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2008-09 School Sports Season Begins Next Week

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Aug. 1 – The sounds of summer will soon change to the sounds of autumn when preparations for the 2008-09 fall sports season begin next week for over 110,000 students in eight sports at member schools of the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

Fall practice begins on Thursday (Aug. 7) with golf, followed by all other sports on Aug. 11. Competition is allowed on the first day of practice in cross country and tennis, and golf may also begin competition that day.

The earliest game date for soccer is Aug. 18, girls volleyball may begin competition on Aug. 22, and girls swimming and diving in the Lower Peninsula may open activity on Aug. 23.

Practice in football must begin on Aug. 11 for all schools wishing to begin regular season games the weekend of Aug. 28-31. Schools must have 14 days of preseason practice at all levels before their first game. All football schools must conduct at least three conditioning days of practice before beginning contact, and the conditioning sessions may not include any pads.

This year, one football date precedes Labor Day, and Thursday varsity games will take place both weeks. In Week 1, 220 games will be played on Thursday, 64 games will be played on Friday, and five games will be played on Saturday. The following weekend, four games will be played on Thursday, 272 games will be played on Friday, and 11 games will be played on Saturday.

Among football rules changes made by the National Federation of State High School for 2008 are several addressing penalty options for teams that are fouled on scoring plays. If the scoring team is fouled on a touchdown play, and again on the point after try, both penalties may be assessed on the subsequent kickoff. On a scoring play at the end of the first half, a foul against the defensive team may be penalized on the point after attempt or the kickoff to begin the second half. On a scoring play at the end of the second half, a foul against the defensive team may only be penalized on the point after try – the penalty cannot be assessed if the game goes to overtime as a result of the scoring play.

The option of carrying unused second half timeouts into overtime has been eliminated this season. A rule has also been instituted by the NFHS that required pieces of equipment – hip pads, knee pads and thigh guards – may not be altered from the manufacturer's original design or production.

A point of emphasis in Michigan and nationally is sideline management and control. Only three coaches are allowed in the 2-yard belt next to the field in the team bench area between the 25-yard lines. Outside the team bench area, the 2-yard belt may not be occupied by coaches, statisticians, trainers, ball people, media or any other non-team personnel. Where possible, line to gain crew personnel should also observe these lines. Such markings, and their restrictions, are common at professional and collegiate venues. Game management shall continue to have the primary responsibility for enforcement of this rule.

(more)

2-2-2 – Fall Practices Begin

The 2008 fall campaign culminates with post-season tournaments beginning with the Upper Peninsula Girls Tennis Finals on Oct. 3, and wraps up with the Football Playoff Finals on Nov. 28-29. Here is a complete list of fall championship dates:

Cross Country:

U.P. Finals -- Oct. 18
L.P. Regionals -- Oct. 24 or 25
L.P. Finals -- Nov. 1

Football:

Selection Sunday - Oct. 26
Pre-Districts – Oct. 31 or Nov. 1
District Finals -- Nov. 7 or 8
Regional Finals -- Nov. 14 or 15
Semifinals -- Nov. 22
Finals -- Nov. 28-29

L.P. Girls Golf:

Regionals -- Oct. 9 or 10 or 11
Finals -- Oct. 17-18

Soccer:

Boys L.P. Districts -- Oct. 13-28
Boys L.P. Regionals – Oct. 21-25
Boys L.P. Semifinals – Oct. 29
Boys L.P. Finals -- Nov. 1

L.P. Girls Swimming & Diving

Diving Quals -- Nov. 18
Swimming/Diving Finals-Nov. 21-22

Tennis:

U.P. Girls Finals – Oct. 3
L.P. Boys Regionals -- Oct. 9 or 10
L.P. Finals --Oct. 17-18

Girls Volleyball:

Districts –Nov. 3-5 & Nov. 6 or 7 or 8
Regionals – Nov. 11 or 13
Quarterfinals – Nov. 18
Semifinals – Nov. 20-21
Finals – Nov. 22

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