member of either the boys team or the girls team during the MHSAA Team Tournament, but not both.
 - A girl who competes on either the boys team or the girls team during the MHSAA Team Regional Tournament must remain with that team for the duration of the postseason tournament. She must be listed on that team's roster and Master Eligibility List and may not change teams at any level of postseason.
 - Girls may enter either the Boys Singles Tournament or the Girls Singles Tournament, but not both. Regardless of which team a girl competes on during the team portion of the Regional Tournament, coaches must designate whether the bowler will be entered in the Boys Singles or Girls Singles Tournament. Schools remain limited to a maximum

of six entries in the Boys Singles Tournament and six entries in the Girls Singles Tournament.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

None.