

**MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.
SOFTBALL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

East Lansing, January 12, 2023, 9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Loraine Brinker, Dryden
Todd Conrad, Muskegon
Rob Dilday, Utica
Jared Hudson, Holton
Chad Klopf, Coleman
Charles LaClear, Flint
Paul Marwede, Alpena
Matt McLouth, Decatur
Vic Michaels, Detroit
Shelly Mills, Montabella
Ron Poyer, Chesaning (MHSSCA)
Adam Valk, Wayland
Jasen Witt, Redford
Betty Wroubel, Pontiac (MIAAA)

Others Present:

Ross Martin, Lansing
Martha Munsell, Fowlerville (MATS)

MHSAA Staff:

Andi Osters (Recorder)

The 2022-23 MHSAA Softball Committee met at the John E. “Jack” Roberts building in East Lansing on Jan. 12, 2023. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision making process and charge of the Softball Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the coaches’ association. The committee was reminded that the scope of their work was to focus on growing the game of softball, protecting the health & safety of participants, and maintaining the proper philosophy of educational, school-based athletics.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

TOURNAMENT PROCEDURES

The committee reviewed recently released District and Regional groupings and discussed the work of the newly formed MHSAA Softball Site Selection Committee, now entirely separate from the Baseball Site Selection Committee. Recent changes to the classification process were highlighted and discussed, along with the 2022 adjustment to district calendar dates for first-round games.

Staff reflected on facility use at Michigan State University for semifinal and final games; with high praise coming from both coaches and officials on (a) the excellent condition of the playing surface, (b) amenities available to players, coaches, and fans on-site and (c) the addition of lights. Overall consensus was positive, with agreement that the festival-like atmosphere with baseball and soccer held simultaneously provides benefit to all three championships.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

Citing correspondence from concerned parents and the recent NCAA adoption of the double first base, committee members debated the benefits of implementation for both regular season and post-season contests. Currently, MHSAA rules prohibit the use of a double first base for post-season play, but allow its’ use during the regular season, if used by the host school. Feedback from those in the room indicated general concern for the inconsistency of application, leading to players having to adjust game-by-game to a piece of new equipment, depending on where the game is being played. Data suggests that the use of a double first base may reduce the number of player collisions and consequently the number of injuries. A proposal to implement the double first base for all softball contests was advanced, to begin with the 2023-24 school year. The delay in implementation should allow for member schools to purchase the equipment, and for coaches, players, and officials to learn corresponding NFHS rules related to the double first base.

TURF FIELDS

Turf fields have become more popular and present in Michigan, with several being selected as MHSAA tournament hosts in recent years, both at member high schools and colleges and university sites. The benefit of a turf field during the softball tournament rests primarily in ability to resist weather-related delay and cost. Teams that are assigned to districts or regionals where turf fields are selected as hosts often complain that the surface is unfamiliar and provides the host school with a disproportionate advantage. Schools with turf fields that require non-metal cleats should inform participating teams well in advance of contests that alternative shoes may be required. Ultimately, the Softball Site Selection Committee is tasked with giving equal consideration to both turf and traditional playing surfaces when selecting tournament hosts.

CONTEST MANAGEMENT & MEDICAL TIMEOUTS

Unlike indoor sports, softball fields are often located a far distance from the school building. Committee members noted that often, umpires arriving on-site are not greeted by school personnel and sometimes never encounter anyone other than the team coaches. As such, coaches should be prepared to greet and make welcome umpires assigned to their home contests.

Additionally, absent a school administrator, game management duties fall to coaches and umpires. Given this fact, a brief pre-game discussion about emergency action planning (sometimes referred to as a "Medical Timeout") is recommended; review where the nearest AED is located, how an Athletic Trainer can be contacted, where the nearest hospital is located, etc. This will be added as a Point of Emphasis during the Softball Rules Meeting for 2023.

DISCUSSION ITEMS - NO ACTION

1. Umpire shortage
2. Seeding/MPR
3. Bat compression testing
4. Pitch count
5. Competition limits
6. NFHS Rule Changes, Major Editorial Changes, and Points of Emphasis

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MHSAA REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Beginning with the 2023-24 softball season, require all regular season and post-season contests to use the double first base. NFHS Rule 1-2 Note stipulates that the base be a one- or two-piece unit, 15 inches by 30 inches and manufactured to be of equal height. The base in foul territory shall be a color other than white. (14-0)