

2023 MHSAA GOLF COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, November 29, 2023, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

James Dewling, Brighton
Rob Dilday, Utica
Bob Filter, East Lansing
Karyn Furlong, Richland (MIAAA)
Ray Hill, East Jackson
Terry Kildea, East Lansing
Tom Koert, Sparta
Marci Pionk, Ionia (Guest/MATS)
Mark Posey, Big Rapids
Anna Rigby, Harbor Springs (Rep. Council)
Debbie Williams-Hoak, Saline (MIGCA)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Casey Glass, Hudsonville
Ann Serra-Lowney, Clarkston

MHSAA STAFF

Andi Osters (Recorder)
Cole Malatinsky

The 2023-24 MHSAA Golf Committee met in the John E. “Jack” Roberts MHSAA building to review topics involving golf and the tournament series. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision-making process and the charge of the Golf Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the golf coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

COACH RESPONSIBILITIES

The 2022 action from the Golf Committee resulted in participating teams being allotted two school-designated coaches during the MHSAA Tournament, with individuals allotted one coach each. Ideally, the extra coach for each team works to provide guidance to all competitors and assists with pace of play, scoring integrity, and tournament operations. The committee agreed that each team be permitted one golf cart for coaches to use on-course, and each individual qualifier’s coach be permitted one, as well. This will be a point of emphasis for coaches and tournament managers in 2024-25.

REGIONAL SITE SELECTION PROCESS

In recent years, the MHSAA has struggled to secure willing hosts for 24 Regional golf tournaments each fall (girls) and spring (boys). Golf has become more popular and profitable for courses, creating scheduling conflicts for golf courses attempting to host MHSAA Regionals in early October and late May. In addition, Athletic Directors often do not indicate their willingness to host in this sport, because of the disconnect between schools and the use of non-school golf facilities.

The committee voted to advance a proposal to establish an MHSAA Golf Site Selection Committee to (a) review tournament groupings drawn by MHSAA staff, and (b) determine host courses and host schools for both the girls and boys Regional tournaments. The Site Selection Committee will convene once annually during the summer and be comprised of athletic directors, coaches, golf course professionals and MIGCA appointees.

MHSAA FINALS TEAM QUALIFYING

For many years, the high school golf community has expressed interest in changing the current method of team advancement from the MHSAA Regional to the MHSAA Golf Final, citing strength of region imbalance among each division of the sport.

Multiple proposals were reviewed, with special thanks given to the MIGCA and Ray Hill, who compiled data and spurred conversation with their research.

Since the addition of iWanamaker scoring, each team in the state has a rating that can be easily referenced when reviewing Regional groups. Players, coaches and tournament managers trust that iWanamaker presents an accurate picture of a team's performance during the regular season, given a large enough data set. iWanamaker rating is based upon slope and rating of courses played, like the USGA Handicap system.

Several regionals, across both boys and girls golf, contain multiple top-rated teams. With three teams advancing from each regional, several top-ranked iWanamaker teams miss the opportunity to advance to the Finals, simply because of their geographic proximity to other high-ranked teams.

To resolve this issue, the committee approved an "At-Large Qualifier" proposal to change how teams advance to the MHSAA Finals. In each Division of golf, beginning in 2024-25, the two lowest-scoring teams from each region will automatically qualify for the MHSAA Finals. Six additional qualifying teams will advance to the Finals based on their iWanamaker rating (generated by the team's best eight regular-season 9-hole qualifying rounds). Ratings will be locked in the iWanamaker system on the first day of allowed Regional competition. This will result in 18 teams qualifying in each Division, which presents no change to the current number of athletes represented at the Finals. Individuals will qualify as they have in the past, with the Top 3 lowest-scoring players from each region advancing to the Finals.

This proposal should result in the best teams and players advancing to the championships, while preserving the integrity and diverse representation of geography-based Regional competition.

MHSAA FINALS PAIRINGS & WAVES

Given the changes to the qualifying process, committee members agreed to a change in how teams and individuals are paired together for Day One of the MHSAA Golf Finals. Starting in 2024-25, players will be grouped in waves by team iWanamaker rating (Teams 1-2-3, 4-5-6, 7-8-9, 10-11-12, 13-14-15, 16-17-18). Individual pairings will also be grouped using this method. Day Two pairings will be created as they have been in the past (based on Day One results).

LIMITED TEAM MEMBERSHIP RULE

A common participation topic at the high school level is the intersection of the MHSAA Limited Team Membership rule and the proliferation of opportunities for highly skilled golfers to participate in local, albeit non-school, competitions. Committee members asserted that partnerships with GAM and the PGA benefit all parties involved, and believe that a relaxation of the rule would encourage more high school golfers to stay and play in Michigan rather than opt for non-school opportunities exceeding the current limit.

The committee voted to amend MHSAA Handbook Interpretation 173 (a) to permit golfers an additional non-school event, the Michigan PGA Open Qualifier. This one-day qualifying event is similar to the already-allowed qualifying round of the Michigan Amateur Tournament.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Establish the MHSAA Golf Site Selection Committee to review Regional tournament groupings and determine host schools and courses. (9-0)
2. In each Division of golf, beginning in 2024-25, the two lowest-scoring teams from each region will automatically qualify for the MHSAA Finals. Six additional qualifying teams will advance to the Finals, based on their iWanamaker rating (generated by the team's best eight regular-season 9-hole qualifying rounds). This will result in 18 teams qualifying in each Division, which presents no change to the current number of athletes represented at the Finals. Individuals will qualify as they have in the past, with the Top 3 lowest-scoring players not otherwise qualified with a team from each region advancing to the Finals. (9-0)
3. Amend MHSAA Handbook Interpretation 173(a) as follows:
 - a. A student may participate in ~~the~~ (a) one qualifying round of the Michigan Amateur Tournament conducted by the Golf Association of Michigan and (b) one qualifying round of the Michigan PGA Open Qualifier Tournament without counting against his/her two non-school competitions during the season allowed under Section 12. An event held on not more than three consecutive calendar days at the same venue is considered a single event (for the purposes of this section only). (9-0)