



Awards, Amateur Status & Scholarships – FAQ

1. Do MHSAA athletes have to compete as amateurs?

Yes. At the core of MHSAA eligibility policies is the concept of *amateurism*. Students are permitted to compete in interscholastic athletics only as amateurs. They may not accept gifts, cash, merchandise, or other valuable considerations based on athletic performance or potential, nor may they sign a professional contract. These standards are outlined in Regulation II, Section 11 of the MHSAA Handbook.

High school sports are designed to supplement the educational experience, not to serve as a pathway to financial gain or professional opportunities. Amateurism ensures that the focus remains on education, character development, friendships, and the love of the game—rather than personal profit. Let the kids be kids.

2. What types of awards are allowed?

Symbolic awards (trophies, medals, plaques, t-shirts) valued at \$40 retail or less are allowed.

3. What types of awards are not allowed?

Cash, gift certificates, merchandise, or equipment given for athletic participation in an MHSAA tournament sport are not allowed.

4. Can a student keep the equipment given to them after the season?

Players may purchase and keep equipment (e.g., uniforms, shoes) at fair market value without affecting their eligibility. The school's athletic director must be consulted in determining fair market value and is solely responsible for making that determination.

5. Can students compete in adult tournaments or leagues?

No. Students may not compete in any bowling competition with adults that offer:

- Prize money
- Jackpots
- Brackets
- Other cash games

IMPORTANT NOTE: This rule applies even if the money is:

- Deferred or held in escrow
- Designated for education or charity
- Converted into “scholarship funds” or USBC SMART points

6. Can students compete in adult tournaments or leagues, even if their winnings are converted to SMART points or scholarship money?

No.

7. What if the student completes the USBC Rule 400 Consent Form – can they then compete in adult tournaments or leagues?

No. While we use some USBC playing rules during MHSAA competition, only MHSAA rules govern MHSAA eligibility. The USBC Rule 400 Consent Form only protects a bowler’s USBC Youth Membership — it does not override MHSAA amateur status rules or safeguard MHSAA eligibility.

8. Can a student participate in an adult bowling tournament or league if they agree not to accept any winnings?

Under MHSAA rules, a violation only occurs if a student accepts impermissible awards or money. However, participation in adult events is strongly discouraged – simply put, students should not be participating in adult events with cash awards, gambling, alcohol consumption, and smoking/vaping. Even if a student declines the awards, it is very difficult to prove that after the fact. Any dispute or misunderstanding could place the student’s eligibility at risk.

9. What is the penalty for accepting prize money?

Accepting prize money in any form results in loss of eligibility for all MHSAA sports for up to one calendar year.

10. What can be done if a student accepts prize money or impermissible benefits?

Eligibility may only be restored if the student forfeits and returns all winnings from the prohibited event.

11. Are non-school youth bowling tournaments with scholarships allowed?

Yes, but with conditions:

- Students may participate in youth-only bowling events that offer USBC SMART Scholarship points.
- Students cannot compete in adult divisions and simply have winnings redirected as SMART points.
- For a scholarship to be valid under MHSAA rules, it must be a true scholarship program with multiple criteria (e.g., academics, citizenship, service), consistent with NCAA, USOC, and MHSAA amateur status policies
- All USBC youth event certification and SMART Scholarship point processes must be followed.

12. Do these rules apply to out-of-state youth tournaments?

Yes. MHSAA rules apply equally to bowling and scholarship events, whether local or out-of-state. Families should use caution when entering youth tournaments outside Michigan to ensure compliance.

13. Who should I contact with questions?

- For MHSAA regulations: Direct questions through your school athletic administration to the MHSAA.
- For SMART Points and scholarship programs: Consult your state USBC youth leadership.