2026-27 GIRLS LACROSSE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, October 7, 2026 – 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT
Paige Comito, Bloomfield Hills
Joe Curcuru, Grand Rapids
Ben Farkas, Hudsonville
Brian Hassler, Hartland
Zach Maghes, Saline
Kaili Miller, Haslett
Todd Negoshian, Rochester
Reo Rodriguez, Grand Ledge (MWLCA)

GUEST
Rich Kieft, (MATS)

MHSAA STAFF
Kathy Vruggink Westdorp (Recorder)

The 2026-27 MHSAA Girls Lacrosse Committee convened at the MHSAA office to fulfill its responsibilities as a standing sports committee. The committee reviewed previous Representative Council actions, examined current MHSAA girls lacrosse policies and procedures, and discussed matters relevant to the continued development and administration of the sport.

Committee members received a historical overview of girls lacrosse participation, including trends in the number of participating schools and teams. Nationally, there are 3,342 schools that offer girls lacrosse in 32 states. Additional information included approved cooperative programs, important dates and deadlines, and NFHS rules changes for the 2026-27 season.

For the 2026-27 school year, girls lacrosse includes 94 teams representing 141 schools, with 118 registered officials. Currently, there are 34 approved varsity cooperative programs. The committee discussed cooperative program requirements and limitations, including the provisions outlined in Regulation I, Section 1(E), which establishes the framework governing cooperative arrangements among member schools.

The 2026-27 girls lacrosse rules changes were also reviewed and include the following:

- Field crosse pockets must comply with additional stringing requirements.
- All crosses must be commercially available to the general public.
- During crosse inspection, officials must ensure the ball moves freely to touch both sidewalls.
- Beginning January 1, 2031, the home team shall wear white jerseys when playing at home.
- By state association adoption, member state associations may implement a possession clock.
- A player suspected of injury may remain in the game, if, after the time-out called by the official, no health care professional or coach enters the field to attend to the player.
- Guidance is established for when a goal shall count.
- Players may not switch sticks with other players on the field during the course of play.
- Any player on the offended team who is on the field of play when a minor foul occurs may take the free position.
- Removes the word “tagging” from the definition of holding.

The committee also reviewed the minutes of the October 2025 Girls Lacrosse Committee meeting to provide historical context, revisit previous discussions, and evaluate matters requiring continued consideration.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Additional health and safety topics were discussed, with an emphasis on the need for consistent enforcement of rules regarding stick-to-body contact. Discussion further upheld the need to remain

vigilant in applying safety regulations designed to protect players and uphold the integrity of the girls game.

Epidemiology summary reports from the MHSAA Head Injury Reporting System were reviewed, covering the 2022-23 through 2025-26 school years. The data indicated that in 2024-25, there were 3,194 girls who participated in lacrosse, with a prevalence rate of head injuries of 1.47%. In comparison, during the 2025-26 school year, participation included 3038 athletes, while the prevalence rate of head injuries decreased to 1.42%.

Girls lacrosse equipment compliance was also reviewed. Headgear remains optional; however, any headgear used must meet the ASTM performance standard F3137 and display the SEI certification mark. USA Lacrosse and the NFHS will continue to collaborate with sport science and safety organizations, rule-making bodies, and other leaders to assess how emerging data should inform future policy. It was reiterated that headgear—whether for men's or women's lacrosse—is only one part of a comprehensive approach to player safety. Education, adherence to age-appropriate rules, sport-specific coach training, and the use of certified officials all play critical roles in reducing risk.

Girls lacrosse eyewear must be SEI-certified and listed on the SEI website. All eyewear must bear the SEI certification mark by January 1, 2025. Participants are responsible for maintaining their protective equipment in good condition, ensuring that it remains in its original, unmodified state and is worn as intended to maximize safety. The Lacrosse Committee placed particular emphasis on enforcing calls of dangerous play more strictly to enhance player protection.

CLASSIFICATION
The committee reviewed the MHSAA classification process for girls lacrosse, including the use of school enrollment figures to determine tournament divisions and the provisions that allow schools to voluntarily opt-up to a higher classification. Discussion focused on the number of schools electing to opt-up in girls lacrosse and the resulting impact on divisional alignment and regional tournament assignments, which can create imbalances in the distribution of teams between divisions and among regional tournaments.

FIFTH QUARTER
The discussion also addressed the implementation of the fifth quarter rule, which girls lacrosse adopted in the 2024-25 school year. Members discussed whether the rule is being utilized as intended and emphasized the importance of maintaining focus on its original purpose—supporting subvarsity programs and promoting player development. The rule is designed to assist smaller teams in fielding competitive rosters and to help schools build and sustain subvarsity opportunities. Continued emphasis will be placed on adherence to both the letter and the spirit of the rule. Committee members provided several useful ways to track the playing time between the JV and varsity games.

Under the rule, a student or team may participate in no more than five quarters in a single day, and in no more than three games and/or interscholastic scrimmages per week (Monday through Sunday), including regular-season and MHSAA tournament play. An individual team is limited to one game per school day. Additionally, a student or team may participate in no more than 4 scrimmages and 18 games, excluding MHSAA tournament play.

MICHIGAN POWER RATING
The use of the MPR (Michigan Power Rating) system over the past few years was reviewed, along with a discussion of its current processes and impact. Committee members noted that the system has been helpful in elevating the visibility of girls lacrosse, and schools are consistently submitting

scores to ensure accurate MPR data. This accuracy is essential for properly distinguishing the first and second seeds within each Regional.

Further discussion focused on whether alternative rating systems, such as *LaxNumbers*, might provide a more comprehensive assessment of team performance. Committee members were reminded that the Michigan Power Rating (MPR) system is based on wins, losses and ties in contests involving teams entered into the MHSAA postseason tournament. The MPR formula incorporates 25% of a team's winning percentage, 50% of its opponents' winning percentage and 25% of its opponents' opponents' winning percentage. Only results involving teams participating in the MHSAA postseason tournament are included in the calculations. Members also discussed the benefits of maintaining a system in which data is managed and stored internally by the MHSAA, ensuring consistency and accountability in the rating process.

Committee discussion included consideration of expanding the use of the Michigan Power Rating (MPR) system to seed all teams in each regional tournament, rather than using it solely to identify and separate the top two teams. Members explored the advantages and disadvantages of fully seeding regional tournaments, recognizing that higher seeds could serve as a reward for a team's performance throughout the regular season. Conversely, members acknowledged the value of the current format, which provides opportunities for lower-ranked teams to compete against similarly ranked opponents, potentially increasing their chances of advancing in tournament play.

The committee also considered the potential use of goal differential as a factor in the tournament process. Following the discussion, members expressed no support for incorporating goal differential, and no recommendation for change was advanced.

OVERTIME

The 2025-26 Girls Lacrosse Committee reaffirmed its decision to retain the existing overtime procedure rather than adopt immediate sudden-victory overtime. The current format ensures both teams have an equal opportunity to compete during the initial six-minute overtime period.

If regulation ends in a tie, teams will receive a five-minute rest, followed by a coin toss (called by the visiting captain) to determine ends. Overtime consists of two three-minute halves, with teams changing ends after the first half without a coaching break. Play resumes with a center draw, and the team leading after six minutes is declared the winner.

If the score remains tied, teams receive a three-minute rest and change ends before beginning sudden-victory overtime. These periods consist of two three-minute halves, with teams changing ends at the midpoint. The first team to score wins. If neither team scores, additional six-minute sudden-victory periods will continue, with three-minute breaks and changes of ends, until a winning goal is scored.

MIDDLE SCHOOL LIMITATIONS OF COMPETITION

Middle school limitations were also reviewed and considered. It was determined to increase the number of allowed contests to 15.

2027 MHSAA GIRLS LACROSSE TOURNAMENT

The teams and schools participating in the 2027 MHSAA Girls Lacrosse Tournament were shared with the committee. There may be additional schools that will still offer girls lacrosse in the 2026-27 season. Division 1 and Division 2 enrollment numbers were also examined, with 45 teams initially set in Division 1 (enrollment of 1,819 and above) and 48 teams in Division 2 (enrollment of 1,818 and below). At the time of the meeting, there were 49 teams in Division 1 and 45 teams in Division 2.

Girls lacrosse tournament dates were also reviewed. The online rules meeting for girls lacrosse will be available from February 8, 2027, to April 15, 2027. Practice for girls lacrosse begins on Monday, March 15, 2027, and the first available contest is on Wednesday, March 24, 2027. The 2026 Girls Lacrosse Tournament was also reviewed for additional points of information. The tournament format and expected Regional/Semifinal sites were also evaluated.

The alternate site travel accommodation rule for lacrosse was reviewed, which indicates that MHSAA staff may change the date, time, and location of a previously scheduled tournament game if the originally scheduled game involves extensive travel for both teams and an acceptable site can be secured. The determination includes consultation with both teams and the tournament manager and may require that the competing teams secure an acceptable field.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Rank all teams in a Regional Tournament using the MPR formula to determine seeding, currently 1 and 2 are seeded. (8-0)

2. Increase the allowance for a middle school student or team in girls lacrosse (Regulation IV, Section 10[D-7]) to participate in no more than 15 games and no more than 160 running time minutes. (8-0)