

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE MINUTES
East Lansing, December 15, 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING

Members Present:

Fred Bryant, Cadillac
Brad Bush, Chelsea
Jim Garofalo, New Boston
Bob Hayden, Temperance (Advisor,
NFHS)
Sean Jacques, Calumet
Nick Kocsis, Detroit
Corey Markham, Houghton

Frank Novack, Detroit
Bob Picano, Woodhaven
Amy Ream, Traverse City (MATS)
John Thompson, Brighton (MIAAA)
Mark Velluci, Novi (MHSICA)
Don Wright, Chelsea (MHSICA)

Staff Member

Cody Inglis (Recorder)

The 2021-22 Ice Hockey Committee met virtually 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 previous years' Ice Hockey Committee meeting minutes was reviewed, and it was noted that there were no recommendations to the Representative Council during the 2020-21 school year.

NATIONAL FEDERATION AND MHSAA PLAYING RULES

Committee members reviewed the new NFHS ice hockey rules changes and MHSAA adaptations specifically the supplemental discipline penalty of two games for a disqualification penalty in ice hockey. Committee members supported a study of this penalty on the number of DQ's and if two games still serve the sport or if it is a disproportionate penalty for the sport of ice hockey and its' players. 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. MHSAA staff will study DQ penalties and report back to this committee on this topic.

MHSAA and NFHS points of emphasis for high school hockey were reviewed and emphasized including player safety and dangerous hits. 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.

MHSAA tournament procedures, structure and calendar were reviewed. MHSAA staff will conduct the 2022 Semifinal draw and it will be posted online.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

After a successful implementation of the Michigan Power Rating (MPR) system in hockey during the 2020-21 school year, discussion centered on the next steps for MPR and how it can be used to help seed the Regionals beyond separating the first and second seeds in an MHSAA Regional. There was strong support to extend MPR and seeding to the entire Regional in the sport of Hockey. This would determine the matchups in the entire Regional based upon the MPR from the regular season. Since this system has been embraced by the hockey community already, the committee felt strongly that implementing this across the regional is the natural next step for the sport.

In a separate but related discussion and proposal, the committee desired to seed the Semifinals in each division using an online committee meeting after the MHSAA quarterfinals comprised of 5 individuals, and MHSAA director, Coaches Association board member, an athletic director named by the hockey

committee and two head coaches of teams not involved in Semifinal games and named by the hockey committee. Factors such as MPR ranking at various points of the season, how teams are trending, injury factors, head-to-head meetings, schedule comparison and coaches' input would be considered. This process is like the sport of Wrestling seeds their teams for the Wrestling Quarterfinals and has worked well for several years. 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 now a process and committee with the MPR formula to make this easier to administer.

A background with details and discussion on the number of cooperative programs and opt-up programs in MHSAA hockey was continued from previous year's meeting. A subcommittee studied cooperative hockey programs and their impact upon high school hockey. This subcommittee consisted of committee members, Hayden, Jacques, Wright with assistance from MHSAA staff members. The subcommittee 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, as well as high number of 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 the hockey restructuring subcommittee determined that hockey division realignment would be the best decision moving forward and developed a plan presented to the hockey committee. This hockey restricting plan divides stand alone hockey schools into thirds along with cooperative programs to have three "equal" divisions after classification is completed in the spring of each school year. This unique way of determining hockey divisions was supported by the hockey committee and will be a proposal advanced to the Representative Council.

The Michigan HS Hockey Coaches Association reported on their efforts to promote and enhance high school hockey. The discussion then focused on a broader shared problem that may need a full complement of different governing bodies at the table to discuss the future of hockey, how high school hockey fits in the world of youth hockey in Michigan and how to continue to draw kids to the sport. The MHSAA will reach out to MAHA to start a conversation about how to work on the number problem that continues to hurt all levels of hockey in Michigan.

Committee discussion also focused on what "we" can do in the high school athletic world and the desire of the committee is to start a reach out to schools, their AD's and coaches to focus on how HS hockey successful programs are coached, administered and stay connected to their school's athletic program. This challenge is exacerbated by cooperative programs and who is responsible for different aspects of the hockey program. The MHSACA along with the MHSAA will work on curriculum and a program to bring to schools to help in this area. Both associations will use previous models of hockey education for schools and update this to best serve MHSAA hockey membership. This outreach program can then be presented for the Hockey committee's determination on next best steps to present the material.

An extended conversation on officials' shortages, officials/coaches' relationships and working to improve this dynamic was discussed by the committee. It was determined that this topic deserved more time, and the committee felt an MHSAA led discussion on officiating was necessary and needed. MHSAA staff will bring together leaders in high school hockey coaching, athletic directors and officials to discuss ways to improve both numbers and relationships in coaching and officiating high school hockey.

MHSAA Items

Previously the MSHCA developed a fall practice proposal and a desire to allow varsity coaches some connection to their programs in all on a practice only basis. This discussion developed in the hockey committee and was taken to all sport committees along with being presented to MHSAA athletic directors in the Fall Update meeting of 2021. This concept garnered some support among AD's and the results were shared with the hockey committee. The hockey committee supports this off-season practice plan concept and agrees that it would help hockey coaches make connections with their own players earlier while still focusing their athletes on their fall sports. This connection would also work to counteract the ability of non-school hockey programs starting in August and using the MHSAA defined season limits against high school hockey to recruit players to non-school hockey.

A related discussion to the division realignment plan was the discussion of cooperative program numbers and if the number 3,500 still fit as a sufficient "cap" for programs or if it needed to be increased to better fit the reality of cooperative programs in HS hockey. While this number increase has been discussed

by the MHSAA and by the hockey realignment subcommittee to increase to 4000, the committee discussed if 5000 would be the better number as a cooperative enrollment "cap".

A request to provide flexibility for JV programs in hockey to request use of a waiver for playing multiple games on one day in a limited basis was discussed. The committee felt strongly that opening up this as it was during the Covid shortened year of 2020-21 was not the thing to do but allowing schools to request a waiver to use the two games in one day with at least four hours of rest time between games at the sub varsity level only was something to consider especially when travel was a challenge for schools and teams. A waiver would be considered with the approval of MHSAA staff if sufficient evidence existed of travel issues for JV only hockey programs.

The committee felt strongly about school administration connection to the game and how school administration or their designee should check in with game officials prior to the game starting and this emphasis should be placed in MHSAA Manager's Manuals and PSTI. This strengthening of language will be done in the 2022-23 versions of these documents by MHSAA staff.

MHSAA staff provided updates on survey results which strongly support adding the State of Minnesota to the MHSAA "border" states through the shared Maritime border which exists. The potential addition of Minnesota would help some MHSAA hockey programs with scheduling and games.

Recommendations to the Representative Council

Use Michigan Power Rankings (MPR) to seed the entire Regional in MHSAA tournament play. (11-0)

At the Semifinal level, using a seeding committee and defined protocols, reseed the teams after Quarterfinal games have been played. 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 seeding committee on Sunday after Quarterfinal play is completed. MHSAA's MPR computer formula, at different times of the season and other factors, will be used by the seeding committee. (11-0)

Realign divisions in hockey by placing one third of stand alone hockey programs and one third of cooperative hockey programs in each of the three MHSAA divisions. (11-0)