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MHSAA Invests In Girls Athletics

EAST LANSING, Mich. – May 31 – The Michigan High School Athletic Association has a history of being a leader in the development and funding of programs which directly benefit the nearly 120,000 female participants who compete in interscholastic athletics at nearly 750 member schools across the state.

Of the 12 post-season tournaments the association conducts in girls sports, only 1 sport – girls basketball, do revenues exceed direct expenses at the end of a tournament. Even without inclusion of overhead, expenses exceed gate receipts by \$240,000 to \$250,000 annually in the other 11 sports.

“It’s just part of the investment we make in girls high school athletics,” says MHSAA Executive Director John E. “Jack” Roberts.

The financial losses in 4 of the 11 tournaments – softball, girls tennis, girls track and field, and girls volleyball, annually account for over half of the underwriting total. Tennis, track and volleyball each annually average between \$45,000 and \$50,000 in underwriting of direct tournament expenses.

“At tournament time, the Association is committed to providing a quality experience for all of its participants, and our track record of investing in girls sports is solid,” said Roberts. “Our efforts go well beyond the playing field. They include promotion and the education necessary to develop tomorrow’s female leadership in educational athletics.”

The MHSAA was the first state high school association in the country to provide its own conference for female coaches, officials and student-athletes, creating the Women In Sports Leadership Conference in 1988. It is not only the longest running, but also the largest gathering of its type nationally. Over 500 people – most of them female high school student-athletes – annually attend this two-day conference during which equity issues are addressed, and participants are given the tools to prepare for careers as a coach, official or athletic administrator.

The MHSAA has secured an endowment which has kept the registration fee for the WISL Conference one of the lowest in the country, and which will ensure the sponsorship of the conference for many years to come.

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2-2-2 – Investment In Girls Sports

This year, in conjunction with the Women In Sports Leadership Conference, the MHSAA launched a special initiative to encourage and equip women to enter the officiating field. The TWO-DAE Clinic (Trained Women Officials-Dedicated, Accomplished, Educated) was a day-long seminar in which officiating issues were addressed in 6 sports.

Future high school athletes and their parents participate in programs at MHSAA Finals in Girls Basketball and Volleyball each season. CHAMPS Clinics (Cooperation, Hard Work, Attitude, Motivation, Participation, Sportsmanship) have been conducted the past 3 years to give an exclusively female audience some additional playing skills training, while their parents are schooled in academic matters, sports nutrition and sportsmanship issues at the high school playing level.

Over the past 4 years, in 3 sports including Girls Basketball and Girls Volleyball, the MHSAA has brought back reunion teams at those finals to again celebrate the achievements of championship teams of the past. The Legends of the Games program has become a staple special presentation at those Final events.

The MHSAA also provides graduating students with \$24,000 in scholarships, half going to females, through the Scholar-Athlete Award, underwritten by Farm Bureau Insurance. This program annually recognizes nearly 4,000 student-athletes who have achieved in academics, athletics and community involvement, with 57 percent of those individuals being females.

On the promotion side, the MHSAA annually televises, at its own expense, its Girls Volleyball Finals, with the past 10 finals being broadcast, a string even longer than the television coverage for its Football Playoff Finals. The finals aired in 6 television markets across Michigan and northern Ohio this year.

The MHSAA also produced at its own expense and purchased the air time on Fox Sports Net Detroit for an hour-long highlights program featuring this year's volleyball championship matches, which was the second highest-rated high school programming on that regional sports channel during the 2000-01 school year. Volleyball was the only MHSAA tournament to have both its finals matches televised and a highlights show in 2000-01, and the MHSAA plans to do the same in 2001-02.

The MHSAA also underwrites the cost of a statewide radio network for its Girls Basketball Finals, and on 8 occasions in the 1990's, the Association paid for all production and distribution costs to televise the Finals of that event (the other 2 finals were televised by Fox Sports Net Detroit).

The costs of these non-tournament expenses involving female student-athletes, coaches and administrators to the MHSAA exceeds \$100,000 annually, and with the exception of the Scholar-Athlete Award, Legends program and Girls Basketball Finals broadcasts, all expenses are dollars spent exclusively on females – over two-thirds of the total.

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3-3-3 – Investment In Girls Sports

The special efforts to provide programming, promotion and personnel training for girls sports are in addition to the year-round efforts the MHSAA provides to both genders, which include the registration and training of officials and assignors; the Program of Athletic Coaches Education; Athletic Director In-Service meetings; the Good Sports Are Winners! sportsmanship program.

“The MHSAA is the leader in Michigan for putting money into all aspects of girls high school sports, exceeding by far any other organization which claims to advance women’s issues in interscholastic athletics,” Roberts said. “We’re proud of what we have done to support the interests of the vast majority of female student-athletes, coaches of both genders in all sports, and administrators at our member schools.”

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,300 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

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