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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2003

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MHSAA Expresses Concern Over Financial Impact On Schools For Move Of Big Ten Football Games To Friday Nights

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Sept. 24 – The financial loss to high school athletic programs will be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars when the football teams from the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota square off in a Friday night, nationally-televised contest on Oct. 10; numbers that will double if Minnesota faces Michigan State University on Friday the following week.

The move of the Michigan-Minnesota game -- made public today by the Big Ten Conference, because Minnesota's venue, the Metrodome in Minneapolis, may not be available due to of a potential Major League Baseball League Championship Series game involving the Minnesota Twins there on Oct. 11 -- was criticized by Michigan High School Athletic Association executive director John E. "Jack" Roberts because high school programs will be negatively affected.

"We are disappointed," Roberts said. "While we appreciate that the Big Ten Conference and both of our state universities explored alternatives, their decision will damage local Friday night football gate receipts, adding to the financial difficulties of school sports in Michigan. While we know people have to make plans, this unfortunate decision is made worse by the fact that it isn't certain the Twins will still be in the playoffs on Oct. 11. Imagine if Minnesota and Michigan play football Friday night and the Metrodome stands empty the next day.

"We are angered more by the arrogance and inflexibility of Major League Baseball and Fox Sports in this matter. A delay of a few hours in the playing of the baseball game could have permitted both football and baseball to be played on the same day in the same venue."

(more)

2-2-2 – Financial Impact On Schools

On most Friday nights in Michigan, there are approximately 300 high school football games taking place. Using conservative estimates, the MHSAA is pegging the minimum gate revenue to be lost by schools in Michigan alone will easily exceed \$100,000 each week. Additional losses will be felt by schools in terms of concessions and other revenue-generating functions which take place at football games. In addition, there are approximately 150 games on average in Minnesota on a football Friday night.

The Michigan-Minnesota game will be televised nationally on ESPN, the Michigan State-Minnesota game will also be televised nationally on ESPN2.

“When the colleges and ESPN began utilizing Friday nights for televising game, the match-ups were in no way as attractive nationally as games between Minnesota and Michigan, and Minnesota and Michigan State,” said Roberts. “There will be a negative financial impact across the nation on high school football because of the one game already being moved and the other game potentially being moved.”

Additional impact will be felt on high school programs in terms of exposure, since at least a dozen of the radio network affiliates for Michigan and Michigan State regularly broadcast high school football games on Friday nights; and newspaper and television coverage of high school games will likely be reduced as well.

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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