

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE MINUTES
East Lansing, December 18, 2019

Members Present:

Aaron Crouse, Pontiac
Jeff Fleming, Birmingham (MHSHCA)
Keegan Ferris, Grand Haven
Brian Gordon, Novi (MHSAA Finals Manager)
Bob Hayden, Temperance (Advisor, NFHS)
Sean Jacques, Calumet (video conference)

David Mitchell, Livonia
Brian Parson, Grandville
Meaghan Rourke, Allen Park (MATS)
John Thompson, Brighton (MIAAA)
Don Wright, Chelsea (MHSHCA)

Staff Member

Cody Inglis (Recorder)

The 2019-20 Ice Hockey Committee met in the MHSAA office to review the MHSAA tournament, policies and procedures governing hockey, playing rules changes, process to make recommendations to the Representative Council, and discuss topics concerning high school hockey in MHSAA member schools. After introductions, the charge of the committee was reviewed.

REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL REVIEW

The committee was given an update on last year's committee recommendations to the Representative Council. A new MHSAA calendar was proposed to shorten the regular season and extend the hockey post season to three weeks. This calendar was approved and put into place for the 2019-20 season that will allow the MHSAA ice hockey tournament to be lengthened. The new calendar has been embraced as a responsible way to help with travel, loss of instructional time, the health and safety of players and enhance high school hockey. The committee reviewed dates of the upcoming 2019-20 MHSAA season with this new calendar.

NATIONAL FEDERATION AND MHSAA PLAYING RULES

Committee members reviewed the new NFHS ice hockey rules changes presented by Bob Hayden, former NFHS Ice Hockey Committee chair and current advisor from Michigan, who has served the MHSAA and the NFHS well. NFHS points of emphasis for high school hockey were reviewed and emphasized including player safety and dangerous hits. Discussion about USA Hockey's Declaration of Fair Play, Player Safety and Respect document and new philosophy was reviewed by the committee. While USA Hockey does not govern MHSAA or NFHS rules, when the National Governing Body of your sport issues a comprehensive document like this, it is imperative that the committee reviews and understands the "trickle down" impact that it will have on officiating, coaching and playing the game of hockey. MHSAA adaptations of NFHS rules were reviewed including the neck guard rule and some of the historical reasons why Michigan has been at the forefront of this health and safety issue with this rule.

MHSAA playing rule adaptations were also examined by the committee including the supplemental game suspension regulations. Conversation centered on the reasons why high school hockey has the two game suspension after a game DQ. Both past history, as well as the higher number of game disqualifications in the sport of hockey, caused the action that led to the extra game penalty after a DQ. While most agree that the conditions and culture of high school hockey have improved since the 1990's, there is still reason to continue this penalty structure. While many on the committee felt that the two game suspension is severe, the committee also agreed that it is a deterrent to poor behavior.

Continued diligence by coaches on controlling dangerous hits by players including blindside hits, hits to defenseless players, checks from behind and boarding remain critical to protect the high school game. This diligence includes coaches teaching the game safely and more players coming into the game with an understanding of a new style of play. There is still a need for continued teaching and coaching on the issue of player safety. This includes working to change the "old school" style of play that has been taught by many associated with the game of hockey.

The committee reviewed the USA Hockey coaches' helmet rule while on the ice and the 30-day mandatory suspension for not wearing a helmet. There was strong sentiment among the committee to develop a similar rule for the MHSAA and high school coaches while on the ice coaching high school

practices. This year the NFHS included in the points of emphasis for high school hockey that all coaches while on the ice wear a HECC certified helmet. The MHSAA hockey committee felt strongly that having a rule in place for this health and safety issue is important and a proposal was submitted for change in this area.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Michigan High School Hockey Coaches Association submitted a proposal based upon the already existing MHSAA seeding policy in soccer and basketball. Hockey has been among the first sports to desire seeding in the MHSAA tournament. The seeding plan would use the Michigan Power Rating (MPR) system which requires schools to input their hockey schedules into MHSAA.com each fall so that the rankings can be adjusted throughout the season. This seeding plan would determine the top two seeds by the MPR formula and separate those top two seeds into opposite sides of the Regional bracket. The seeded teams would be determined approximately 10-15 days ahead of the beginning of the tournament. In the end, while there is a strong desire to seed the MHSAA hockey tournament from many, this responsible start to the process was endorsed by the hockey committee.

In a separate but related discussion and proposal, the committee desired to seed the Semifinals using the MPR formula after Quarterfinal play is completed. Using the updated MPR formula the teams in each of the three divisions would be placed in a 1-4 order with 1 playing 4 and 2 playing 3 in each division at the Semifinal round of play. There is precedent in this process as wrestling reseeds team wrestling when all teams to the same site for their Quarterfinal. In hockey's case, after the Quarterfinal round of play, all teams advance to play at USA Hockey Arena in the MHSAA Semifinals and Finals. The committee has previously advanced an unapproved Semifinal seeding plan and the difference in this proposal is that there is a now a process with the MPR formula to make this easier to administer.

The MSHCA reviewed their coaching education series from the fall when they visited Marquette and Holt to conduct coaching clinics lead by MSHCA staff, USA Hockey staff and MHSAA personnel. Future plans were shared with the committee in the areas of coaching education, requirements for attendance and involvement of other groups, coaches and speakers. All agreed the coaching education is critical to high school hockey continuing to thrive. The MSHCA deserves credit in making this a clear directive for high school hockey coaches and providing a strong education opportunity at no additional cost to its membership. Discussion on MHSAA mandated coaching education and the CAP program for level 1 and 2 was suggested for all new coaches as a way to meet the growing need for coaching education. This discussion will be forwarded to Kathy Westdorp, MHSAA Asst. Director and coordinator or the MHSAA CAP program.

A background with details and discussion on the number of cooperative programs and opt-up programs in MHSAA hockey was continued from last year's meeting. The committee agreed that cooperative programs continue to be created by schools to allow students to play high school hockey, not create "super teams" that dominate MHSAA tournaments. Data was discussed to show this point. The high number of cooperative programs – 55 of the 138 teams - as well as high number of 25 opt-ups, cause this to be a concern for high school hockey divisions and tournament structure. Both the cooperative program number as well as the opt-up number are the highest of any MHSAA sport and may necessitate hockey division realignment. This discussion led the group to ask several questions as to the history of cooperative programs, the size of enrollments in MHSAA hockey divisions and the history of opt-ups in hockey. While there was considerable discussion on potentially changing hockey divisions and plans submitted to change the division alignment, there were no proposals approved. The committee also discussed the use of formula to determine cooperative program numbers based upon the number of teams, schools and programs that are in cooperative programs. This idea will be discussed at the Classification committee later in January. The committee asked the staff to continue to monitor the number of cooperative programs and the number of opt-ups. The committee asked MHSAA staff to look at moving the date that divisions are determined to later in the school year – right now it is late March or early April. The new date could be after the winter sport cooperative deadline on August 15th. This later date could help with the process of having more accurate data of what teams are in place prior to the divisions being drawn. The MHSAA classification committee will be discussing this at their January, 2020 meeting to provide more direction for hockey and other sports in this matter.

MHSAA high school hockey promotion was discussed at length by the committee. The committee looked at the of number of programs, the growth of high school hockey in some communities that have never had high school hockey, as well as ways to ensure that hockey's unique characteristics were discussed. The steps that the MSHCA has done have worked to enhance both the communication and

quality of high school hockey. Some of these include: the State Champs Hockey Time podcast, the Michigan Hockey Hub website, promotional articles on the facts about high school hockey and the establishment of High School Hockey day in Michigan.

The MSHCA developed a fall practice proposal after careful planning and a desire to allow Varsity coaches some connection to their programs in the all on a practice only basis, which would amount to 10-14 practices prior to the start of the season. These practice sessions would work to counteract the ability of non-school hockey programs starting in August and using the MHSAA defined season limits against high school hockey as a way to recruit players to non-school hockey. In addition, fall hockey conditioning practices are being done right now by non-school coaches unaffiliated with their school. This could be a parent or booster club person and results in lower quality practices than if a school coach was available to coach the team. After much discussion, the committee while feeling strongly about a potential change would like to see how a proposal like this impacts other sports, all schools and if there might need to be more education on the current rules for fall hockey practice including the "rotation" based system of out of season hockey practice that could be used by coaches. The committee would like the fall practice proposal to go to MHSAA staff and the Representative Council as a information piece so that others can view and comment on this potential future proposal.

Officials' retention and recruitment continues to be a challenge with not enough quality or quantity of high school hockey officials in many areas of the state. The committee reviewed MHSAA policy on head injury tracking, concussion care gap insurance, MHSAA concussion standards, protocol and rules on concussion. A girl's high school hockey update was reviewed by the committee as a group has approached the MHSAA about the MHSAA becoming involved in this area.

Sportsmanship and the need to emphasize this part of the game of high school hockey continues to be discussed by the committee as a way to keep the educational piece of school based sports a part of the game. Continued focus in this area will be done.

A draw was conducted for the 2020 MHSAA Tournament Semifinal pairings as follows:

Division 1 – QF #1 vs. QF #4, QF #2 vs. QF #3
Division 2 – QF #6 vs. QF #8, QF #7 vs. QF #5
Division 3 – QF #10 vs. QF #12, QF #9 vs. QF #11

Recommendations to Staff

Adjust the hockey classification division draw to later in the school year after the August 15th winter sports cooperative sport application date to allow for more accurate divisions to be drawn and include both opt-ups and cooperative programs.

Direct MHSAA Staff and the MHSAA Representative Council to review the Fall Practice proposal for future discussion by the hockey committee but as a way to get this important topic on the agenda of the MHSAA.

Recommendations to the Representative Council

All members of the high school hockey coaching staff must wear a HECC certified helmet while on the ice for practice. (11-0)

At the Regional level, seed the top two teams and place them on opposite sides of the bracket. Seeded teams are not guaranteed byes or home games. Seeds will be determined by the MHSAA's MPR computer formula. The random draw will be conducted and published by the MHSAA on the Sunday 10-15 days prior to the start of the Regional tournament (and include all results through that Saturday). (11-0)

At the Semifinal level, reseed the teams after Quarterfinal games have been played and place them on opposite sides of the bracket. This would mean that the top ranked team would play the 4th highest seeded team and the 2nd highest seed will play the 3rd highest seeded team in each of the three divisions. Seeds will be determined by the MHSAA's MPR computer formula. The MHSAA will conduct this reseeding on the Monday of the week of the MHSAA Hockey Finals. (11-0)

