It has been said that without coaches, referees, umpires, judges and offiicals, our games are simply recess. In many parts of our state, we need more coaches and MHSAA registered officials to make sure the game experiences for our students continue uninterrupted.

Coaches and registered officials come from all walks of life. These women and men are teachers, business owners, doctors, lawyers, first responders and law enforcement officers. They give back to students because they often had great experiences as a student-athlete and simply want to "stay in the game" to allow kids of today that same privilege.

How can you join this team or help grow the ranks of coaches and officials? If you are interested in officiating, go to MHSAA and click on the SCHOOLS or OFFI-CIALS button. All the information you need is right at your fingertips.

If you have no interest in becoming a coach or official, you can still help the cause. When attending your next game, simply cheer positively for your team and remain quiet when something happens that you see differently. Common decency and respect are harder to find in these current times, and you can help support our coaches and officials by just letting them do their jobs!

Let's continue to come together and support everyone involved in school sports at a time when these events are needed more than ever.

Enjoy the games.





Living each day with an "attitude of gratitude" is a daily pursuit that is worth chasing for us all.

As we move from the regular season into MHSAA tournaments, let's take a moment to thank those working on the "athletic front lines" who work long hours and do their best work behind the scenes. These athletic leaders in each of our school communities continue to make opportunities happen for our kids and are worthy of our respect.

At this event, the front-liners are the school administrators creating a safe environment, our coaches teaching kids about the game, and more importantly life lessons, and game officials applying the rules impartially for fair competition. It also includes those working behind the curtain in athletic department offices and in sports medicine that make our games happen and happen safely.



Last year, the MHSAA celebrated its 100th year. As we begin the second century of school sports in Michigan, let's remember and be thankful for the efforts of these special people and many others behind the scenes to make today's contest possible.

Enjoy the game!



As we move down the tournament trail, we need to appreciate the opportunity to play these games while realizing the end result is not an all-or-nothing proposition. The sun will come up tomorrow for all participants and teams, and one of the lasting lessons of school sports is the outcome of a game or competition is never life-defining.

All too often, the immense pressure of winning or losing is brought to bear on kids and coaches – and that's just not fair. There's no doubt we all want to win, but in sports – just like in life – you can't win all the time.

Many times, the most valuable lessons in sports and in life don't come after wins and success. It's getting back up after you have been knocked down, knowing that a temporary setback never defines a person in the long-term. That is what is important. That is what's life-defining.



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Enjoy the game- and remember what's most important today.



Deep tournament runs are the canvas that paint lifelong memories for all involved — the players, coaches, the families and school community. Congratulations to all on reaching the final stages of this MHSAA tournament.

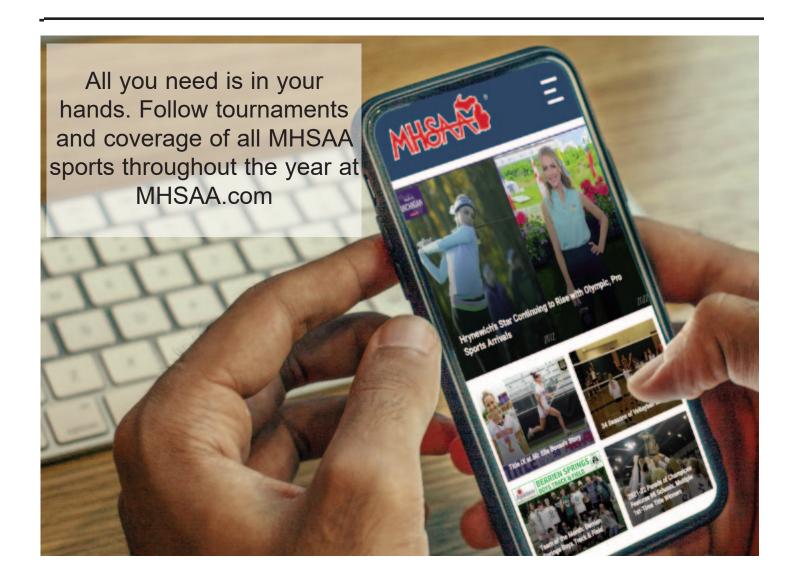
We often like to talk about the 99 percent factor in high school sports. For approximately 99% of the participants, this is the biggest athletic stage they'll ever perform on, and the memories made are what they'll revisit in memories and reunions for years to come.

For that incredibly small group that will be blessed enough to continue playing competitive athletics beyond high school, the day will come at some point in their post-high school careers when they're asked about standout mem-

ories and accomplishments. Many will point back to this week – this team – playing with their friends from the neighborhood with the overwhelming community support.

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Enjoy the games.

— Mark Uyl MHSAA Executive Director

(For Use in **DISTRICT PROGRAMS** Only; Or Regional if it is the first round of play)

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(For Use in **QUARTERFINAL/SEMIFINAL** TOURNAMENT PROGRAMS)

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Sportsmanship Extends to Online Behavior

ith the changes that have occurred in college sports the past couple of years, high school sports is truly the last level of pure amateur competition in our country – and the NFHS and its member state associations want it to remain that way.

As football, volleyball, soccer, cross country and other sports begin this fall, high school coaches and athletic/activity directors will be involved in preseason meetings to emphasize the expected outcomes of education-based sports, as well as speech, debate, music, theatre and other programs.

Among those fundamental values of education-based activities that must be discussed is sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior. More than winning, more than learning the skills of a sport, a focus on sportsmanship has been one of the defining elements of high school sports and other activities for more than 100 years.

Along with maintaining the sound traditions of sports and minimizing the risk of injury, NFHS playing rules encourage sportsmanship, and the first page in all NFHS rules publications includes a statement noting that "each athlete is responsible for exercising caution and good sportsmanship."

In the past, with an emphasis on conduct on the playing field or court – or in the auditorium or rehearsal hall – sportsmanship has been defined as those qualities of behavior that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. More so than preparing students to play sports or another activity at the next level, one of the significant goals of education-based high school sports and activities is helping the 12 million-plus individuals in these programs to become responsible citizens.

And in today's online world dominated by hand-held devices, that goal has become more challenging. Now, messages to students in high school sports and other activities about sportsmanship must be communicated before they hit the practice field or court because one inappropriate post, tweet or message could alter their lives forever.

At the recent virtual National Student Leadership Summit hosted by the NFHS, Christina Jontra of Neptune Navigate, one of the newest NFHS corporate partners, discussed the need for good sportsmanship online as much or more so than on the court or field.

In the digital age in which we live, participants in high school activity programs need to be aware that their character and respect for others should be the same, whether in the sport or activity itself, or online.

As the popularity and influence of social media continues to surge, it is imperative that student-athletes, as well as coaches, administrators, parents and everyone involved in education-based athletics, are aware of the ways they can endanger themselves with their online behavior and understand the techniques they can employ to prevent that from happening.

In her recent presentation, Jontra noted five characteristics of good sportsmanship online – honesty, compassion, respect, responsibility and courage. Just as a student would respect an opponent on the field or in the debate room, the same must occur online.



KARISSA NIEHOFF



At preseason meetings this fall, coaches and athletic/activity directors should encourage students in their programs to be mindful of online contact with individuals on opposing teams – particularly any bantering that could be perceived as cyberbullying. As Jontra mentioned in her message during the NSLS, hurtful words can ruin a person's life forever.

Fortunately, during the season, the millions of high school students involved in sports and performing arts have less free time to spend online on a daily basis, but the time spent must be done in a positive manner. Not only could damaging words on social media affect a student's chances for an athletic scholarship, inappropriate messages could also negatively impact future job possibilities as employers are more actively auditing social media.

Whether the setting is before hundreds of people at an actual game or event, or a private experience alone online, positive and respectful behavior should be the choice every time

— Karissa Niehoff NFHS Executive Director

Fans:

ENOUGH ENOUGH!

Bad behavior at high school athletic events has gotten OUT OF CONTROL.

Are YOU part of the problem?

Always be respectful, encouraging and positive.

Let's come together to #BenchBadBehavior for good!

BenchBadBehavior.com











MHSAA Student Advisory Council in Place

ight student-athletes who are juniors at their schools during the 2025-26 academic year are serving two-year terms on the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Student Advisory Council.

The Student Advisory Council is a 16-member group which provides feedback on issues impacting educational athletics from a student's perspective, and also is involved in the operation of MHSAA championship events and other programming. Members of the Student Advisory Council serve for two years, beginning as juniors. Eight new members are selected annually to serve on the SAC, with nominations made by MHSAA member schools. The incoming juniors will join the group of eight seniors-to-be appointed a year ago.

Selected to begin serving on the Student Advisory Council in 2025-26 are: Nichole James, Detroit Edison; Mia McGregor, Mio; Camryn Siegers, Holland Christian; Lucy Weber, Fenton; Brody Hammer, Middleville Thornapple-Kellogg; Sam Bentley, Ypsilanti Lincoln; Mason Mireles, Hartford; and Joey Smokevitch, Johannesburg-Lewiston.

Those eight new members were selected from 125 applicants, the second largest group of applicants in the 20 years of the council. The first Student Advisory Council was formed for the 2006-07 school year. With the addition of this class beginning this summer, members will have represented 148 schools from 53 leagues plus independent schools that do not play in a league. Combined, the new appointees have participated in 11 MHSAA sports, and six will be the first SAC members from their respective schools.

The Student Advisory Council generally meets eight times each school year, and once more for a 24-hour leadership camp. In addition to assisting in the promotion of the educational value of interscholastic athletics, the Council discusses issues dealing with the 4 S's of educational athletics: scholarship, sportsmanship, safety (including health and nutrition) and the sensible scope of athletic programs. There also is a fifth S discussed by the group – student leadership.

This school year, the Council handed out championship trophies at Finals events, led sessions during four Sportsmanship Summits, provided feedback to the MHSAA Representative Council on proposed rule changes, worked on a mental health initiative, and wrote the script for a public service announcement on adult spectator sportsmanship that was included in broadcasts throughout the last school year.

The new additions to the SAC will join the Class of 2026 members who were selected a year ago: Itzel Albarran, Bronson; Harper Barnhart, Brownstown Woodhaven; Diamond Cook, Southfield Christian; Henry Ewles, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep; Cole Haist, Big Rapids; Frannie Keeley, Jenison; Trey LaValley, Romeo; and Ethan Stine, Bridgman.

Student Advisory Council Belief Statement

Adopted Nov. 2007

As the voice of Michigan's student-athletes, the Student Advisory Council's role is to convey the message of how high school sports are supposed to be played. We are responsible for helping the MHSAA maintain a positive and healthy atmosphere in which interscholastic athletes can thrive.

We believe athletes should be competitive, sportsmanlike and excel academically. We believe students in the stands should have fun, but not take the focus away from the game. We believe coaches should act as teachers, helping student-athletes develop while still keeping high school sports in perspective. We believe that parents should always be positive role models and be supportive of their child's decisions. We believe officials commit their own time to high school sports and respect should always be shown and given to them.

The most important goal for student-athletes is to enjoy high school sports while keeping a high level of respect between all those involved in the games.

 Written by the Student Advisory Council, adopted by MHSAA Representative Council in Nov. 2007

ESSENTIAL MELLEN OF EVERY STARTING LINEUP

Without officials, today's event would not be possible. They deserve thanks and appreciation for dedicating their nights and weekends, so our students can always play the sports they love.

Think you have what it takes to make the big calls?

Sign up today

HIGHSCHOOLOFFICIALS.COM











Participating in Multiple Sports, Activities Continues to be Best Route to Success

here has been an ongoing debate for years regarding the advantages or disadvantages of focusing on one sport during teen and high school years vs. playing multiple sports.

Some people have argued to be successful in a particular sport at the college level requires a person to devote all energy to that sport throughout high school. While this approach may work for some, an ever-increasing majority of athletes believe playing multiple sports leads to more success – on the athletic front and careers outside sports as well.

And recent events would substantiate that viewpoint regardless of age. Athletes who competed in high school sports many years ago, as well as current and recent participants, have similar views.

All four former high school athletes who were inducted into the NFHS National High School Hall of Fame this summer played multiple sports in high school.

Anna Maria Lopez participated in volleyball, basketball, and track and field at St. Mary's Academy in Portland, Oregon, before excelling at volleyball at the University of Southern California. Caryn Schoff-Kovatch, the leading scorer in New York high school girls basketball history at St. Johnsville High School, also was all-league in soccer and softball.

Tim Dwight was a standout football and track athlete at City High School in Iowa City, Iowa, before his stellar college and professional careers. And Prince Amukamara played football, basketball, and track and field at Apollo High School in Glendale, Arizona, before his 11-year NFL career.

"I think it is truly beneficial to play multiple sports," Amukamara said. "I was just a natural-born competitor, and I felt like I was good at a lot of things, so I never thought the one-sport mindset was for me. Growing up, I was so thankful for a program out here in Arizona called GRASP (Glendale Recreation After School Program). They really encouraged us to do a lot of sports. I was pretty good at a lot of sports, and I loved competing, so I tried them all."

In the recent NFL Draft, 222 of the 253 athletes (88 percent) who were drafted participated in multiple sports in high school. Miami quarterback Cam Ward, the No. 1 selection, played basketball and football at Columbia High School in Texas. Other first-rounders who excelled at multiple sports included Tyler Warren, tight end from Penn State who played football, basketball and baseball at Atlee High School in Mechanicsville, Virginia, and Jaxson Dart, University of Mississippi quarterback who played football and baseball in Draper, Utah.

Emeka Egbuka, wide receiver from Ohio State, played football and baseball at Steilacoom High School in Washington and credits baseball as a contributing factor to his athleticism.

More recently, similar stories of playing multiple sports were shared at the NFHS National Student Leadership Summit held last week in Indianapolis. During one of the general sessions, more than 90 percent of the 211 attendees, all of whom were junior or seniors

currently involved in high school sports or other activity programs, indicated they currently were participating in multiple sports.

Playing multiple sports in high school is truly a winning formula. In addition to enhancing chances for a college scholarship and playing a sport at the highest level, there are innumerable benefits for the 95 percent of high school athletes who will not play at higher levels.

Multiple-sport participants have a reduced risk of overuse injuries, are able to learn from multiple coaches, participate in cross-training which leads to better athleticism, have better mental development and teamwork skills, and have a reduced chance of burnout in sports. Further, students can enjoy multiple activities concurrently, such as participation on a sports team while also belonging to a performing arts group.



KARISSA NIEHOFF



It is incumbent on coaches, administrators and state associations to pave the way for students to be involved in multiple sports – and other activity programs. Many have done a great job at opening these doors, including Jane Berry-Eddings, longtime speech and debate coach at Sprague High School in Salem, Oregon, who was inducted into the National High School Hall of Fame earlier this summer.

"I've had students who were drum majors and students who were on the track and cross country teams, and I've had football players and basketball players who were involved in speech and debate," said Berry-Eddings. "I've always encouraged them to look at their schedule and pick what they wanted to do."

NFHS member state associations continue to add more sport offerings, which make it possible for more students to be involved in a sport or activity of their choosing. Most recently, the Hawaii High School Athletic Association added its 21st sport – surfing – to its offerings of state championships.

Whether the goal is to participate in high school sports and activities to have fun with their peers, or to achieve a college athletic scholarship, or to be a lifelong participant, the best route to achieving a successful, healthy balance in life is to participate in multiple sports and other activities, time.

— Karissa Niehoff NFHS Executive Director

THE skiph school sports!

Let's take a moment to appreciate the dedicated individuals who make high school sports possible. Our officials!

Their commitment and hard work are what keep the games going and ensure every athlete has a fair chance to shine.

Want to join them? #BecomeAnOfficial and suit up today!









Keeping Education the Focus of School Sports

ith all the changes that have occurred in college sports the past five to seven years, and the ripple effects that have surfaced at the high school level, there has never been a better time to reinforce the educational value of high school sports and other activity programs – as well as the important role of the 19,500 high schools and 51 NFHS member state associations that serve our nation's schools.

While a very small percentage of the almost eight million participants in high school sports will play at the college or professional levels, the majority will use the skills, knowledge, values and other intangibles learned through these education-based programs to land career-defining jobs and pave the way for their future.

Although policies on NIL and one-time athletic transfers have been making recent headlines, the focus must remain on the benefits that students receive from participating in sports and other activities. Those benefits include discipline, teamwork, social interaction with peers, improved academic performance, leadership and time management.

In addition, participation in high school sports and other activities boosts self-esteem and self-confidence and helps to produce a positive outlook on life. These activities also instill resilience and the ability to handle both success and failure. Athletes regularly face setbacks and have to persevere to learn from their mistakes.

Sports and other activities such as speech, debate, music and theatre support the academic mission of schools. Beyond the potential for athletic scholarships, participants in high school sports and other activities are viewed favorably by future employers. Many human resource leaders in major companies are drawn to former sports/activity participants because of these aforementioned traits.

Far too often, however, the focus of high school sports becomes the quest to earn an athletic scholarship and play sports at the college level – or beyond. While that opportunity exists, a dose of reality is worth considering.

About one percent of the 537,000 boys and 1.4 percent of the 373,000 girls who participate in high school basketball will play the sport at the NCAA Division I level. And of the one million-plus boys who play high school football, only three percent will play at the major college level.

And the chances of playing in the National Basketball Association (.03 percent) or the National Football League (.08 percent) are infinitesimal.

These statistics are not meant to deter hopes and dreams of playing at the next level, but they should reinforce the need for continued focus on the educational benefits. In fact, there are many surveys and reports indicating that participation in high school sports is a great predictor of career success in many fields other than sports.

Surveys have shown that more than 90 percent of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies played high school sports. Another recent survey by Ernst & Young of 821 high-level executives indicated that 90 percent of the women sampled played sports – and among those women in chief positions, the proportion rose to 96 percent.

The Drive Group, a national recruiting agency, says companies hire athletes because they achieve goals, are determined, put strategy into action, are team players, have never-give-up attitudes, perform under pressure, and are motivated and committed.

In high school, Meg Whitman, CEO of Hewlett-Packard, was the captain of the swimming team and also played lacrosse, tennis and basketball.

Lara Abrash, chair of Deloitte US who played softball growing up, said in an article on Fortune.com, "One lesson I still carry with me (on and off the

field) is you don't have to be the best, fastest or smartest person in the room to become a leader or to achieve success. Good leaders often find success in assembling the right team, developing a vision and strategy, aligning and empowering team members, and executing together to reach a shared goal. Sports have been invaluable in shaping my business philosophy."

In the same article on Fortune.com, Artie Minson, CEO of LeafLink and former president of WeWork, said, "I was the cocaptain of my high school cross country team where I learned the importance of running as a team and that the amount of hard work and effort you put in on the practice runs when no one is watching is what determines the outcome at the race."

Jon Cook, CEO of the world's largest ad agency, VML, played three sports – football, basketball and baseball – in school. Cook noted that he "gravitated to team sports and there's so much even today that I draw from those experiences.



KARISSA NIEHOFF



That high you get when you win alongside others—whether they're your teammates or your colleagues—is truly out of this world.

"The way I see it, the importance of bringing a team together and being a unifier will never get old. Being an effective leader is about working together to achieve. Winning will always be fun, of course, but it's about making sure everyone succeeds collectively, playing to their individual strengths while motivating and trusting each other implicitly."

The real leaders in helping our nation's schools provide these education-based opportunities through sports and other activity programs are the 51 NFHS member state high school associations. These associations, many of which have been in existence for more than 100 years, are the backbone of education-based activity programs and exist to serve, not to rule.

While these associations are tasked with eligibility and transfer rules, the rules are about protecting opportunities for all students, not limiting individual ambition. These leadership organizations ensure that every school – no matter its size or location – has a fair shot.

These education-based groups are focused on student well-being and safety. They also are involved in conducting many state championships; however, through the process of staging events, they are first and foremost building leaders, focusing on citizenship and sportsmanship, and strengthening communities.

Let's keep high school sports and other school activity programs focused on education, and let's continue to support the 19,800 high schools and 51 state associations so that every student has an opportunity to participate.

— Karissa Niehoff NFHS Executive Director

Get in the Game. We Need You!

hey don't make the headlines, their names are not in the box scores and they don't make the all-star teams. But perhaps the most important individuals in high school sports are the contest officials.

These individuals are so important that, in fact, there would be no organized competitive sports at the high school level without the men and women who officiate these contests every day across the country. Subtract the dedicated men and women who officiate high school sports, and competitive sports would no longer be organized; they would be chaotic.

In some areas of our country, high school officials are retiring faster than new ones are being added. And junior varsity, freshmen and middle school games are being postponed – or even cancelled – because there are not enough men and women to officiate them.

Anyone looking for a unique way to contribute to the local community should consider becoming a registered high school official. For individuals who played sports in high school, officiating is a great way to stay close to the sport after their playing days have ended. Officiating helps people stay in shape, expands their social and professional networks and offers part-time work that is flexible, yet pays. In fact, officiating is a form of community service, but with compensation.

Another benefit of officiating is that individuals become role models so that teenagers in the community can learn the life lessons that high school sports teach. Students learn to respect their opponents and the rules of the game and the importance of practicing good sportsmanship thanks, in part, to those men and women who officiate. And the objectivity and integrity that high



school officials display is an example that every young person needs to observe firsthand. In short, communities around the country will be stronger because of the life lessons that high school officials help teach the next generation.

Officiating is a great way to stay connected to sports and to give back to the local high school and community. We need dedicated men and women to become involved so that high school sports can continue to prosper for years to come.

Individuals interested in learning more about becoming a high school official, and beginning the application process, can do so at MHSAA.com on the Officials page.



Unacceptable Behavior: Still Happening

nacceptable behavior at high school sporting events – it's still happening. And much of this deplorable behavior continues to be directed at the thousands of individuals who VOLUNTEER to serve as contest officials.

While many states have reported an increase in the number of individuals signing up to officiate high school sports – particularly in the past few years of recovery from the pandemic – surviving the constant questioning of calls, name-calling, profane language and even violent attacks remains a challenge for new officials.

This is supposed to be EDUCATION-BASED SPORTS. Yet, the NFHS has heard reports of coaches – and even student-athletes themselves – disrespecting officials on the court and field.

We have to do better. We must do better. As the slogan for our Bench Bad Behavior campaign says, Enough is Enough.

One of our sport directors attended a state basketball tournament a few weeks ago. The games were action-packed, the skill level was superb, the stands were packed. Two outstanding teams advanced to the championship game. The tournament was a great success – except for the behavior. In high school sports, however, that is an unacceptable exception. Coaches and players in the final game were constantly on the officials, questioning calls. Does winning, in and of itself, define success in high school sports? The answer should be a resounding NO!

Since the NFHS started its Become an Official campaign about seven years ago, more than 125,000 people have applied to become a high school official. These are individuals who had a desire to give up time on weeknights and weekends – for not much money – so that millions of high school students could be involved in sports.

These individuals officiate to give back to high school athletics. Do they get every call right every night? Absolutely not, just like coaches and student-athletes make mistakes at times.

High school sports need to be different than the college and professional levels, where players and coaches tend to complain about almost every call. High school sports are also different than non-school youth travel teams, where the emphasis is on individual accomplishments and winning. While we wish the behavior of coaches and athletes at other levels presented a better role model, behavior in education-based high school sports must be different.

In a 2023 survey by the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), 35,000-plus officials who completed the survey indicated that while 40 percent of sportsmanship problems are caused by parents, 25 percent of the behavior issues were attributed to coaches. Not surprisingly, 50 percent of the survey respondents said coaches were



KARISSA NIEHOFF



the group most responsible for improving sportsmanship.

Bingo! In high school sports, coaches set the stage for the proper displays of sportsmanship and positive support for officials. If coaches are haranguing officials throughout the game, the message to players and fans is that type of behavior is acceptable. If coaches take the lead and show support for officials, others will follow.

In that same survey, 68 percent of the respondents said sportsmanship is getting worse – six years earlier in a similar survey 57 percent indicated behavior was getting worse. And 72 percent of the officials indicated they are treated unfairly by coaches. We are definitely going in the wrong direction!

This is extremely disappointing. We must do better. In high school sports, coaches must support those individuals who are serving as officials – those people who make it possible for the games to continue. The goal is for everyone to work together for the betterment of the eight million participants in high school sports.

— Karissa Niehoff NFHS Executive Director O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say does that star spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free,

and the home of the brave

recent Harris poll found that two out of three American adults don't know all of the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner" - and many don't even know which song is our National Anthem or why it was written.

The song of our nation was penned by Washington attorney Francis Scott Key at a dramatic moment during the War of 1812. On the night of

September 13, 1814, Key watched as our country was attacked by the British navy at Fort McHenry. After watching the rockets' red glare and bombs bursting in air throughout the night, dawn broke. Key was expecting to find Baltimore firmly under British control,

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM PROJECT PROJECT Restoring America's Voice

Sponsored by MENC: The National Association for Music Education

but was stunned to see a battered but still flying American flag waving in the sunrise. So inspired was Key that he wrote the poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." Set to a tune attributed to John Stafford Smith, "To Anacreon in Heaven," it became America's national anthem in 1931.

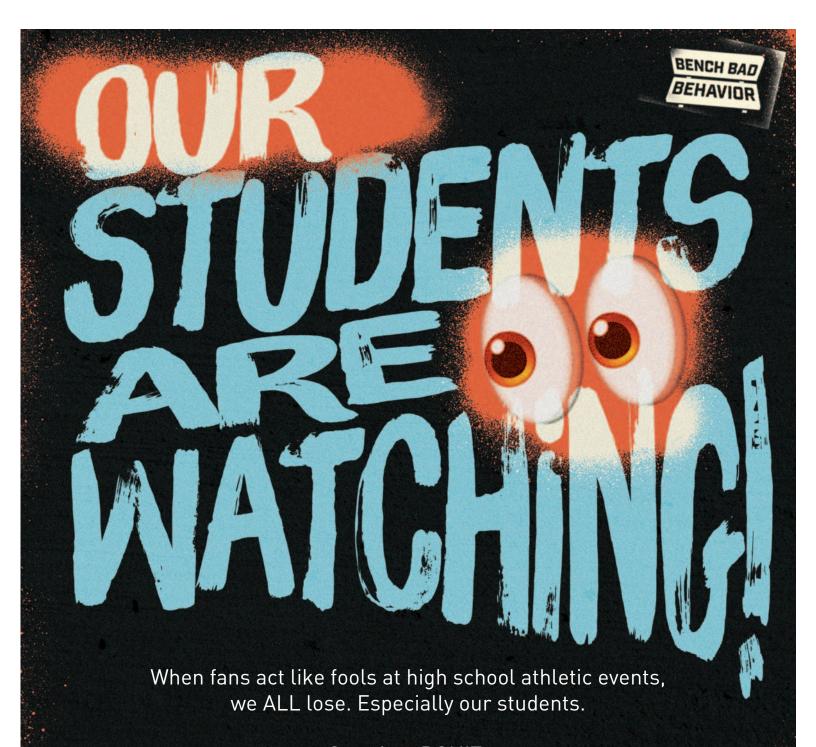
There has been a noticeable decrease in the respect given the National Anthem presentation over the last few years. Whether it is team members joining hands and swinging them back and forth during the anthem or a student body screaming for the start of a competition over the last few notes of the song, or the prevalent wearing of hats and talking on cell phones during the anthem, school sports

provide us with the vehicle to remind everyone of the manner in which we pay respect to the flag, our nation, and the competition that it precedes.

Students, participants and spectators are reminded that when the National Anthem is played,

they should remove their hats, stand at attention, face the flag, and place their right hand over their heart from the first note of the music until the last note.

Learn more about the National Anthem Program on the web at: nationalanthemproject.org



So ... just DON'T.

Grow up and #BenchBadBehavior!

BenchBadBehavior.com











Join us in celebrating all the groups that make high school sports and performing arts programs possible!

You can show your appreciation each week by using the hashtag #HSActivitiesMonth on social media.



#HSActivitiesMonth

Community

Why are high school sports so special?

Because they connect people from all walks of life ... who may not agree ... who may not think they have much in common.

But when they come together as ONE, they realize they're much more alike than they are different.

And it's their shared love for high school sports that united them more than anything else.

PlayPerformCompeteTogether.com











Mental Wellness of Participants is Top Priority

ife has certainly become more stressful and challenging since that infamous month of March of 2020 when a never-imagined pandemic brought everyone to their knees.

While the panic eventually subsided and slowly but surely life resumed, the effects of the shutdown continue to persist today. The pandemic and many events that followed certainly have challenged the mental wellness of millions of people across the globe.

Fortunately, high school sports and performing arts activities have been an elixir for the 12 million-plus students involved in these programs annually. Additionally, ensuring the mental wellness of participants in high school activities is of utmost importance.

The month of May can be particularly stressful for high school student-athletes – from seniors graduating and facing a future beyond high school, to the pressure to succeed in state championships, to the outside influence of social media and other factors.

During the month of May, which is designated Mental Health Awareness Month, high school coaches and administrators should take extra time to be aware of potential symptoms of students struggling with their physical and mental health.

The NFHS is continuing its #WeSeeYou campaign, which is designed to empower coaches to be able to assist students who are dealing with mental health challenges. The goal is to create a culture of caring in school communities where everyone feels seen and supported, especially high school students.

Fortunately, over time, the stigma associated with addressing mental health has lessened. In many ways, most people at one time or another have felt the pressures of life and wondered how to keep going. It is OK to need – and ask for – help.

Mental health is defined as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to the community.

Following are a few tips for leaders in schools to help high school students facing even more challenges during this busy month:

Acknowledge and connect with all students. Everyone wants to be seen by someone who matters to them – parent, teacher, coach.

Be sure to see students for who they really are, not who they may appear to be on social media.

Create a culture where everyone is looking out for each other.

Realize how important your influence may be in the lives of students.

While most high school students will not experience a mental health crisis, many are facing stressors and challenges they have never faced before. It is the job of everyone involved in the lives of these students – parents, coaches, teachers, administrators – to offer support and guidance.

One new resource offered by the NFHS is a free online course on the NFHS Learning Center (www.NFHSLearn.com) entitled "Coaching Mental Wellness." The course was created to help coaches support students with issues they are facing on and off



KARISSA NIEHOFF



the fields and courts. The course highlights various strategies to deal with mental health issues in a positive manner.

The course begins with a framework for wellness, which discusses the importance of nutrition, sleep and exercise. The materials suggest that when sleep is disrupted by a busy schedule, stress or illness, it can have a negative impact on mood, energy and the ability to get things done.

Another chapter offers ways that coaches can help students who are dealing with mental health challenges, including expressing concern, listening, being available and understanding the struggles with anxiety. The course offers strategies to help students who are dealing with depression, including empathy, discussing the issues, writing a new script and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.

Openly talking about mental health struggles and sharing personal experiences helps to normalize the issue and encourages more people to seek support. Let's be open to everyone around us who may need help and support.

Visit the WeSeeYou.Community website to learn more and get free resources to promote the #WeSeeYou culture in your school community. Together, we can offer support, empathy and encouragement to every student in our nation's schools.

— Karissa Niehoff NFHS Executive Director



PARENTS, TEACHERS AND COACHES

Ask your high schoolers how they are.

Then be ready to ask how they REALLY are.

Make them feel seen, heard and loved for who they are and who they're becoming.

www.WeSeeYou.Community











ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION COME WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL UNIFORM.



This message presented by the Midnigan High School Athletic Association and the Midnigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.



