

2023-24 MHSAA ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, December 14, 2023, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Crouse, Pontiac
Keegan Ferris, Grand Haven
Joe Ford, Mason
Bob Hayden, Temperance (Advisor)
Ben Henry, Alpena
Meaghan Rourke, Allen Park (Advisor/MATS)
Cody Smith, Romeo
John Thompson, Brighton (MIAAA)
Steve Witt, Midland

VIRTUAL

Dan Giachino, Calumet
Ashley Mantha, Saline
Ryan Ossenmacher, Northville (MHSICA)
Brian Parson, Grandville

STAFF MEMBER

Cody Inglis

The 2023-24 Ice Hockey Committee met in person and 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, committee responsibilities were reviewed.

The previous years' Ice Hockey Committee meeting minutes was reviewed, and though no proposals came forward out of the hockey committee in 2022-23 there was several areas of discussion. A review of those discussion items previewed this year's meeting.

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. The committee reviewed data on how many DQ's have occurred this season so far and for what violations. In addition, MHSAA policy of ejection review was shared including video clips of actual occurrences from this year's games. Though it continues to be discussed by this committee, there was not support to reduce the 2-game supplemental discipline penalty especially given the ejection review policy and how it has impacted this area.

MHSAA and NFHS points of emphasis for high school hockey were reviewed and emphasized including player safety and dangerous hits. There is still a need for continued teaching and coaching on the issue of player safety. Concussion recognition and management was also reviewed with the committee. Agreement that though continued diligence in this area is necessary that there is a better understanding of head injuries and concussions, and the presence of Certified Athletic Trainers was an important step that needs emphasis in hockey programs and schools.

Protocols that will be used in the Semifinal Seeding committee were reviewed and committee members were selected by the committee which will meet virtually in February to determine Semifinal seeds using MPR and other criteria.

Discussion on Sportsmanship, especially in student sections detailed some challenges in managing this area of hockey games. An increase in cooperative programs, game management coverage and the off-campus nature of HS Hockey were all discussed as reasons for these challenges. The committee was reminded of the MHSAA policy that requires a school administrator be present at all MHSAA hockey tournament games.

The MHSAA rule adaptation on neck guards was thoroughly discussed to emphasize that this is not a new rule to MHSAA HS Hockey and continued diligence in this area was critical. Recent tragic events in hockey and other governing bodies discussions about changing the rules in this area reinforced that the current MHSAA rule has the neck guard requirement correct and now emphasis on wearing it correctly and at all times is the next step.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

After a successful implementation last season of using the Michigan Power Rating (MPR) to seed the entire Regional, the committee reviewed how this new process worked and next steps regarding the use of MPR. Out of state opponents were discussed and how they impact MPR as well as the continued Quarterfinal seeding discussion that many coaches favor. The committee discussed the brackets and the draw dates for this process as this will determine the matchups in the entire Regional based upon the MPR from the regular season.

Inclusion at the MHSAA Finals of school Pep Bands was discussed specifically at USA Hockey Arena. The MHSAA will review protocols for Bands and when they can play if they desire to attend.

MHSHCA TOPICS

The Michigan HS Hockey Coaches Association brought forward three proposals including a revamped discussion, with data about increasing the game count from 25 to 27. Committee discussion centered on the reasons and rationale that the Coaches Association completed after last year's committee meeting. The Committee unanimously approved a proposal to be forwarded to the Representative Council for consideration.

Committee discussion also focused on two staff recommendations to change MHSAA policy on determining "home teams" by using the MPR in Regionals and Quarterfinals and recommended immediate implementation of this policy for the 2023-24 hockey season. Language changes in MHSAA documentation will be done to reflect the strong support of the hockey committee.

The coaches association also asked the MHSAA to look at changing the game times at the MHSAA Hockey Finals to rotate between divisions in the future. Currently D2 plays at 11 a.m. followed by D3 at 3 p.m. and D1 at 7 p.m. A rotation between divisions so that all can experience different game times was desired in coaches' association survey. MHSAA staff will discuss with the Finals planning committee, USA Hockey Arena, and other MHSAA staff to determine if this request is feasible before implementation.

The MHSHCA 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 garnered support and the concept went to the Representative Council for their consideration but was not approved. The Representative Council asked each sport to push forward a proposal if this was a concept still deemed to be important for them to pursue. The MHSHCA will develop a plan and bring forward to this committee in the future. Discussion about the proposal and the Coaches' Association desire to discuss this further will continue.

MHSAA STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review Pep Band protocols at MHSAA Finals.
2. Use MPR to determine home teams at the Regional and Quarterfinal levels.
3. Investigate a rotation of Divisions at the MHSAA Hockey Finals.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Add two regular season games to the MHSAA hockey game count to increase to 27 from 25 games.
(11-0)