

2025-26 MHSAA GOLF COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Greg Beavers, Laingsburg
Dan Cooper, Troy (MIGCA)
Gabe Crowner, Ypsilanti
Rob Dilday, Utica
Karyn Furlong, Richland (MIAAA)
Josh Glerum, Zeeland

Todd Hursey, Traverse City
Debbie Williams-Hoak, Saline (MIGCA)

MHSAA STAFF

Cole Malatinsky (Recorder)

The 2025-26 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 Michigan Interscholastic Golf Coaches Association (MIGCA).

DISCUSSION ITEMS

POSTSEASON TOURNAMENT REVIEW

The committee reviewed the changes implemented for the 2025-26 school year, beginning with the 2025 LP Girls Golf Tournament. Items discussed included the use of iWanamaker Team rankings (iWR) to generate team waves and pairings at the Regional level; the updated coaching restrictions limiting players from receiving simultaneous coaching from more than one coach during play and limiting Finals individual qualifiers to one coach; and Regional host reimbursement for two rules referees. Overall, these changes were viewed as positive.

SCORING PROTOCOL

The committee again reviewed tournament scoring protocols, which were updated following a recommendation from the committee last year to include more detailed language outlining the hole-by-hole scoring procedure—an expectation that, while previously unstated, should have already been standard practice.

The committee reaffirmed that both in-round and post-round scoring protocols, including the use of a designated scoring area for post-round score verification and attestation, should be consistently implemented throughout the regular season. Coaches must continue to make these procedures a point of emphasis for their players.

MHSAA staff will continue to highlight these expectations during the annual coaches’ rules meeting and will explore additional avenues to reinforce the importance of proper scoring procedures with coaches and tournament hosts during all regular season and postseason events.

The committee also suggested that MHSAA staff continue working with iWanamaker to identify a mechanism within the app that prevents players from prematurely finalizing their scores on the course, and ensure the final attesting by the player only occurs after gathering with the entire playing group and addressing any question or concerns with a tournament manager, referee or scoring personnel in the designated scoring area after the round is completed.

FINALS CART FEES & GREENS FEES

The committee reviewed the increase from \$20 to \$30 for all cart rental fees during the MHSAA Finals, including coaches' carts. Coaches and administrators on the committee discussed the merits of maintaining a separate coaches' cart rental fee; however, given the coaches' role in monitoring play and ensuring safety during tournaments, the consensus was that coaches should simply be provided a cart. It was noted that most regular-season tournaments already include coach cart rentals within the event fee.

As part of this conversation, the committee also acknowledged the rising costs of course maintenance, supplies, and labor, and emphasized the need to remain aware of these increasing expenses when working with host courses—particularly with respect to greens fees.

After discussion, the committee unanimously approved a recommendation to increase the Finals greens fees from the current \$32 per player per day to \$42 per player per day and eliminating the separate cart fee for coaches. Under this structure, the coaches' cart would be included within the \$42 per-player fee. This change would take effect beginning with the 2026-27 school year.

Spectator carts for those with mobility-related disabilities would remain at \$30, if spectator carts are permitted by the host course and tournament management.

It should be noted that the committee also considered the potential impact on schools and golf courses and discussed spreading increases over multiple years. Ultimately, they elected to move forward with the \$42 fee for the 2026-27 school year, recognizing that it would generate additional revenue for host courses while maintaining reasonable affordability for participating schools.

SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR

The committee reviewed ongoing concerns with spectator behavior at Regional and Finals events, including spectator carts, entering fairways or restricted areas, failure to maintain the required 25-yard distance, and providing advice to players—all violations of MHSAA spectator rules.

The committee emphasized the need for clearer communication of expectations and penalties, along with more consistent enforcement by tournament directors and coaches.

To support this, members recommended creating a standardized spectator rules sheet for all Regionals and incorporating these guidelines into tournament management materials. The committee also stressed the importance of educating spectators and coaches during the regular season—not only at the Regionals and Finals—to ensure consistent understanding and reduce confusion.

Additionally, the committee noted the need for better communication and enforcement of both coaching and spectator restrictions throughout the season so neither group is surprised by postseason requirements. Increased communication with athletic directors was recommended to reinforce these expectations.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLANNING

The committee discussed the implementation of the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) template within the iWanamaker scoring platform beginning with the 2025-26 school year. While the committee noted several positives and improvements related to emergency action planning, golf continues to present unique challenges—such as courses not having AEDs on site, or

having them located only in the clubhouse or restaurant, coupled with the fact that golfers and coaches are spread out across a wide area. Additionally, the state law that would have required an AED at all high school athletic events has stalled due to the absence of funding, underscoring the continued need to prioritize emergency preparedness in golf and for schools to work together to ensure AED access at courses for all events.

MHSAA staff will continue working with iWanamaker to explore whether a mechanism can be added within the platform to require coaches to review and update the EAP template prior to the start of each round.

HEADPHONES / EAR BUDS

Following multiple questions and complaints regarding golfers wearing ear buds or headphones during competition, the committee reviewed the current electronics policy. Under USGA rule, players are prohibited from listening to music or other audio for the purpose of eliminating distractions. In addition, the MHSAA Hard Card adopts Model Local Rule G-8, which prohibits the use of audio and video devices during play.

Given these provisions, the use of ear buds or headphones during competition is not permitted. The Committee unanimously approved a recommendation to update the MHSAA Electronics Policy in all MHSAA tournament documents to explicitly include language prohibiting ear buds and headphones during competition, and to make this a point of emphasis during the rules meeting.

DRESS CODE

The committee reviewed the MHSAA dress code in light of evolving golf apparel trends and discussed updating the language to allow additional types of shirts specifically designed and sold as golf apparel to qualify as acceptable uniform tops. The committee unanimously approved expanding the dress code accordingly.

The committee also unanimously supported adding language to tournament documents requiring coaches to follow the MHSAA Golf Dress Code while coaching during competition, noting that coaches set the standard for their athletes.

FINALS SCHEDULE

The committee revisited the Finals schedule and discussed the potential benefits and drawbacks of moving from the traditional Friday–Saturday format to a Monday–Tuesday format. Data from the 2025 Update Survey showed that 87% of school administrators supported the shift, citing improved accommodation for host courses—whose weekend business is significantly impacted—and potentially better lodging availability for traveling schools.

No action was taken at this time to allow the MIGCA to discuss the proposal with its membership and to continue working with host courses on key logistical considerations, including practice-round availability and fees. The committee agreed that this topic should remain under review for future consideration.

LIMITED TEAM MEMBERSHIP

The committee reviewed the background and intent of the MHSAA Limited Team Membership rule – the “loyalty” concept – which emphasizes that students should prioritize their school team over individual pursuits and reflects the educational goals of teamwork and shared responsibility. The committee reaffirmed concerns that it is unfair to teammates and team

objectives when players miss practice or competition—or risk fatigue or injury—due to non-school events during the season.

The committee also noted that in May 2024 the Representative Council did not approve a proposal that would have allowed golfers to participate in one qualifying round of the Michigan PGA Open Qualifier without it counting toward the two non-school competitions permitted under Interpretation 173. MHSAA staff continue to receive questions and concerns regarding this two-event limit, and further discussion on this topic is anticipated in future years.

TOURNAMENT PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS

The committee revisited the Representative Council's May 2023 action requiring golfers to participate in at least four school competitions to be eligible for the MHSAA tournament. This rule was intended to ensure meaningful participation with the school team and to discourage golfers from skipping most of the high school season to focus on non-school events—a practice made possible because Limited Team Membership restrictions apply only after a student competes in a school match or scrimmage.

Given ongoing concerns about students missing substantial portions of the season for non-school tournaments, the committee unanimously recommended strengthening the requirement. Under the proposal, golfers would need to participate in at least half of their team's regular-season matches to be eligible for postseason play. Waivers would remain available for students with extenuating circumstances (e.g. long-term injury).

POSTSEASON TOURNAMENT CONCEPTS

Finals qualification remains a key discussion point among the MIGCA, particularly concerns that top-ranked teams may fail to advance under the current format, which qualifies only the top three teams from each geographic Regional. Competitive-balance issues arise when some Regionals contain multiple "top ten" teams while others include fewer, creating perceived inequities in the path to the Finals.

The committee revisited a potential "Finals Qualifier" concept designed to address these concerns.

Under this model, a Semifinals or "Finals Qualifier" round would be added. The six geographic Regions per division would remain intact, but Regionals would be held one week earlier. From each Regional, the top six teams and top six individuals not on a qualifying team would advance to a Finals Qualifier event. Each division would include three Finals Qualifiers, pairing two geographically adjacent Regionals.

Advancement from the Finals Qualifier to the Finals would include both guaranteed and performance-based berths. Each Qualifier would receive three automatic team qualifying spots. The remaining six statewide team berths (for a total of 15 per division) would then be awarded using iWR team rankings (best eight 18-hole rounds), with additional spots assigned one at a time to the next highest-ranked team statewide after accounting for the automatic qualifiers.

Regardless of the number of team berths assigned to a Qualifier, the top five individuals not on a qualifying team would advance from each Finals Qualifier to the Finals.

MHSAA staff noted several potential benefits of this concept. It preserves the traditional geographic structure of MHSAA tournaments by ensuring that schools from all areas of the state continue to have a pathway to advance. While iWR would help determine the distribution of additional qualifying berths, advancement to the Finals would still be based solely on

performance at MHSAA postseason events. The concept also helps address concerns about “stacked” Regionals by giving stronger teams, including top-ranked programs, an improved opportunity to advance. Additionally, the added round could enhance the excitement of postseason competition and may improve the Finals experience by reducing field sizes and improving pace of play for top teams and individuals.

While no action was taken, the committee expressed interest in the concept and its potential to expand advancement opportunities in highly competitive Regions while maintaining geographic structure and performance-based qualification. The MIGCA will continue to discuss the proposal with its membership.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MHSAA STAFF

1. Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, increase the Finals greens fees to \$42 per player, per day, and include the coaches' cart within this fee, thereby eliminating the separate cart fee for coaches. Spectator carts for individuals with mobility-related disabilities would remain at \$30, provided spectator carts are permitted by the host course and tournament management.
2. Continue to work with iWanamaker to identify a way within the platform to prevent players from prematurely finalizing their scores on the course and to ensure that final attestation occurs only after the entire playing group meets with the tournament manager, referee, or scoring personnel in the designated scoring area at the conclusion of the round.
3. Create a spectator rules sheet for all rounds of the MHSAA Golf Tournament and incorporate these standards into tournament management materials. Emphasize the importance of both coaches and parents understanding these expectations and increase communication with athletic directors to help address spectator-related issues proactively throughout the season.
4. Collaborate with iWanamaker to refine and clarify the language within the standardized EAP template in the MHSAA Golf app and explore the feasibility of making completion of the EAP template a requirement as part of tournament setup.
5. Update the MHSAA Electronics Policy in all MHSAA tournament documents by incorporating the language from the MHSAA Hard Card Model Local Rule G-8, explicitly prohibiting the use of earbuds and headphones during competition, and make this a point of emphasis during upcoming rules meeting.
6. Update the MHSAA dress code to permit, in addition to golf shirts and mock turtlenecks, shirts that are specifically designed and sold as golf apparel to be worn as allowable uniform tops and require coaches to adhere to the MHSAA Golf Dress Code while coaching during competition.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Under Regulation II, Section 15(F), a student must compete in at least four (4) school-sponsored regular-season golf events, or in at least half of the school team's regular-season events (whichever number is greater), in order to be eligible to participate in the MHSAA Golf Tournament. (8-0)