

2024-25 MHSAA ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, December 12, 2024, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing and via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT

Eric Albright, Midland
Aaron Crouse, Pontiac
Keegan Ferris, Grand Haven
Shane Finney, Macomb
Joe Ford, Mason
Dan Giachino, Calumet
Jeff Guiney, Petoskey
Bob Hayden, Temperance (Advisor)
Ben Henry, Alpena

Ryan Ossenmacher, Northville (MHSICA)
Brian Parson, Grandville
Meaghan Rourke, Allen Park (MATS) (Advisor)
Cody Smith, Romeo
John Thompson, Brighton (MIAAA)
Don Watchowski, Novi
Don Wright, Chelsea (MHSICA)

MHSAA STAFF

Cody Inglis (Recorder)

The 2024-25 Ice Hockey Committee met to review the MHSAA tournament, hockey policies and procedures, playing rules changes, the process for making recommendations to the Representative Council, and topics concerning high school hockey in MHSAA member schools. After introductions, committee responsibilities were reviewed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL REVIEW

The previous year's Ice Hockey Committee meeting minutes were reviewed, including the proposal from the Ice Hockey Committee to add two regular-season games that went to the MHSAA Representative Council, but was not approved, in May of 2024. A preview of various discussion items was also conducted by the committee.

NATIONAL FEDERATION AND MHSAA PLAYING RULES

Committee members reviewed the new NFHS ice hockey rules changes and MHSAA adaptations, specifically the NFHS implementation of the neck laceration protector being mandated for high school hockey. While this rule is not new to the MHSAA, which has had this regulation since 1999, the committee agreed that a national rule will help support the longstanding MHSAA rule in this area. Penalty structure regarding the neck laceration protector for when it is not worn by players was also reviewed, and the committee determined that clarifying this would help coaches and officials.

The committee reviewed data on how many DQs have occurred this season so far and for what violations. In addition, the MHSAA Ejection Review Protocol was conducted. Though this committee continues to discuss it, there was no support for reducing the 2-game supplemental discipline penalty, especially given the ejection review policy.

The committee also reviewed concussion recognition and management. They agreed that though continued diligence in this area is necessary, there is a better understanding of head injuries and concussions, and the presence of certified athletic trainers was an important step that hockey programs and schools should emphasize.

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 high school hockey were all discussed as reasons for these challenges. The committee felt continued education for school administrators and coaches was critical to continue to emphasize that this is school-based athletics. To help in this

area, a proposal was made to mandate and conduct a school ice hockey education series conducted by MHSAA staff during the fall of 2025.

The overtime policy, including shootouts and the options for game-ending procedures, was discussed. The committee asked for more education and clarity for schools, coaches, and administrators through reminders about regular-season overtime options.

For the second year in a row, the Michigan Power Rating (MPR) was used to seed the entire region. The committee reviewed how the process worked and the next steps regarding the use of MPR. The committee was reminded of the decision to use the MPR to determine home teams in the MHSAA tournament starting in the 2023-24 season and that this will continue to occur. The committee discussed the assignments and brackets for this process, as this will determine the matchups in the entire region based on the MPR from the regular season.

Protocols for the Semifinal Seeding Committee were reviewed, and committee members were identified. The committee will meet virtually in February to determine Semifinal seeds using MPR and other criteria.

Discussion took place on the new MHSAA regulation regarding Emergency Action Plans to be implemented, practiced, and rehearsed by teams and the rinks for both practices and competitions. Continued emphasis on schools to remind them of this requirement is needed.

MHSHCA TOPICS

The Michigan High School Hockey Coaches Association brought forward numerous proposals, including a revamped discussion with data about increasing the game count from 25 to 27. The 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 continued consideration.

The coaches association again asked the MHSAA to look at changing the game times at the MHSAA Ice 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 the coaches association survey. MHSAA staff determined that there was not enough time to make this change for the 2024-25 season, but for the future this should be considered for the MHSAA Ice Hockey Finals. MHSAA staff will discuss with the Finals Planning Committee and USA Hockey Arena to determine if this request is feasible before potential implementation in 2025-26.

The MHSHCA discussed the future of the number of divisions in ice hockey and the MHSAA. While no firm decisions have been made, the number of teams in ice hockey needs to be recognized as dropping each year, which creates some challenges for the number of teams in each of the three MHSAA divisions. A potential subcommittee of coaches, AD's, and others may be needed to study how any potential change to divisions would impact high school hockey.

MHSAA STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Investigate a rotation of divisions at the MHSAA Ice Hockey Finals.
2. Mandate an ice hockey education series at three locations (North, West, and East) in the fall of 2025 with schools to include coaches and athletic directors. This education series will be conducted by the MHSAA with support from the MHSHCA. (13-0)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Add two regular-season games to the MHSAA ice hockey game count to increase to 27 from 25 games. (13-0)