

**MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION**  
**Girls Competitive Cheer Committee Meeting (ZOOM)**  
East Lansing, January 26, 2022  
9:30 a.m.

**Members Present:**

Brittany Gunderson, Gaylord  
Kris Isom, Adrian  
Holly James, Lawton  
Phyllis Olszewski, East Jordan  
Anna Ramirez, CCCAM  
Allison Sartorius, Waterford  
Garrett Simpson, MIAAA

Stacy Smith, Caledonia  
Jessica Trefry, Michigan Center  
JD Wheeler, Hartland  
Meaghan Rourke, MATS

**Members Absent:**

Jon Studley, Alpena

**Staff:**

Kathy Vrugink Westdorp

**COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Girls Competitive Cheer Committee reviewed its responsibilities as a standing sport committee and the process of making recommendations to MHSAA staff and the MHSAA Representative Council. In addition, the Girls Competitive Cheer Committee reviewed the charge of the Girls Competitive Cheer Sub-Committee which met on January 18, 2022. This Sub-Committee studied the technical aspects of girls competitive cheer and made recommendations which were submitted to the Competitive Cheer Committee for additional review.

The Girls Competitive Cheer Tournament Manager's Materials and Participating School Information were also reviewed. In addition, the minutes from last year's Girls Competitive Cheer Committee and the Manual Insert were provided and reviewed. The District, Regional and Finals sites and times were provided and have all been posted at mhsaa.com.

**HISTORY OF GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER**

The history of girls competitive cheer was shared with the Competitive Cheer Committee including how the MHSAA first was committed to have girls competitive cheer meet the definition of a sport. To that end, a format was created by Michigan cheer coaches and athletic administrators with the purpose of providing consistent rules, while allowing teams to perform all aspects of cheer techniques and styles designed to promote athleticism. Additionally, meeting the criteria of a sport provided by the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education, was imperative. Girls competitive cheer has provided a great opportunity for girls to participate in a sport in which involvement and spectatorship have soared. Those that choose to be involved in Girls competitive Cheer have the same responsibilities as all other interscholastic sport coaches, officials and administrators with respect to student-athlete capabilities, facility safety and good sportsmanship.

Included in the discussion of the history of girls competitive cheer was an analysis of the status of current schools who were offering the sport. When lines were drawn in March 2021, there were 349 schools who offered girls competitive cheer which grew to 358 schools (88, 88, 90, 92). As of the above date, the number of schools offering is 314 schools (86, 83, 82, 63). Many of the schools who have dropped have consistently been the same schools and it has become problematic in classification purposes as the divisions become skewed. The Classification Committee has been discussing a proposal to eliminate those schools that have indicated sport sponsorship but have failed to have either a team and/or individuals actually participate in the MHSAA tournament in the sport during the previous two MHSAA tournaments. Included in the proposal is the opportunity for schools who are not included in the classification process to be added to the tournament planning process later, based on current enrollment and actual tournament participation.

**GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER COMPARATIVE CONCUSSION INFORMATION**

Committee members reviewed comparative information from the MHSAA Head Injury Reporting System by sport and year. Comparative data indicates that in 2018-19, participation in girls competitive cheer was 6715 students and in 2019-20 participation was 6567. In 2020-21, participation in Girls Competitive Cheer was 5191, much of this due to COVID conditions. Data was reviewed by the Cheer Committee in an effort to have the necessary available sport injury data to make appropriate decisions for the sport of Girls Competitive cheer. Further information shared identified that most of the injuries occurred during practice (either at the

middle or end) at the varsity level. Current information indicates that there has been a total of 47 head injuries in girls competitive cheer so far in 2021-22.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMPETITIVE CHEER SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Competitive Cheer Sub-Committee meets for the purpose of annually reviewing current competition and safety rules and to propose changes and additions to the Competitive Cheer Manual. The committee focuses on the technical aspects of competitive cheer and advises the full committee and ultimately the Representative Council of the rules that may need review, revision or update. Review of the recommendations that come from the Competitive Cheer Coaches Association of Michigan also occurs and discussion occurs regarding each of the technical proposals. The recommendations from the MHSAA Sub-Committee include:

1. Remove the 10-point penalty if a team has less than their division mandated number in Round 2 while retaining the language that if competing with less than the mandated number in round 2, teams in Rounds 1 and 3 are not allowed to exceed the number of competitors placed in Round 2. (20-0) (6-0)
2. Allow middle school teams to perform an OLE as part of a pyramid with one bracer. A liberty flair would be allowed but other flairs are illegal. This pyramid would require two points of contact from the bracer. (20-0) (6-0)
3. Allow static inverted stunts to release to shoulder level stunts without constant contact. This would be another possible stunt that would count as a "release skill" in the current choreography proposal. (20-0) (4-3)
4. Adjust the penalty for going over the time limit each round and give one penalty point for every second over the time limit. The penalty would not exceed 15 points. (20-0) (6-0-1)
5. Adopt a new choreography chart that awards points based on tumbling, OLE's vertical twists/360's and release skills that does not supersede a 10-point maximum of points earned. (20-0) (7-0)

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMPETITIVE CHEER COMMITTEE**

The Girls Competitive Cheer Committee continues to discuss several topics regarding the evolution of girls competitive cheer as a sport. This includes discussion regarding the restructuring of the various rounds and reorganizing the choreography chart. The focus will continue to be on how a format change can improve the sport and the long-time effects of doing so, as well as increasing participation in the sport.

The proposals provided initiated discussion regarding whether there should continue to be a penalty for teams that had less than their division-mandated number as there was sentiment that numbers were low in all sports (due to COVID) and teams were not as large as in the past. The conversation evolved into whether the penalty was still necessary. There was opinion on both sides of the issue as there was also feel that if the penalty was not in place, teams would put a minimal number of athletes on the floor. Some observed that this could only be a temporary solution because participation numbers will increase.

In addition, several "technical" aspects of girls competitive cheer were discussed allowing middle school teams to perform an OLE as part of a pyramid with one bracer as long as there were two points of contact. There was an indication that this was a safer progression for middle school. Static inverted stunts were also discussed as and whether some teams/coaches were pushing athletes without proper progression.

Additional discussion included conversation about limitations of competition (Regulation II, Section 10) and whether there should be consideration for the "fifth quarter" rule, or in the case of girls competitive cheer, the "four rounds" rule. Discussion included, whether this would be good in building numbers for sub-varsity teams. Some additional concerns included whether this would cause the athlete to learn another full round of competition for another team and the uncertainty for the athlete being placed in that position.

Discussion included other proposals that came from the Competitive Cheer Coaches Association and the Sub-Committee including considerations for advancing to the MHSAA finals. A continuance of the practice of having a spring/summer editing group of coaches and judges review the Competitive Cheer Manual and further update the Manual will continue. This practice would include a review of non-safety and safety related violations and lend further clarity and parameters to existing rules. It also involves the inclusion of girls competitive cheer recommendations approved by the Representative Council and discussion of ways to provide a format for greater participation at all levels. Additionally, this group would be charged with adding any other new updates to the Girls Competitive Cheer Manual.

## **2021-22 GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER TOURNAMENT INFORMATION**

The 2021-22 Competitive Cheer Tournament will hold Districts on Friday and Saturday, February 18 and 19, 2022. There will be six Districts in four Divisions which will each have four teams progress to eight Regionals the following week on Saturday, February 26, 2022. Four teams from each of the eight Regionals will move to the Finals at the DeltaPlex in Grand Rapids on Friday, March 4 and Saturday, March 5, 2022. This will include four separate sessions of girls competitive cheer, scheduled at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Saturday.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

The Girls Competitive Cheer Committee makes the following recommendations to the Representative Council:

1. Remove the 10-point penalty if a team has less than its division-mandated number in round 2, while retaining language that if competing with less than the mandated number in Round 2, teams in Rounds 1 and 3 cannot exceed the number of competitors placed in Round 2. (8-2)
2. Adjust the penalty for going over the time limit in each round to giving one penalty point for every second over the time limit, not to exceed 15 points. (9-0)
3. Adopt a new choreography chart that awards points based on tumbling, OLEs, vertical twists/360s and release skills, while not allowing a team to supersede a 10-point maximum of points earned. (9-0)
4. Allow middle school teams to perform an OLE as part of a pyramid with one bracer. A liberty flair is the only flair allowed and this pyramid would require two points of contact from the bracer. (10-0)
5. Permit a high school player to participate on two different levels of a school team on the same date in the same sport, with a maximum of four rounds allowed as a single-day limitation. (8-1)