

# MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

## CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE MEETING

East Lansing, January 10, 2018

### Members Present:

Kathy Bondsteel, Jonesville  
Dave Chrisinske, Middleville  
Greg Gallas, Wyoming  
James Green, Kingston  
Kevin Guzzo, St. Joseph  
Jason Kemler, Brethren  
Vic Michaels, Detroit  
Steve Newkirk, Clare  
Brian Osborn, Fowlerville  
Mike Roberts, Hillsdale  
Pete Ryan, Saginaw  
Marty Simmonds, Pontiac  
Jon Studley, West Branch

John Thompson, Brighton  
Al Unger, Kingsford  
Robert Vandenberg, Martin  
Pat Watson, West Bloomfield

### Member Absent:

Jason Kasparian, Port Huron

### Staff Members:

Tom Rashid  
Jack Roberts (Recorder)

## INTRODUCTION

Origins of the Classification Committee trace back to the 1980s when a forum was created to discuss relationships between public and nonpublic schools, which resulted in some policy changes, especially related to the transfer rule. When the ad hoc committee was made a standing committee, two additional purposes were established: (1) to perform intermediate review (between sport committees and the Representative Council) of proposals related to MHSAA tournament classification for a sport; and (2) to review proposals related to the policies and procedures of counting students and collecting enrollment figures for school classification purposes as well as proposals affecting tournament classification generally.

Because the makeup of this committee usually reflects broader diversity than MHSAA sport committees in that its makeup has fewer coaches and more administrators, and there is usually strong representation of diverse school size, location and demographics, the Classification Committee is also asked to respond to subjects that are not directly related to classification. The Classification Committee has become the principal forum for reviewing policies and procedures related to cooperative programs.

Minutes of the 2017 meeting of the Classification Committee were reviewed.

## SPORTS SPONSORSHIP TRENDS

The sports with the greatest **decline** in sponsorship for 2016-17 (as reported to the MHSAA as of 5/22/17) are boys golf (-9 schools), which also had the greatest decline in 2015-16; girls bowling (-7); boys tennis (-7), which has had a decline of more than 15 percent since 2006-07; and girls tennis (-6).

The sports with the greatest **increase** in sponsorship are girls cross country (+9 schools); boys cross country (+8); boys lacrosse (+8); and girls lacrosse (+6).

Committee members discussed reasons for the rising and falling sport sponsorship, and they invited more research into the forces that may be behind the increase and decrease of participation by students as well as sport sponsorship by schools. Among factors to consider may be the effects of . . .

- Early sports specialization and burnout.
- Early or severe cutting of school team squad sizes.
- Faculty vs. Nonfaculty coaches; limited coaching candidates.
- Academic pressures on schools.
- Lack of early opportunities to learn sports skills.

- Lack of role models.
- Proliferation of club sports.
- Court-mandated change of seasons.
- School of Choice, lack of investment in a loyalty to local schools.

## **REGIONAL OVERVIEW**

The committee was provided a sport-by-sport summary of classification in each of Michigan's four bordering states. Generally, Michigan has as many or more classifications or divisions as its bordering states; sometimes Michigan has more schools in each classification or division than bordering states.

## **EIGHT-PLAYER FOOTBALL**

A review of the 2017 8-Player Football Tournament, the first to be conducted in two divisions, was provided. Recent actions and discussions of the Representative Council related to 8-player football were reported, including that the limit for the 8-player tournament each year will continue to be the maximum for a Class D school that year. Class D schools which have sponsored 8-player football one year (e.g., 2018) but have an enrollment in excess of Class D the next year (2019) may continue in the 8-player tournament for that year (2019). They must be within the Class D enrollment limit the following year (2020) to continue in the 8-player tournament that year (2020). The enrollments of schools are those established through the Enrollment Declaration Form submitted each February.

It was reported that the Council is considering ways to assist 8-player schools' scheduling of regular season games. A trial run paper study for the 2018 season will be prepared in March and distributed to Class D 8-player schools in April before Council approval is sought for a plan that is required of all 8-player tournament schools in 2019 and 2020. It is thought that at least two-thirds of all Class D 8-player schools should support this role for the MHSAA before making it a requirement for schools' participation in the MHSAA 8-player tournaments.

## **SEEDING**

Seeding is a topic on the agenda of several MHSAA sport committees. Last May, the Representative Council reiterated that its approach is to consider seeding on a sport-by-sport, level-by-level basis, depending on its committees and others to develop specific plans and to demonstrate wide support among schools of all sizes and types.

A recommendation by the Basketball Committee in December of 2016 to seed District and Regional basketball tournaments with one of the systems utilized by the NCAA for its men's Division 1 tournament was not adopted by the Council last May, but staff was requested to explore alternatives for seeding District level tournaments only.

Subsequently, MHSAA surveys have demonstrated significant support, especially in more populated areas, for an approach that separates on District brackets the top two teams of each District, whose teams continue to be assigned on the basis of geography. The committee was shown how similarly the results would have been if any one of the three systems had been used to perform this "simple seeding" of District basketball tournaments in 2017.

The committee considered some of the many questions that would have to be answered before any one of these systems could be adopted. However, even without answering these questions in December 2017, the Basketball Committee has recommended seeding for District tournaments as soon as possible. The Classification Committee made a recommendation to the Representative Council.

## **EQUAL DIVISIONS**

At its January 2017 meeting, the committee reviewed lists of schools which sponsored a sport but opted out of the MHSAA tournament for that sport during the winter 2015-16, spring 2016 and fall 2016 seasons. The committee considered altering the equal divisions system by not including at the time when divisions are set those schools that had intended to sponsor the sport but did not enter the previous MHSAA tournament for the sport. While there was consensus that this change should occur, committee members wanted the Representative Council to see in May how that might have changed divisions for 2016-17 and/or would change divisions for 2017-18 and then decide if the change in procedure should be adopted for the 2018-19 classification process.

Preliminary data provided to the Representative Council in May did not show much promise that this effort would result in the kinds of changes hoped for in some sports. The committee examined revised results for the sports which would be most affected if equal divisions were determined without the inclusion of schools that had not competed in the MHSAA tournament for that sport for two or more consecutive years.

Several committee members encouraged continuing consideration of ways to assure that “equal divisions” has the effect of having as close as possible an equal number of schools actually participating in each division of each MHSAA tournament for a particular sport. It is likely that no single policy is the answer, but rather increasing MHSAA staff efforts are needed before divisions are drawn in March to assure schools are realistic in their sport sponsorship indications.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

If a plan is approved to separate the top two seeded teams of each geographically determined District of the Girls and Boys Basketball Tournaments, the system used should be completely controlled within the MHSAA office. (Unanimous)