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GO GREEN! MHSAA Online Rules Meetings Score Big Financially & Environmentally

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Oct. 20 – With over 1,600 schools in the Michigan High School Athletic Association membership, being partial to one particular school's colors would be inappropriate. But it's easy to pick one color – green – to favor when it comes to providing services that affect the games.

The MHSAA has been going green this year to help prepare coaches and officials across the state for their upcoming seasons in a variety of sports which has been good for the ecology and good for the economy.

One of the most important services the MHSAA provides every year is pre-season rules meetings in most sports. These meetings are important educational vehicles to inform coaches and officials about playing rules changes and points of emphasis that help promote an educational and safe atmosphere for the games. Annually, attendance at these meetings approaches the 20 thousand mark. Schools must be represented at these meetings, and officials wishing to work MHSAA post-season tournaments must also attend.

But with everyone's time at a premium these days, and gasoline commanding premium prices; the MHSAA has taken advantage of technology to help deliver the important information available through rules meetings.

Last spring, over a thousand coaches and officials in track and field were part of an experiment by the Association to conduct these rules meetings over the Internet. The test was an immediate hit, with the program expanding to soccer and volleyball during the fall, where nearly 2,900 participants were recorded. Winter sports rules meeting series are now available online in basketball, ice hockey and wrestling, and over 800 coaches and officials have taken part in less than two weeks. The Association also conducted some of its summer education programs for officials assignors and local officials association trainers exclusively over the Internet.

The savings in terms of time has been priceless. The average in-person meeting takes about an hour, the travel time is on average upwards of an hour each way, and then adding in any time socializing with fellow coaches and officials; a trip to a rules meeting is a full evening's activity. "For those folks who enjoy that atmosphere and have the time available, there will still be a number of meetings taking place that way, which the MHSAA will continue to offer unless gas availability or prices dictate otherwise," says MHSAA Communications Director John Johnson.

An online meeting takes about 30 to 45 minutes to complete. From a money well spent standpoint, the average rules meeting attendee is not driving a round trip of about 80 miles, saving around ten dollars on gas. For all of the online meetings the MHSAA has conducted during this calendar year, over \$30,000 has been saved in gasoline purchases; and the amount of travel saved for those meetings approaches nine trips around the Earth at the Equator -- plus all the typical automobile emissions that aren't being put into the atmosphere.

"One additional benefit is that when a coach goes into a school computer lab to participate in an online rules meeting, assistant coaches and administrators that normally wouldn't be able to attend an in-person session are in tow, being brought up-to-date on rules changes – and they're all hearing the same, consistent message," Johnson said.

Johnson added the online availability will expand further in for spring sports, and beginning in 2009-10, there will be online meetings for every sport in which the MHSAA conducts a post-season tournament. Plans are also being made to put much of the content onto the public side of the MHSAA Website, so general public can become better acquainted with important rules changes.

(more)

2-2-2 Online Rules Meetings

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,800 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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