



media information



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

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Contact: John Johnson

517.332.5046 or www.mhsaa.com

Growth In Bowling, Girls Competitive Cheer Approved At Spring Representative Council Meeting

EAST LANSING, Mich. – May 26 – Two of the fastest-growing sports on the Michigan high school scene – bowling and girls competitive cheer – will play to expanded tournament formats during the 2006-07 school year following action taken during the annual Spring Meeting of the Representative Council of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, May 7-9, in Lewiston.

The Spring meeting of the 19-member legislative body of the Association's nearly 1,700 member schools is generally the busiest of its three sessions each year. The Council considered 58 committee proposals and also dealt with a variety of eligibility rule, post-season tournament and operational issues.

Following three successful years of a single-site venue for the Finals, the Council approved the Bowling Committee recommendation to have separate sites for each of the three Divisions of competition. The sites will be spread out across the state, with Sunnybrook Lanes in Sterling Heights, the site of the first three Finals, hosting one Division of competition. The Council also approved the Bowling Committee recommendation to expand the tournament format from four to six Regions in each Division; advancing the top three teams and top ten individuals from each Regional to the Finals, which should result in an increased number of participants at the Finals.

The Council also voted to expand the Girls Competitive Cheer post-season tournament from three Classes to four Divisions. The four Divisions will each have more than 60 schools, and by adding a fourth category of competition, Regional meet sizes will be reduced to a more manageable number. A total of 40 teams will advance to the Finals, an increase of 10 teams from the 2005-06 season. The Finals meet will be conducted over two days at the DeltaPlex in Grand Rapids, which has hosted the event the last three years. One Division of competition will be scheduled for the evening of March 9, and three Divisions will be on March 10 during the 2007 tournament.

"The changes in Bowling and Girls Competitive Cheer are a reflection of the increased interest in high school sports," said John E. "Jack" Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. "Schools continue to add extracurricular athletic opportunities for our students because they see the value they bring to the school and the community, and young people continue to turn out for these activities in record-setting numbers."

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2-2-2 – Spring Representative Council Meeting Summary

There were four other sports with classification issues before the Representative Council at the May meeting: a Skiing Committee proposal to reclassify from two Classes (A and B-C-D) into two nearly equal Divisions was approved; a Swimming and Diving Committee recommendation to reclassify in the Lower Peninsula from two Classes to three nearly-equal Divisions was tabled pending the gathering of additional information about the tournament format; and requests from the Soccer Committee and the Girls Volleyball Committees to reclassify into four nearly-equal Divisions were denied, the Soccer request being turned down – in part – because the procedure of surveying schools about the change and a review of the Classification Committee had not yet taken place.

Previously-announced Council action addressed the escalating pressures on coaches and student-athletes in educational athletics, which included:

- Reaffirmation of the Association’s position against national competition in high school sports;
- Establishing a seven-day summer “dead period;”
- Establishing a pre-season “down period;” and
- Strengthening existing regulations covering sports-curriculum courses.

(NOTE – The press release from May 9 with additional information about these actions can be found on the Press Releases page of the MHSAA Web site.)

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

Administrative/Regulation Matters

- A change was made to the Transfer Regulation, adding an interpretation that a change of schools is allowed only one time in Grades 9-12 when the circumstances are those of a student who had moved out of state with one or more parents, enrolled in a high school there while attending a specialized sports academy, and then returned to live in Michigan. Previously, there was no limitation on such transfers.
- Under the Awards rule, the Council added language clarifying the limit on the value of prizes to member school athletic team members who raise the most money through team fundraising efforts which involve student-athletes or their parents only to \$25, which is the existing limit for the value of an award a student-athlete can receive while participating in interscholastic athletics. Consistent with the existing rule, student-athletes may not receive cash or negotiable certificates as prizes for participating in team fund-raising activities.
- Regulations applicable to live video of events were broadened to include a distribution prohibition for any medium currently available or yet to be developed; and to prohibit the participation of member schools in events televised live by third parties or non-member schools. The revision covers newer transmission mediums such as broadband and wireless. Schools may still be granted permission to broadcast games live locally on a school operated cable television channel under certain conditions.

Registered Officials Matters

- To assist local officials associations in their efforts to train their members, the Representative Council approved a document with standardized observation guidelines and an accompanying feedback form that will be available for voluntary use by local approved officials associations beginning with the 2006-07 school year.

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3-3-3 – Spring Representative Council Meeting Summary

- Awards for officials reaching their 45th and 50th year of registration were approved. The MHSAA annually honors officials with 20, 30 and 40 years of service to interscholastic athletics at its Officials Awards & Alumni Banquet each April. This recognition program began in 1980 with 20-year officials; 30-year officials were added in 1989, and 40-year officials were added in 2001.

Sports Matters

- In baseball and softball, MHSAA tournament policy was revised so that any game called prior to the completion of a full inning after the fifth inning will become a suspended game if the visiting team has scored one or more runs in that inning to tie the game or retake the lead and the home team has not retaken the lead. When the game is resumed on another day, it would start from the point of suspension, and be completed pursuant to all applicable rules.
- In basketball, the Representative Council did not approve a Basketball Committee recommendation to lengthen the regular season by allowing schools to participate in a non-counted tournament of not more than two games. The Council discussed irregularities in the markings of the coaching box and the enforcement of rules related to the coaching box, and directed the staff to make the issue a point of emphasis in rules meetings and Athletic Director In-Services programs.
- The Council approved the Bowling Committee recommendation to change the order of the Finals events so that the team championships will take place on the first day of competition, and the singles championships on the second day.
- The Track & Field/Cross Country Committee recommendation to alternate the gender for running and cross country events based on the calendar year, rather than the school year, was approved. Girls events will be run first in odd-numbered calendar years, and boys events will be run first in even-numbered calendar years. Committed recommendations to conduct a two-day Lower Peninsula Individual Finals meet and a team tournament were not adopted.
- In football, the Representative Council approved a recommendation of the Football Committee addressing forfeitures of regular-season games which become known after the announcement of the playoff field on Selection Sunday (October 22, 2006). If a qualifying team forfeits one or more games for the use of an ineligible player, and the forfeitures would have caused that team not to qualify for the Playoffs, that team will be withdrawn from the bracket and the opposing team will receive a Bye. No team will replace the disqualified team, per existing MHSAA policy, and the forfeitures will not affect the status of other qualifying teams. If a non-qualifying team forfeits one or more games for the use of an ineligible player, those forfeitures will not affect the status of other qualifying teams. The Council also denied the request of the Football Committee to change the format of the Football Playoffs that would have teams seeded on a Regional basis, eliminating the Pre-District and District match-ups.
- In ice hockey and soccer, the Council approved the recommendations of both sport committees to change the goal-differential rule for regular season and tournament play from ten goals to eight goals. This rule will also continue to be optional for non-varsity play in soccer, but if used, the eight-goal differential would be the standard. In hockey, the game goes to a running clock if the differential is reached during the first or second period, with the game terminated at the end of the second period or anytime the differential is reached in the third period. In soccer, the game is terminated at halftime or at any point in the second half once the differential is reached.

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4-4-4 – Spring Representative Council Meeting Summary

- In girls lacrosse, the committee recommendation to allow a team to participate in up to three multi-team tournaments during the regular season was adopted. Each tournament will count as one contest for the purpose of the 18 contests limitation in a season.
- The Representative Council approved the Soccer Committee recommendation to return to a penalty kick format of determining a champion in the Final game of the MHSAA postseason tournament. From the tournament's inception in 1982 until 1988, penalty kicks were used on just one occasion following regulation and overtime play to determine a winner in the title game. Since 1990, co-champions have been declared after regulation and overtime play on five occasions. Penalty kicks have been used at pre-Finals levels of the tournament due to the need to advance a team to the next level of play.
- Acting on the request of the Wolverine Conference, a tennis regulation was revised so that in a league championship tournament involving more than eight schools, an individual may play in a fourth match in a single day provided the player had not played in more than six sets in the first three rounds of the tournament and the fourth match would complete the tournament. This is the existing policy for MHSAA Regional Tournament play.
- In girls volleyball, Michigan will join a group of states experimenting with a rules modification that would allow the Libero to serve in one position in each game. The Libero position was established in Michigan during 2005-06, and will remain an option for schools to use.

The Council also reviewed reports on membership, with 762 senior high schools and 818 junior high/middle schools in 2005-06; eligibility advancement applications, which remained stable at 16 for the third straight year; the use of Educational Transfer Forms, which was up slightly over the previous year; school violations, which were about equal to an average year; attendance at athletic director and coaches in-service workshops, which saw an increase again over the previous year's totals; another 12,000-plus year for officials registration, which included an all-time high of 102 high school students registered through the Association's Legacy program; the progress of criminal history checks on all officials; rules meeting attendance; and officials reports submitted for the past three sports seasons. The Association's \$8.9 million budget for the 2006-07 school year was also approved.

The Representative Council is the 19-member legislative body of the MHSAA. All but five 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 approximately 1,700 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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