

2025-26 MHSAA FOOTBALL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 28, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Adams, Camden
Jay Alexander, Detroit
Fred Bryant, Cadillac
Mike Burger, Pittsford
Lenny Dantine, Millington
Kris Ernst, Fowler
Mike Evoy, Detroit
Ricky Gonzalez, Detroit
August Kapolka, Cedar Springs
Bill Kennedy, West Ottawa
Nichole Martin, St. Ignace
Jason McIntyre, Mt Pleasant
Karl Schmugge, Saginaw
Ben Sherman, Grand Rapids

Jake Skewis, Negaunee
Jim Sparks, Novi
Chance Stewart, Sturgis
Ben Tarbutton, Mancelona
Conner Thomas, Mason
Zach Zimmerman, Almont

GUESTS

Andrew Pratley (MHSFCA)
Mitch Smelis (MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Brad Bush
Will McKoy (Recorder)
Tricia Wieferich

The MHSAA Football Committee met to review NFHS playing rules, MHSAA regulations, 8-player and 11-player tournament procedures/policies, and concerns involving high school football. Following committee member introductions, the committee discussed the 2025 Football Committee minutes, football participation numbers, football official's registrations, sportsmanship and ejection data, girls flag football and concussion reporting.

The committee reviewed concussion data and discussed the upward trend over the past two football seasons. The committee did not believe that the current concussion requirements and return-to-play protocols warranted any modifications.

MHSAA staff reported the progress made during the 2023, 2024, and 2025 spring football recruiting evaluation camps conducted throughout the state. Staff will continue monitoring the NCAA recruiting calendar while balancing conflicts with other spring sports.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

8-PLAYER FOOTBALL

The committee discussed awarding different playoff point values to games against Division 1 and Division 2 teams, similar to the system used in the 11-player format. They also considered the potential geographic impact on schools in both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas if a change were implemented. Ultimately, the committee decided against changing the current playoff point allocation. Also, the committee explored awarding bonus playoff points to teams that play 8-player opponents with enrollments above the 215-student playoff limit.

Lastly, the committee discussed a proposal to modify timing rules to align with current 11-player subvarsity rules, which allow officials to start the game clock on the ready-for-play signal following a change of possession. The committee was opposed to this proposal, believing it would significantly shorten the game.

MHSAA TOURNAMENT POLICIES

The committee discussed the MHSAA policy for determining the date and time of tournament games based on the distance between competing schools. After review, the committee believes that the current policy is necessary, easy to interpret, and functioning as intended, and therefore, no changes are recommended at this time.

The committee also briefly discussed whether the MHSAA should restrict tournament teams from hosting contests based on opponent spectator seating capacity and overall facility accommodations. While the committee acknowledged this as a potential concern, it felt that effective event management and supervision could adequately mitigate any issues that may arise.

MHSFCA PROPOSALS

The MHSFCA leadership brought two proposals from their members to the Football Committee.

1. To adjust the fifth quarter rule to allow players to play five quarters in a day. During this discussion, the committee expressed concerns regarding the current misuse of the existing fifth quarter allowance. Given these concerns, the committee did not support additional allowances at this time.
2. MHSFCA provided the committee with Regional seeding data to support a shift from District-based playoffs to a Regional seeding approach. The committee reviewed whether the proposal would create more equitable matchups in the first two rounds while allowing higher seeds additional home games without significantly increasing travel. While the data showed a modest increase in travel, the committee didn't believe the increase was enough to deny the proposal. The committee agreed and proposed a change to the playoff seeding process to the Representative Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Move to a Regional pairing model in the 11-player football tournament. Regionals would be seeded 1 through 8, with two District tournament pairings (District 1: 1 vs. 8, 4 vs. 5; and District 2: 2 vs. 7, 3 vs. 6). (17-3)