

## **MHSAA BASEBALL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

East Lansing, January 12, 2022

### **Members Present:**

Eric Albright, Midland  
Jeremy Beal, Hudson  
Rick Dorn, West Bloomfield  
Kris Herman, Glen Lake  
Nate Maury, Houghton Lake  
Julie Riggs, Brethren  
Brian Samulski, Northville  
Matt Sheick, Pellston  
Jason Smith, Saranac  
Greg Sombati, Romulus  
Todd Szalka, Trenton  
Alex Tiseo, Marquette

Don Watchowski, Novi

### **Members Absent:**

Troy Gary, Gladwin  
Juan Sanchez, Detroit

### **Others Present:**

Kelly Salter, MATS

### **Staff Present:**

Brent Rice (Recorder)

The 2021-22 MHSAA Baseball Committee met to review topics involving MHSAA Baseball. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the baseball coaches association. After introductions were completed, the committee reviewed the terms of appointment to the Baseball Committee, the charge and mission of the group relative to the decision-making process and the minutes from the previous meeting.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**National Federation Topics:** Staff presented committee members with an update on rules and interpretation discussions and changes from the National Federation. This included a single rule edit requiring pitchers that receive pitch signals from the dugout or signal card to simulate taking signs from the catcher before the pitch.

The committee also discussed jewelry requirements/restrictions in baseball. While there was consensus that the most important thing is consistent enforcement across the state, it was strongly suggested by several committee members that the jewelry rule and penalty be eliminated altogether.

MHSAA staff informed the committee that the interpretation prohibiting coaches from coming onto the field to dispute calls would be extended indefinitely, and discussion was had regarding possible adjustments from last year's version of the rule to be implemented this season.

**Health and Safety:** Committee members were presented nationwide and statewide data identifying baseball injury statistics. The number of reported injuries remained consistent with the data from the previous five seasons. Arms (particularly pitchers and catchers) still make up the highest rate of reported injuries. Reported head injuries in Michigan baseball rose slightly from the previous season but was nominal. Committee members were provided details of reported significant injuries from the 2020-21 season.

**Declining Umpire Numbers:** The steady decline of MHSAA officials was reiterated to the committee, with the numbers particularly low in spring sports and especially low in baseball and softball. The top concerns associated with the decline of umpires were also provided and include: Unmanageable game times, low game fees, high cost of equipment, no dressing areas, no on-site administrators.

Some solutions presented by staff and committee members were to move some games later in the day and from double-headers to single games, increase game fees, have leagues/conferences assist with umpires purchasing equipment and make sure that

administrators are available to greet and escort umpires to a private dressing area when they arrive.

**Tournament Information:** The staff provided updates on the selection of tournament host sites and potential proposals that may affect the baseball tournament. Committee members discussed some of the difficulties in finding quality Quarterfinal sites given the requirement to find facilities willing to host three games on a Saturday with only six-month notice. Some suggestions from committee members were to try to secure Quarterfinal sites well in advance of the Site Selection Committee meeting, to utilize high-quality high school facilities (even if they would host their own Division) and to consider possible ways to separate the Regional Final and Quarterfinal games in the future.

District hosts and dates were also discussed at length. The committee was in favor of classification of teams based on the schools that last participated rather than those that indicate they have a team. They were also in favor of a proposal that would allow the District First Round games to be played prior to Memorial Day. They supported the idea of separating the Baseball and Softball Site Selection Committee into two committees.

**Other Proposed Considerations:** MHSAA staff presented to committee members two additional proposals for consideration. The coaches on the committee expressed that most of them utilized the “contact days” provided to them in the fall of 2020 and would be in favor of an expansion of coach/player contact days in the future. It was indicated that this would allow them to engage with students more throughout the year in a team setting and would also allow them to better familiarize themselves with freshmen students prior to the start of the season.

The committee briefly discussed a proposal that would add Minnesota as a border state for the purpose of travel regulations. Most committee members were indifferent to this proposal and indicated they did not believe it would affect a large number of schools in the state; but nevertheless, believe that it made sense for some schools and some sports based on their geography.

### **Recommendations to the Representative Council:**

1. By default, District First Round games are played on the Tuesday following Memorial Day. If all participating teams agree before the draw is held (and the host school, if applicable), teams may play District First Round games on the Thursday, Friday or Saturday before Memorial Day.  
(13-0)
2. Separate the Baseball/Softball Site Selection Committee into individual Site Selection Committees. (13-0)