

Michigan High School Athletic Association, Inc.

FOOTBALL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 18, 2023, 9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Mike Farley, Grand Haven
Andrew Pratley, MHSFCA
Steve Bouvy, Millington
Kris Ernst, Fowler

Vic Michaels, Detroit
Jim Sparks, Novi
Michael Fosburg, Newaygo
Doug Haggart, Clare

Guest:

Mitch Smiles, MATS

Members Absent:

John Guth, Warren
Brad Brunet, Wyoming
Mike Burger, Pittsford
Jay Alexander, Detroit
Mike Evoy, MIAAA
Chris Hartman, Kingsford

MHSAA Staff:

Will McKoy
Andy Frushour
Brad Bush
Tricia Wieferich (Recorder)

The committee met to review NFHS playing rules, MHSAA regulations, and 8-player and 11-player tournament procedures/policies and concerns involving high school football. Following Committee introductions, a review of the 2022 meeting minutes, and a statement of relationship to the Representative Council, the following items were discussed. The committee also discussed the decline in participation numbers, football officials' registrations, and sportsmanship and ejections trends.

Tournament Review

The committee was provided with 2022 Football Playoff information for both the 11-player format and the 8-player formats. The committee discussed participation numbers for 8-player schools involved in the 8-player tournament.

Discussion Topics

The committee discussed the current 5-quarter rule and its effectiveness in assisting smaller schools in maintaining lower-level football teams. The committee believes that only some schools are using the rule as it was initially intended due to the relative newness of the rule. The committee hopes to see a cultural shift within football programs toward the original purpose of the rule.

The committee discussed the possibility of shortening the window for coaches to complete the mandatory online football rules meeting with the new deadline being before the first contest date. The current deadline is week four of the football season, and the committee thought coaches should only coach the first three weeks of the season if they know the new rules and points of emphasis. The committee felt that shortening the window would not add undue pressure on schools and athletic departments as coaches would have plen-

ty of time to complete the requirement from the date it opens (late July) until the first contest (late August).

The committee discussed the possibility of changing the 8-player timing rules to mirror our sub-varsity and change of possession timing rules to assist with perceived longer game times. While the committee thought this could be a possibility in the future, they felt there needed to be more data to support the perception and input from 8-player schools to support a change at this time.

The committee discussed the possibility of increasing the 215-enrollment cutoff and adding an additional division for 8-player. The committee felt it would be a wrong move at this time, given the decline in participation at all levels and all divisions. No action was proposed or taken.

The committee discussed the possibility of relaxing the travel limitations for football teams to play contests against schools outside the current travel allowed before the school year starts. The committee believes the current rules align with educational athletic values and do not believe a change is needed.

The committee discussed the possibility of the MHSAA and MHSFCA partnering to create regional recruiting combines to provide schools and student-athletes with an NCAA rule-compliant event that allows college coaches to assess players without the threat of NCAA violation. This attendance at this event would waive out-of-season restrictions to allow a proper evaluation process.

The MHSFCA proposed several rules/regulation changes, which included:

- To adjust the Five Quarter rule to include special team plays. Kicking plays would be exempt from the quarter count in the 5 Quarter per week rule. The committee believes this is critical for two reasons: helping programs with low numbers maintain sub-varsity teams and player safety, which allows regular players on small teams to get necessary rest breaks on special teams, provided by players from other levels.
- MHSAA and MHSFCA provided the committee with Regional seeding data requested by the Representative Council during the May 2022 council meeting. The committee discussed if Regional seeding as proposed would make for more equitable district pairings, with higher-seeded teams getting more home games without significant travel increases. This data will be shared with the council in hopes of achieving approval.

The committee briefly discussed the possibility of changing the football playoff qualification procedure from the current “Strength of Schedule” to the “all-in” football playoff selection process. Staff informed the committee that the MHSAA will be forming a “task force” to explore the possibility and present options to the Representative Council.

Recommendations to Representative Council

1. Move the deadline for coaches to complete the online football rules meeting to before the first contest of the football season. (8-0)
2. Expand the use of the “5-quarter rule” to exempt special teams’ plays (kickoffs and scrimmage kick plays) during varsity football contests from the application of the rule. A down in which the offensive team is in a scrimmage kick formation or a free kick occurs during a varsity football contest would not count in the quarter limitation. (8-0)

3. MHSAA and MHSFCA conduct regional recruiting combines that are NCAA compliant. Participation in these MHSAA/MHSFCA combines would waive MHSAA out-of-season coaching regulations for NCAA recruiting assessment. (8-0)