



michigan high school athletic association

# media information

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## **Outreach & Innovation Mark Representative Council's Spring Meeting**

**EAST LANSING, Mich. – May 21 –** A series of actions designed to increase the relevance of school sports to youth and the usefulness of school sports to schools were taken by the Representative Council of the Michigan High School Athletic Association during its annual Spring Meeting, May 4-6, in Gaylord.

The Spring meeting of the 19-member legislative body of the Association's nearly 1,600 member schools is generally the busiest of its three sessions each year. The Council considered 54 committee proposals and also dealt with a variety of eligibility rule, post-season tournament and operational issues.

Throughout the 2007-08 school year, the MHSAA has been evaluating the role of school sports. An online survey conducted in the fall helped shape a Mission Action Plan to deal with the societal changes which have affected educational athletics. The bottom line of the plan looks to increase participation in school sports while keeping the mission of the games in their proper perspective.

Some of the actions seek to keep the relationship between school sports and student-athletes intact in different ways. At one end of the spectrum, the Council authorized a study of the possibility of the MHSAA's involvement in sixth grade athletic programs, and also allowed high school coaches to begin communicating with potential student-athletes from feeder schools late in their eighth grade school year. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Council approved plans for a "Reaching Higher" summer camp opportunity for some of the state's top basketball players to be launched in July, 2009.

"Some of the measures taken previously to avoid early and year-round pressures of high school sports participation have seen the gaps filled by the less healthy influences of youth sports, which have promoted philosophies contrary to the values promoted in educational athletics," said John E. "Jack" Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. "Finding ways to connect early with kids, and connect often – provided the connections are just right – may prove to be more beneficial than the 'hands off' approach the rules have required in the past."

During the course of the 2008-09 school year, the MHSAA will convene a study group to review all aspects of sixth grade athletic participation and the Association's role and responsibility. Data will also be sought through multiple sources, including the annual Fall Update Meeting survey of over 1,000 administrators who attend those programs, and through the statewide Athletic Director's In-Service program.

Senior high schools will be allowed to be in contact with potential student-athletes at feeder schools through two Council actions. The first allows high school coaches and athletic administrators to conduct once a year for each sport a sports-specific program to groups of junior high/middle school students and parents if that school has the same governing board or is of the same religious denomination and at least 25 percent of that school's previous eighth-grade class is attending the high school. On or after April 1, information announcing the starting date for high school sports practices and other allowed summer activity may be distributed to groups of eighth graders under the same conditions. The second allows high school students to assist in an unpaid and supervised role with junior high/middle school teams under the same circumstances.

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## 2-2-2 – Spring Representative Council Meeting

The “Reaching Higher” program is best described as an advanced placement course for high school basketball players. The first one-day camps will take place during the latter part of July in 2009, with up to 120 boys and 120 girls selected by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan – mostly those about to enter their senior year of high school – taking part in a mix of classroom and on-court sessions involving drills, testing and game conditions. The high school coaches conducting the camp, which takes place during an NCAA men’s evaluation period, will also be selected by BCAM.

Camp participants will be subject to a minimum grade point requirement; only three players from any one team may be selected; and membership of the school’s coach in BCAM is not required to be nominated or selected. Coaches working the camps must be BCAM members, with a core group of 10 individuals being annual staff members, and the remainder being selected from BCAM’s regional and statewide honorees for that season.

In addition to the camps, there will be multi-media support through print and Internet-based resources developed by the Youth Sports Institute at Michigan State University and other sources for junior high/middle and elementary school students; and resources aimed at assisting those with college aspirations. Subsequent phases of the “Reaching Higher” program may include day camps sponsored by the MHSAA and BCAM for students in the sixth grade or below, and possibly an MHSAA/BCAM Summer Series, a team camp experience for member schools. Additional details about the program will be developed during the 2008-09 school year.

The Council also approved calendar changes beginning in 2009-10 for school sports which have been two years in the making. One objective was to address the need for a minimum number of practices before a team could begin competition in all sports. A second objective was to free-up an additional August weekend.

For the fall of 2009, football may begin practice on August 10, with all other sports beginning on August 12. Football teams may not compete until conducting 12 separate days of practice (including the first three without pads) and not before 16 calendar days have passed. Golf and tennis may not compete until conducting three days of team practice and not before seven calendar days have passed. Cross country, soccer, swimming and diving and volleyball must conduct seven days of practice, and 10 calendar days must pass before the first competition. In no case will weekend practices be required to meet the minimum practices before the first competition date.

Discussion of alternative calendars to eliminate some of the overlap in basketball seasons and to conduct spring sports in better weather will continue into the fall of 2008, and be revisited at upcoming fall and winter Representative Council meetings.

With gas prices having more of an impact than ever before on school sports, the Council has taken several actions to ease some of the burden felt by officials and schools. Earlier this year, the Council determined that over the course of the 2008-09 school year, the MHSAA will expand its online Rules Meeting availabilities to all sports for coaches and officials. Online meetings will be added for soccer and volleyball in the fall; basketball, ice hockey and wrestling in the winter; and all sports will be available online in the spring of 2009 and thereafter. A small number of face-to-face meetings will still be conducted in each sport.

Piloted by track this spring, online meetings were attended by nearly 1,200 coaches and officials. The average round trip miles for those individuals would have been 82 had they attended the meeting previously scheduled in their area. Those individuals would have ended up driving nearly 100,000 miles (about four times around the Earth’s equator), and spending over \$13,000 for gasoline. Attendance at the Rules Meeting series for all sports in a given year averages between 19,000 and 20,000.

Earlier this year, the Council approved mileage reimbursement bonuses for teams with one-way trips over 250 and 500 miles in the MHSAA Football Playoffs. At its May meeting, the Council increased by one-third the mileage reimbursement for MHSAA Tournament officials who must travel beyond 50 miles round trip.

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### **3-3-3 – Spring Representative Council Meeting**

The Council approved the option of allowing District tournaments in basketball and volleyball to play games at drawn home sites beginning in 2008-09, instead of play taking place at a third-party host. Details about guidelines for this option will be determined soon. Where the option is utilized, travel expenses may be significantly reduced and crowd sizes could increase.

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

#### **Administrative/Regulation Matters**

The penalty for coaches violating regulations which prohibit their coaching at high school all-star or national high school championship events where students enrolled at MHSAA member schools are participating was clarified. The penalty now calls for the school of the coach to be placed on probation for one year; with the coach being prohibited from coaching at that school in any sport for one year, and the coach being prohibited from coaching in any MHSAA tournament in any sport at any other member school for one year.

#### **Sports Matters**

The Wrestling Committee recommendation for seeding the Quarterfinal round of the Team Dual Wrestling Tournament was approved by the Representative Council. The top four teams will be seeded into the bracket for each division based on predetermined criteria, and the remaining four teams will be placed by a blind draw. The seeding will take place the Sunday prior to the Quarterfinal round of the tournament. The Council also voted to move the Team Dual and Individual Tournament series one week earlier beginning in 2009-10.

Adopted by the Council was the Volleyball Committee recommendation to allow District matches to be played on any day of the week designated for District play, with no more than one match per day. If a team is required to play on consecutive days on one side of the bracket, its potential opponent must have the same schedule. Regional play will have Semifinals on Tuesdays, and Finals on Thursdays.

Exhibition times may now be used to qualify for the MHSAA Swimming & Diving Finals. The Council adopted the Swimming & Diving Committee proposal to allow exhibition times which are conducted under predetermined criteria. The net effect is to allow coaches to put better swimmers in exhibition races to allow additional swimmers to compete for team scoring in lopsided meets.

Ice hockey teams will be allowed to dress a maximum of 22 players next year, up from the previous high of 20, as the Council approved that committee's recommendation. Schools will be surveyed during the 2008-09 school year regarding the option to increase the length of a playing period from 15 to 17 minutes.

Based on a continuing trend of increased school sponsorship and pending approval of the Classification Committee, tournament managers and schools, the Council approved the expansion of Lower Peninsula Girls Golf to four divisions of competition beginning in 2009-10.

The Council approved a survey during the 2008-09 school year regarding the viability of eight-player football for schools of 200 or fewer students. There are currently 14 other states which sponsor eight-player football. A total of 68 Class D schools, with enrollments of 242 or fewer students, sponsor football; and of those 68 schools, 45 have enrollments of 200 or less. The Council also approved the concept of allowing a live statewide video broadcast of one Semifinal game in the MHSAA Football Playoffs, provided there is no cost to the Association to produce the event.

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#### **4-4-4 -- Spring Representative Council Meeting**

The format of the Girls Competitive Cheer Tournament will be changed beginning in 2008-09 to incorporate a District level of competition. There will be six Districts in each divisions, advancing four teams each to two Regionals of 12 teams each from which four teams will advance to the Finals. The number of schools reaching the Finals will decrease from 10 in each class to eight. The Girls Competitive Cheer Finals will also return to their original weekend in 2008-09, taking place on the first weekend of March.

#### **Other Matters**

At the winter and spring meetings, the Council continued to modify MHSAA Handbook language to better accommodate the growing number of schools using academic trimester schedules. Discussion will continue on minimum academic standards for athletic eligibility and the period of ineligibility following a deficiency at the end of a trimester or semester. Action may be taken on the latter issues at the next meeting of the Representative Council in December.

The Council authorized the MHSAA staff to review future venues for Finals Tournament sites in baseball, girls and boys basketball, and softball, with action will be taken at the next meeting of the Representative Council in December. Staff was also authorized to select soon from two venues desiring to host the Individual Wrestling Finals.

The Council also reviewed reports on membership, with 767 senior high schools and 813 junior high/middle schools in 2007-08; eligibility advancement applications, which was down to seven this year, the lowest number since being implemented in 1987-88; the use of Educational Transfer Forms, which was up over 25 percent over the previous year; school violations, which were slightly higher than an average year; attendance at athletic director and coaches in-service workshops, which saw a slight increase again over the previous year's totals; a record-setting 12,743-plus year for officials registration; rules meeting attendance; and officials reports submitted for the past three sports seasons. The Association's \$8.2 million budget for the 2008-09 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 nearly 1,600 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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