



media information



1661 ramblewood drive east lansing, mi 48823 517.332.5046 fax-517.332.4071 www.mhsaa.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2005

Contact: John Johnson or Jack Roberts

517.332.5046 or www.mhsaa.com

An MHSAA Commentary By Communications Director John Johnson: Hearing The Cheers

There was never so strong a testimony as to how the general public – not just the educational athletics community – felt about the placement of school sports seasons as when the United States Supreme Court announced a decision on May 2 virtually assuring that the widely-preferred scheduling would prevail for at least the 2005-06 school year.

- At a mid-Michigan high school, classes were interrupted with a public address announcement of the news, which was greeted with cheers by the student body.
- On the sidelines of a girls soccer game in western Michigan, hugs and high fives ran through the adults in the stands and the athletes on the sidelines as word spread that the seasons would remain the same for the coming school year and possibly beyond.
- Sports media, with only one exception, expressed their pleasure in print and electronic mediums, pointing out again that a change of seasons would greatly reduce the recognition student-athletes receive through their coverage of the games; and that college athletic scholarship opportunities are enhanced – not hurt – by the current schedules.
- By margins of three or four to one, online public opinion polls taken by several of the state's larger newspapers showed support for the MHSAA's effort to have the lower court decisions overturned.

It was as if the silent majority – losing heart because of earlier court rulings which flew in the face of the desires of schools, administrators, coaches, student-athletes and parents; which flew in the face of the fact that the sports seasons chosen by schools over 30 years ago meet the needs of participation opportunities of girls and boys in record numbers; which flew in the face of allowing financially-strapped schools to make the best use of their available resources to serve kids; which flew in the face of common sense – was not only awakened, but rejuvenated in the belief that all was not lost.

But all has not been won either.

(more)

2-2-2 – MHSAA Commentary

From a public relations standpoint, the schools' viewpoint on season placement has claimed a landslide victory from Day One in this litigation. The practices which have maximized the quantity and quality of participation and college scholarships earned by Michigan student-athletes – figures which have been statistically substantiated – have won out over undocumented claims of harm.

A win in the court of public opinion isn't the same thing as a win in a courtroom. This case could turn against the schools again, just as it turned in their favor on May 2.

But the affirmations that have come this way since the Supreme Court tossed out the previous Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals rulings and remanded the case to that lower court for reconsideration validate how schools and the general public feel, and validate all of the work that has been done to preserve the seasons on behalf of schools. To preserve participation opportunities for girls that are already fading away in states recently forced by litigation to switch seasons in the name of gender equity.

It also validates the reason school sports – educational athletics – exist. Not to cater to elite athletes. Not to be a feeder system for colleges and clubs. Rather, to be there for every athlete who's willing and able to play by school rules. To be there to complement a students' classroom experience.

It was those everyday student-athletes and their parents and their communities that stood up all over Michigan and cheered last week for the equity that already exists. Cheered for what they wanted. Cheered for what they believed in. Cheered for what has worked so well for so many for so long.

We heard those cheers. We thank you for those cheers. And we'll continue to work hard to serve you and fight to maintain the seasons – your seasons.

-0-

NOTE – The sports seasons litigation can be tracked from the home page of the MHSAA Web site, by clicking on This Week In The MHSAA and then on the Tracking The Sports Seasons Litigation link. As additional information becomes available about case and its reconsideration by the Sixth Circuit, it will be posted to the MHSAA Web site.

RL05-072

Farm Bureau Insurance and MEEMIC Insurance are year-round MHSAA Corporate Partners