



michigan high school athletic association

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Eight-Player Football Plan Approved At Representative Council Spring Meeting

EAST LANSING, Mich. – May 18 – Several months of work acting on expressions of interest by member schools for a reduced-player format for football resulted in the approval of a plan for an eight-player playoff division by the Representative Council of the Michigan High School Athletic Association during its annual Spring Meeting, May 3-4, 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 33 committee proposals and also dealt with a variety of eligibility rule, post-season tournament and operational issues.

The Council approved 11 recommendations from a committee established to act on the information gathered during a series of winter informational meetings on a reduced-player football format. In looking toward the 2010 season, schools will have to indicate in writing on two occasions – November 19 by the athletic administrator, and then April 1, 2010 by the superintendent – their commitment to the eight-player division. If a minimum of 20 schools commit to the eight-player format, the MHSAA will conduct a 16-team, four-week playoff in 2010. If more than 40 schools commit, a 32-team, five week playoff will take place.

Only those schools within Class D – with a maximum enrollment of 223 for the 2009-10 school year -- will be eligible for the eight-player division playoff. Schools with enrollments too large for the MHSAA eight-player playoff division may still sponsor eight-player teams. Games may take place during the regular season between schools which have declared for the eight-player or eleven-player division of post-season play, but those games will not count towards playoff or bonus points.

Eight-player competitions will comply with National Federation playing rules, and the field size approved by the Council for MHSAA Playoff games will be the traditional 100 yards from goal line to goal line, with the width of the field only 40 yards, to allow for games to be played on existing fields with a minimum of physical changes. The MHSAA will also facilitate a meeting of schools sponsoring eight-player football to assist them in the development of regular-season schedules.

“The option of an eight-player division will benefit our smaller schools which have struggled to maintain sufficient numbers to sponsor football programs, and at the same time create an opportunity for other members of similar size to offer the football experience,” said John E. “Jack” Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. “The end goal of maximizing the quantity and quality of the participation experience is embodied in the Council’s action to create an eight-player football playoff division.”

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

Administrative/Regulation Matters

Four changes were made to out-of-season regulations for schools and coaches effective August 1, 2009. The requirement that out-of-season “open gyms” have a diversity of activity was eliminated; but there will continue to be an emphasis that no organized drills, practice structure or sport instruction take place. Schools will now be allowed to use non-competition practice jerseys at out-of-season camps and competitions. The “three-player” rule has been

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increased to a four-player rule for all sports out-of-season during the school year for coach-athlete interaction, provided practice or competition with students or others not enrolled in that school district does not take place. Finally, the limited-player rule (three or four) will now end on the Monday following Memorial Day beginning with the 2009-10 school year, rather than ending on the final day of classes for each school.

Sports Matters

Beginning in 2009-10, the international tiebreaker rule will be used in all MHSAA Softball Tournament contests beginning in the 11th inning; and the rule may be used by league or conference adoption for regular-season games any time after seven innings. The international tiebreaker rule takes the player who was the last batter for a team in its last at-bat, and places that player at second base to begin the inning.

For MHSAA Baseball and Softball Tournament Semifinal and Final games played at Bailey Park in Battle Creek beginning in 2009-10, there will be no rain-shortened contests. Games suspended for weather conditions will be picked up from the point at which they were stopped and played to their completion – whether that be seven innings or a shortened game because of mercy rules. This provision does not apply to games played at the District, Regional or Quarterfinal levels of the tournament.

In Bowling, a school will be allowed to have six singles entries into the MHSAA Tournament beginning in 2009-10. The previous limit was five; and single match play in the Finals Tournament will be conducted in a two-game, total-pin format instead of the best of three format.

In Golf, the Lower Peninsula spring tournament series will move one week later beginning in 2011, beginning after Memorial Day.

In Ice Hockey, regular-season games may be played using 17-minute periods by league adoption. The MHSAA Tournament will continue to use 15-minute periods.

The Council also reviewed reports on membership, with 770 senior high schools and 820 junior high/middle schools in 2008-09; eligibility advancement applications, which was up to 15 this year; the use of Educational Transfer Forms, which saw a slight increase in use this year; school violations, which were up sharply this year due to a dramatic increase of schools not rating officials; attendance at athletic director and coaches in-service workshops, which hit an all-time high in 2008-09; another outstanding year for officials' registrations, topping the 12,600 mark again; rules meeting attendance; and officials reports submitted for the past three sports seasons. The Association's \$9.5 million budget for the 2009-10 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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