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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 28, 2003

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Spring Representative Council Meeting Summary

EAST LANSING, Mich. – May 28 – In addition to adding lacrosse for girls and boys to its post-season tournament lineup in 2004-05, reestablishing a point-differential rule and expanding the number of officials used at the Regional level of tournament play to three in basketball, the Representative Council of the Michigan High School Athletic Association also dealt with a variety of measures dealing with eligibility rules and sports issues at its Spring meeting, May 4-6, in Gaylord.

The Spring meeting of the 19-member legislative body of the Association's 1,216 member schools is usually the busiest of its three sessions each year. The Council considered 55 committee proposals and discussed a number of eligibility and operational issues.

Among other action taken by the Council at its Spring meeting were adoption of the tournament structure for the MHSAA Bowling Tournament series, which begins in 2003-04; allowing more scheduling flexibility in certain sports at the junior high/middle school level; exploring invitational tournaments for the smallest schools in its membership and for emerging sports; changing the venues for the Lower Peninsula Golf Finals; and making adjustments to the weight monitoring program used for wrestling.

"The role of the Representative Council is to establish guidelines to assist schools in the day-to-day conduct of educational athletics; and while every decision is noteworthy in its own way and important to our schools, not all are headline news," said John E. "Jack" Roberts, executive director of the Association. "The decision to add lacrosse reflects the growth in that emerging sport, and the point-differential rule and the addition of a third official in basketball are positive steps for that sport."

By the time of the first MHSAA conducted post-season tournament two years from now, sponsorship of lacrosse as an interscholastic sport by member schools will likely exceed the 64 school minimum for consideration of MHSAA post-season tournaments. Currently, there are over 60 schools represented in a statewide lacrosse league participating in the spring. Details about the administration of the sport will be announced at a future date. It is anticipated that there would be at least a Regional level of competition prior to the post-season tournament Finals, and that the calendar would coincide with existing spring sports which end in an MHSAA sponsored post-season tournament. Lacrosse is the second post-season tournament added for girls and boys by the Council this year, with bowling being added at the Fall meeting.

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In response to action by the National Federation of State High School Associations to allow a point-differential rule in basketball by state association adoption beginning in 2003-04, the Council reinstated the rule used successfully during the 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02 school years on an experimental basis. The Council also voted to increase the number of officials used to work MHSAA post-season tournament games at the Regional level to three next year.

The point-differential rule for Michigan will be identical to what was used in 2001-02, and will be used at all levels of regular and post-season tournament play. When a 40-point differential is reached at any time beginning in the second half, the clock will not stop with the following exceptions: called time outs; injuries; the end of a period, and; for the shooting of free throws in the final two minutes of the fourth quarter.

Beginning next year, three-person officiating crews will be used at the Regional level of MHSAA post-season tournaments for boys and girls. Since the 1995-96 school year, three-person crews have been working the Final level of the tournament.

“The point differential rule in basketball is educationally sound and was successful when schools in Michigan experimented with it. We’re pleased to be able to implement it on the permanent basis,” Roberts said. “The move by the Council to add a third official for Regional play was done carefully, since not all parts of the state use three officials for regular-season, nor should they feel pressured to do so, especially in these budget-conscious times. To even think that implementation of three officials can occur at the District level soon is unlikely since we barely have enough tournament-qualified officials now to cover those tournaments with two-person crews.”

Here is a summary of other actions taken at the Spring Representative Council Meeting:

Policies and procedures were approved for the MHSAA Bowling Tournament series in 2003-04

– For MHSAA post-season tournament competition, the Regional team format will consist of six games using the Baker system and three games using traditional scoring, with the total pins determining the order of finish. Singles competition will take place in a four-game block. There will likely be four Regionals in each of three Classes – A, B and C-D – with the top four teams and top seven individuals from each advancing to the Finals. Bracketed match play will be used for the Finals with two Baker and two traditionally scored games in team competition; and a qualifying block will take place in the singles Finals to cut the field to 16 for match play to determine a champion. A variety of other policies were also implemented, a full list of which will eventually be posted to the Bowling page of the MHSAA Web site. The first MHSAA Bowling Finals will take place March 5-6, 2004. It is expected that at least 69 schools in Class A, 37 in Class B and 50 in Class C-D will participate.

Quoting MHSAA Assistant Director Randy Allen – “The tournament formats selected by the Bowling Committee modify some of those used in past years and carry over others without change. The Baker system, in which every bowler on the team contributes to the final score, is an exciting format used at the collegiate level. We’re excited about watching the development of this sport at the high school level here in Michigan.”

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3-3-3 – Spring Representative Council Meeting Summary

Two scheduling proposals affecting junior high/middle schools were passed – The first was to allow in basketball and volleyball, three days of competition in a week, but only two of the competition dates may occur on a night before a school day. There would be a limit of five days of competition in any 14-day period, Monday through Sunday. This rule is consistent with the rule at the senior high school level and the existing junior high/middle school rule for wrestling. The other proposal sets the length of the basketball and volleyball seasons at 13 consecutive weeks, with leagues, conferences and local schools determining the starting date for the season.

Quoting Randy Allen – “The Junior High/Middle School Committee sought the ability for schools to be able to pick up an additional day of competition primarily to be able to participate in a tournament, and reschedule cancelled games late in the season due to poor weather conditions. Because of the unique needs of junior high/middle school sports and their calendars, the second proposal gives them even more flexibility in being able to determine a schedule which best serves them locally.”

The Council approved the Classification Committee recommendation to explore alternatives within the existing four-class format for enhancing the tournament experience for the smallest Class D schools within the MHSAA membership, and also to explore the idea of MHSAA sponsorship of regular-season invitational tournaments for those schools – In January, the Classification Committee was presented concerns that schools of less than 100 students face. The Classification Committee presented the Council some ideas for potential change in District tournaments involving those schools; and with the alternative of making available a regular-season tournament for those schools against similarly situated schools as an alternative to participation in the MHSAA post-season tournament.

Quoting Jack Roberts – “Providing positive educational experiences for our smallest schools was addressed in the last century by providing a Class E in the Upper Peninsula for schools of fewer than 75 students. It was a practical idea then. Creating a separate classification for the fewer than 80 member schools, spread out around our state, would not be a practical idea now. But to look at situations where such schools, in their own geographic areas, might be best served with some other creative post-season and regular-season competition options is an idea worth exploring.”

A discussion item on the agenda involved dialogue about reorganizing MHSAA tournaments in the wake of diminishing school finances – The Council authorized the MHSAA staff to supplement the site selection process for tournaments by developing and administering alternative policies to use “back-up” sites for Regional and Quarterfinal play when an originally scheduled site would result in excessive travel. Some of these policies may be implemented during the 2003-04 school year and the topic will be revisited by the Council at its Fall meeting in December. There was also discussion about changes during the regular season that might be proposed for adoption at the local level in response to limited school finances.

Quoting Jack Roberts – “In certain parts of our state and in certain sports, the MHSAA and schools have already been working on sensible arrangements to address excessive travel during tournament play. The Council has directed the staff to become more involved in the process in additional sports, at additional levels. The additional flexibility provided will have a positive impact on school budgets and their tournament experiences.

“As an Association of schools, the budget crunch should encourage us to have an extended discussion about sensible and defensible things we can do to be fiscally responsible and provide a quality educational athletic experience for our students and communities. Schools should look for more local

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competition. Schools can do without some of the frills and not engage in the Arms Race that has consumed major college sports. Schools should look at shorter seasons. Everything should be on the table for discussion, and schools should take the lead on this topic and provide additional ideas for the Council to explore.”

In the area of sportsmanship, the Council extended to all MHSAA post-season tournament indoor venues the existing policies of the Basketball, Ice Hockey and Volleyball Tournaments that requires spectators to wear shirts – Venues in Competitive Cheer, Gymnastics, Swimming & Diving, Wrestling and the Football Finals would be affected.

Quoting Jack Roberts – “The Volleyball Committee was the most outspoken on this topic, because history has shown that the practice of not wearing shirts at tournament contests, especially in the Final round of a tournament, is not at all about promoting school spirit, but about the individuals involved wishing to draw attention to themselves – a violation of good sportsmanship and what school sports stand for.”

The Council also heard the report of an ad hoc committee it formed a year ago about seeding MHSAA post-season tournaments – The committee, which met twice during the 2003-04 school year, was appointed last May to explore the possibility of seeding selected MHSAA tournaments at their lowest levels. Using ice hockey and girls basketball data from the current school year, the committee reported to the Council that there was no consensus for making a recommendation to begin seeding tournaments.

Quoting Randy Allen – “The ad hoc committee shared many ideas in its meetings – a lot of rationale for seeding and a lot of rational for not seeding. In reviewing the test data, the committee could not generate the kind of support necessary to keep the discussion going. For all of the advantages of seeding the top teams at the first level of play, the practice of a blind draw continues to be the most educationally sound way to conduct tournaments here in Michigan.”

In the MHSAA Baseball and Softball Tournament series beginning in 2003-04, a coin flip will be used to determine the home team designation for all games – The current practice is to let bracket placement determine the home team based on the tournament draw.

Quoting Randy Allen – “Being the home team, and having last at-bats, is a huge factor in baseball and softball. While the current system is based on the chance of the draw, it is literally possible to end up with a draw which could give a team home designation throughout a tournament, and for a school to draw being the visiting team throughout a tournament. Using a coin flip to determine the home team designation is a common practice at in-season tournaments, and the most fair way for us to proceed.”

In additional action involving basketball, the Council approved the Basketball Committee recommendation to change the beginning date for District draws to three Mondays prior to the start of the tournament, but not later than the Monday preceding the tournament – The previous practice was to start the draws the Monday prior to the start of the tournament and concluding that same week.

Quoting MHSAA Assistant Director Nate Hampton – “Schools asked the Basketball Committee for a different window in which conduct draws based on a variety of factors, including the school calendar. Allowing the draws to be conducted locally earlier, and in a larger time window, will provide the schools the flexibility they have requested.”

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In girls competitive cheer, the Representative Council acted to allow more time for proposals for change to be discussed before a final vote of the Council – The Council discussed the number of changes occurring in the sport and the lateness with which proposals reach the Council after the Competitive Cheer Committee’s mid-March meeting. The Council acted to table proposals advanced by the Competitive Cheer Committee until more time could be provided for their thorough discussion by member schools, and if the Committee continued with a mid-March meeting, to have all proposals follow a practice of being discussed for a year before being returned to the Committee to be advanced to a Council vote.

Quoting Jack Roberts – “It was felt the tight timetable did not provide for an adequate discussion by the cheer community of the number of changes and the significance of such changes in Competitive Cheer, and that this could be detrimental to the growth of the sport.”

Also in competitive cheer, the Council voted to approve the Committee recommendation to allow three teams to qualify to the Finals from a Regional tournament if there was a two-way tie for second.

The Council did not approve the recommendation of the Cross Country/Track & Field Committee to have the MHSAA conduct a Team Track & Field Championship meet.

Quoting Nate Hampton – Given that the Committee vote on the issue was not unanimous, that the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association was not in favor of such a meet, that previous Update Meeting surveys of school administrators were split on the issue, and the resources needed to launch tournaments in emerging sports serving students previously unserved by the MHSAA, the Council felt the time was not right to approve an additional level within an existing sport tournament.”

In golf, the Council approved the Golf Committee recommendation to move away from conducting all divisions of the Lower Peninsula Finals in mid-Michigan and to move toward the use of other university courses around state for those events – Since the 1988-89 school year, both the girls and boys events have been conducted exclusively in the greater Lansing area, the girls event exclusively at Forest Akers Golf Courses on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing. Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, the Forest Akers complex will host one or two divisions of play in each tournament, while the remaining divisions will take place at the Eagle Crest Golf Course on the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, and The Meadows Golf Course at Grand Valley State University in Allendale. A rotation system will be established to determine which divisions will play on each course, based on the course’s availability that year, and the availability of other university courses are being explored.

Quoting Randy Allen -- “The Golf Committee wanted to have their sport experience the excellent university golf courses available in different parts of the state, and to also ease the hosting burden on one community. We’re appreciative of those courses in the greater Lansing area which have served us so well for so long, and looking forward to the experience of working with our new courses.”

The previous Executive Committee action to establish a single ice hockey overtime procedure for multi-school tournaments conducted during holiday periods and on days not followed by school days was reaffirmed by the Council – The action allows for any number of eight minute sudden death periods to be played to determine a winner of a contest, waiving the one overtime limit used for regular season contests.

Quoting Randy Allen – “This action provides consistency where none previously existed, and has been welcomed by the hockey community.”

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6-6-6 – Spring Representative Council Meeting Summary

In response to a list of institutional control matters related to alpine skiing, the Council took two actions – The first limits entry into the 2004 MHSAA Skiing Tournament to those schools which are represented by a school administrator at a series of meetings to be conducted by the MHSAA prior to the start of the season. The second requires that a student participating in the 2004 MHSAA Skiing Tournament have taken part in at least four meets during the regular season against MHSAA member schools. Participation in Central United States Skiing Association (CUSSA) meets will not count toward meeting the requirement.

Quoting MHSAA Assistant Director Gina Mazzolini – “Skiing, more than any other sport in which the MHSAA provides services and a post-season tournament, gets less attention from school administrators, is coached more by non-faculty coaches, has its participants involved in more non-school competition during the school season, and has practice and competition venues not only off campus but at distant locations. If schools are going to offer this opportunity to their young people, schools need to take better institutional control of the sport.

“The move to require a minimum number of meets against MHSAA member schools brings skiing more in line with other sports, and helps make the school team a ‘school’ team – not one where skiers drop in and become eligible just in time for the MHSAA tournament.”

The Soccer Committee recommendation to utilize artificial surface fields approved by MHSAA staff for all levels of tournament play was passed – The action, unlike other Council votes which take effect in the coming school year or beyond when notes, takes effect for the 2003 girls tournament. In addition, the Council also voted to allow an experiment in District tournament play in 2003-04 in which the three whistle officiating system may be used at sites where both officials and teams are familiar with that system. Sites will be selected by the MHSAA staff.

Quoting Gina Mazzolini – “The landscape has literally changed where artificial surfaces, once thought to be detrimental to the game, are now desirable because of advances made in the types of surfaces. Some schools have installed artificial surfaces exclusively for soccer, and others have their fields designed in a way to provide for wider pitches than they could previously provide with natural grass.

“There are areas around the state which have used the three-whistle system for a number of years, and report that it has helped increase the quality of the game.”

In tennis, the committee recommendation to return to breaks not exceeding 90 seconds in length following every odd-numbered game in tournament play was adopted.

Quoting Gina Mazzolini – “High school coaches asked for the return of the rule which would allow them to talk to their players following the first game of a match because by following the USTA continuous play rule, three games could pass and that lost opportunity to help a youngster adjust or settle down was felt to be an important factor in some matches.”

The Council delayed the use of rally scoring and three out of five game matches in volleyball for the MHSAA post-season tournament until at least 2004-05, the first year rally scoring is required by National Federation of State High School Association rules -- During the coming school year, the Council wants to assess the impact rally scoring could have on: additional costs to schools and the Association for adding a Pre-District round to tournament play; additional costs for officials; National Federation policies for regular season varsity dual and multi-game and match scoring which are still in development; an experiment in Illinois this Spring utilizing rally scoring in a best of three game format; and other factors which rally scoring will affect. For the upcoming season, the Council is encouraging local schools and leagues and conferences to experiment if they wish with rally scoring for regular season play.

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Quoting Gina Mazzolini – “There is some data already coming together from those states which have experimented with rally scoring, and the results do not yet form a consensus in many ways. Rather than jump blindly into this without a thorough analysis of what rally scoring would do to affect the MHSAA tournament and regular-season play, the Council wants to see how this plays out in other states while the use of rally scoring is not mandatory, and make final decisions based on the best information available.”

A variety of changes in the MHSAA Wrestling Weight Monitoring program were approved --

In addition, the Council approved the Wrestling Committee recommendation to conduct nutrition education in-service programs for wrestling coaching in 2003-04; and to allow wrestlers the flexibility to vacate their lowest weight if they weight in two classes higher.

Quoting MHSAA Assistant Director Bill Bupp – “The Wrestling Weight Monitoring program requires annual adjustments to make sure that we are providing a program that is maximizing the safety factors for participants, and also is manageable for coaches and administrators. Allowing wrestlers to advance beyond the original two weights will also help them better compensate for growth during the season, avoiding some of the problems encountered a year ago.”

The Council also reviewed reports on membership, with an increase to 758 senior high schools, and a decrease of junior high/middle schools to 458; eligibility advancement applications, which increased slightly to 24 for the past school year; the use of Educational Transfer Forms, which decreased by 10 percent this year; school violations, which saw a significant decline in the past year; attendance at athletic director and coaches in-service workshops; another increase in registered officials during the 2002-03 school year; rules meeting attendance; officials reports submitted for the past three sports seasons; and a review of risk minimization issues in various sports. The Association’s \$7.9 million budget for the 2003-04 school year was also approved.

The Representative Council is the 19-member legislative body of the MHSAA. All but 5 members are elected by member schools. Four members are appointed by the Council to facilitate representation of females and minorities; and the 19th position is occupied by the Superintendent of Public Instruction or designee.

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,200 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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