

2025-26 MHSAA CROSS COUNTRY / TRACK & FIELD COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mike Buslepp, Romeo
Lewis Clingman, Grand Rapids (ATOM)
Noah Dooley, Colon
Dave Emeott, Kentwood
Jerry Haggerty, Wayland
Chris Hartman, Kingsford
Jason Hemgesberg, Chesaning (MIAAA)
Matt Kaczor, Freeland
Steve Linn, Deckerville (MITCA)
Don Passenger, Grand Rapids
Gordie Richardson, Gaylord (ATOM)
Clay Schiman, Hillsdale

Cliff Somers, Fremont
Lesley Starkey, Sturgis
Joe Stephens, Berrien Springs
Alex Tiseo, Charlevoix
Preston Treend, Richmond
Mike VanDyke, Grand Rapids

GUEST

Amy Ream, Traverse City (MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Cody Inglis (Recorder)

The committee met to review specific National Federation sports rules, MHSAA tournament policies, and interpretations applicable to Track and Field and Cross Country during the regular season and MHSAA tournaments. The following is a summary of items discussed by the committee, including recommendations to staff for inclusion in tournament materials and recommendations to be advanced for Representative Council consideration. The committee was reminded of the importance of their local perspective, along with providing feedback and input, while maintaining a broad view of Cross Country and Track & Field.

Following the welcome, introductions, statement of committee purpose, and the committee's relationship to the Representative Council, the following business was conducted.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The committee reviewed the 2025 Committee Minutes and Recommendations.

Emergency Action Planning (EAP) was reviewed, with emphasis on the unique challenges of outdoor sports involving large numbers of participants spread across a wide area. MHSAA policies were shared, and further education efforts will be directed to coaches and schools. The committee also discussed the 2026 National Federation rules and editorial changes for Track and Field and Cross Country.

The Adaptive and Wheelchair Track & Field category was reviewed. The committee was reminded that this category is now a permanent part of MHSAA tournaments. Adaptive athletes competed in four events—100m, 200m, 400m, and shot put—at both the Regional and Final levels. Discussion focused on increasing participation, and the committee was provided with data showing how many adaptive participants have competed in the MHSAA Track & Field tournament, with each of the four events showing an increase in competitors from the previous year. While continuing to promote this program, the MHSAA is also working with both MITCA and ATOM to ensure compliance with adaptive track and field regulations.

The committee reviewed the work of the Track and Field Standards Committee, which met in November 2025. The committee focused its work on developing additional qualifying standards for Regionals and Finals, with particular focus on Early Qualifying (EQ) standards. Updates included 2026 changes to EQ, such as allowing relay meets, out-of-state meets, and coordination, as well as changes to the FAQ document outlining EQ meet criteria and Finals qualification processes.

The committee strongly supported the EQ process after its first year in 2025 and expressed excitement to see how the new updates and changes would be implemented for the 2026 Track & Field season.

The committee confirmed the 2026 Track and Field Final Sites as follows:

Division 1 – Rockford High School

Division 2 – Hamilton High School

Division 3 – Kent City High School

Division 4 – Hudsonville – Baldwin Middle School

Continued discussion took place regarding the policy allowing coaches on the infield at Finals. After six years of using a limited coaching box for running events in the Finals on the backstretch and facing constant enforcement issues, the committee determined that shutting down the infield for coaches, except during the lunch break, would be implemented in 2026. High Jump and Pole Vault coaches' boxes, if those events are conducted on the infield, will still be in place; however, coaching boxes for running events will not be used at the 2026 MHSAA Finals.

The Team State Finals, conducted by MITCA for the past 27 years, were discussed at length. MITCA provided input indicating that 70% of coaches polled would support the MHSAA conducting team finals, along with a calendar adjustment that extends the season by one week, culminating in team finals on the second weekend in June. Individual Finals would precede the team event by one week. Regionals would remain in the third week of May, leaving Memorial Day weekend untouched in the MHSAA championship calendar. A proposal was made and supported for the MHSAA to demonstrate a team final for Track and Field and extend the calendar by one week in this sport.

The committee discussed continued interest in Indoor Track and the potential for MHSAA sponsorship. There is growing support for officially adding the sport. A concern remains regarding the misunderstanding or disregard of out-of-season coaching rules during the indoor season. The committee recommended that, following the Representative Council's review and consideration of potential indoor track sponsorship, MHSAA staff work to bring all stakeholders together for a meeting to explore collaborating on adding this sport. MHSAA staff will work to ensure this occurs.

Regional site selection committee work was shared, including hosts and alignments. The committee believed that adding an additional date to the window of hosting options for both the Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula was important to allow hosts to use FAT timing and officials, which are in short supply in some areas of the state. The committee suggested adding Wednesday to the existing Thursday–Saturday dates.

Upper Peninsula Track and Field qualification standards were discussed, and the current standards were reviewed. While there was productive discussion, the committee agreed that additional study is needed to ensure that developing standards would not create additional challenges in timing, logistics, or venues for the UP Track & Field Finals. The UP Athletic Committee will continue to discuss this matter.

CROSS COUNTRY

The committee reviewed the 2025 Cross Country Tournament, including the Finals held at MIS for the 30th year, the Junior High/Middle School Regional competition, and the expansion of that tournament. The 2026 Cross Country calendar was outlined, including dates for the start of the season, Regionals, and Finals. The committee was reminded that the 2026 Cross Country Finals will take place on the latest date on the calendar, November 7, 2026.

The committee was also updated on the start of discussions with Michigan State University, the Lansing Sports Commission, and Playmakers running store regarding Forest Akers East Golf Course as a potential site for the MHSAA Finals. Forest Akers East and MSU successfully hosted the Big Ten Cross Country Championships this past fall and will host the NCAA Division III Finals in the future. These events have opened discussions with the MHSAA about the possibility of Forest Akers East hosting the MHSAA Cross Country Finals. While the conversation is in its early stages, there is interest in determining whether this could be a viable future option for the MHSAA.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Establish an MHSAA Track & Field Team Finals meet and extend the Track & Field season by one week. (13-5)
2. Add a Wednesday as an option for Track & Field hosts to use for the MHSAA Regionals to the existing Thursday – Saturday option that currently exists. (18-0)