

2024-25 GIRLS LACROSSE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 9, 2024 – 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT

Paige Comito, Bloomfield Hills
Joe Curcuru, Grand Rapids
Ben Farkas, Hudsonville
Shari Oole, Grand Rapids (MATS)
Eric Pierce, West Bloomfield

Daniel Russell, Royal Oak
Adrian Trzebiatowski, Swartz Creek

MHSAA STAFF

Kathy Vruggink Westdorp (Recorder)

The 2024-25 Girls Lacrosse Committee met to review its responsibilities as a standing sports committee; review prior Representative Council action; recommend to the Representative Council changes regarding NFHS or MHSAA rules/regulations relative to girls lacrosse; suggest points of emphasis for rules meetings; and evaluate current practices and procedures with MHSAA staff. Some members of the Girls Lacrosse Committee will also assist in the assignment of officials to all levels of the MHSAA Girls Lacrosse Tournament. Members of this committee were provided with a history of the teams/schools participating in girls lacrosse and how the sport has grown. Also provided were the approved cooperative programs, important dates and times, and rules changes. From NFHS data, girls lacrosse ranks 10th in participation for the ten most popular girls programs. There are currently 91 officials registered in girls lacrosse and 94 teams/142 schools participating in girls lacrosse for 2024-25. The committee generated some information as to possible upcoming programs throughout Michigan. There are currently 35 approved cooperative programs and questions were answered regarding the cooperative program limitations as well as Regulation I, Section 1(E) which provided information on the framework of cooperative programs.

Information was received regarding the progress and process of the NFHS/USAL Girls Lacrosse Rules Committee, which is now comprised of ten members representative of the states who offer girls lacrosse, with advisory individuals from USAL. The NFHS writes the rules, publishes and distributes the rules book. This year, the 2024 girls lacrosse rules changes were minimal and continue to align rules to match the flow of the game established by free movement. The rule changes provided consistency in clock management at the end of each quarter as well as simplifying the penalty and application for minor fouls in the critical scoring area. Additionally, there was an expanded definition of a major foul for illegal stick contact and criteria of player body and cross positioning for a legal pick.

The minutes of the October 2023 Girls Lacrosse Committee were also reviewed for the purpose of providing background of prior discussion and actions of the committee.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Additional health and safety issues were discussed including MHSAA protocol for implementation of National Federation sports playing rules for concussion. Discussion included that stick-to-body contact needs to be called consistently and coaches and officials need to be diligent in following rules provided for the safety of the sport. Epidemiology summary reports were provided through the MHSAA Head Injury Reporting System for the 2020-21 through the 2023-24 school years relative to sport-specific head injuries in girls lacrosse. MHSAA information showed girls participation in lacrosse at 2,777 athletes and a head injury prevalence rate of 1.48% in 2020-21, and in comparison, in 2023-24, there were 3,245 girls who participated in lacrosse and a head injury prevalence rate of 1.11%.

Girls lacrosse equipment compliance was reviewed. Goalkeepers are required to wear chest protectors designed for lacrosse that meet the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture. The

use of headgear is presently optional, and any headgear must meet the ASTM performance standard F3137 and must be permanently labeled with the SEI certification mark. A field player choosing to wear headgear must wear it as the manufacturer intended and securely affixed with the chinstrap in place. USA Lacrosse and the NFHS will continue to work with various sport science/safety groups, rules making bodies, and other leaders to understand best how data will impact policy moving forward. It was reiterated that headgear for both men's and women's players is just one component of an integrated approach to game safety and head injuries. Education, the use of age-appropriate rules, sport-specific training for coaches, and the use of certified game officials are critical factors. Girls lacrosse eyewear must be SEI-certified and listed on the SEI website. All eyewear must bear the SEI mark for certification by January 1, 2025. In addition, users have the responsibility to maintain the integrity of protective equipment for risk minimization purposes by establishing that equipment shall not be modified from its original manufactured state and shall be worn in the manner the manufacturer intended it to be worn.

Additional equipment compliance includes the allowance for goalkeepers to wear a clear, molded and non-rigid helmet eye shield in combination with tinted or clear eyeglasses and that face masks that are soft and non-abrasive be allowed to be worn for health and/or religious reasons. Clarification that hair adornments such as beads can be worn in the hair as long as they are secured and do not endanger other players was also reiterated. The goalkeeper's thigh padding must be shorts or pants manufactured with integrated protective padding. Compression shirts that meet the NOCSAE ND200 lacrosse standard under the uniform to protect against commotio cordis are allowed for field players and these shirts are not required to meet the color requirements of visible undergarments.

The committee also spoke about how to increase participation in girls lacrosse and also the health and safety of the participants. The opinions included that officials should consistently enforce the rules and coaches should also emphasize the health and safety rules for players. The team culture is important in increasing and retaining participation in the sport as well as attracting additional coaches. High schools and middle schools working together will also assist in expanding additional programs in girls lacrosse. There was a continual emphasis on making certain that we are supporting coaches and remembering the big picture of educational athletics. Additional opinions included reducing some of the exclusivity by opening the sport up to many as well as providing opportunities for more young women to learn the game.

FIFTH QUARTER

Conversation also included the 5th-quarter regulation which girls lacrosse moved to for the 2024-25 school year. The focus needs to be in assisting subvarsity teams in this endeavor and adherence to the spirit of the rule. It will continue to be important in emphasizing the purpose of the rule through assisting smaller teams and building subvarsity teams. The rule for 2024-25 is that a student or team shall participate in no more than five quarters in a day, in no more than three games and/or interscholastic scrimmages of lacrosse in one week (Monday through Sunday), including regular and MHSAA tournament play. An individual team is limited to one game per school day. A student or team shall participate in no more than four interscholastic scrimmages and in no more than 18 games, exclusive of the MHSAA tournament. Overtime is considered an extension of the fourth quarter.

REVIEW OF GIRLS LACROSSE RULES CHANGES PROPOSED

Several years ago, the rule of "sudden victory" overtime was not adopted by the MHSAA Committee. The 2024-25 Girls Lacrosse Committee affirmed that the previous overtime rule will continue to be retained. This includes that when the score is tied at the end of regular playing time and overtime is to be played, both teams will have a 5-minute rest and toss a coin (visiting captain calls) for choice of ends. Two 3-minute "halves" of overtime will be played. The clock will be stopped after 3 minutes of play in order for teams to change ends with no delay for coaching. The game will be restarted by a center draw. The team that is ahead at the end of six minutes wins the

game. If the teams are still tied after six minutes have elapsed, the teams will have a 3-minute rest and change ends. The winner will then be decided on a “sudden victory” stop-clock overtime of no more than six minutes in length with the teams changing ends after 3 minutes. The team scoring the first goal wins the game. Play will continue with “sudden victory” overtime periods of six minutes in length (two 3-minute halves) with 3 minutes in between and change of ends until a winning goal is scored. The committee elected to retain the rule citing there was equal opportunity for play in the established six minutes.

2025 MHSAA GIRLS LACROSSE TOURNAMENT

The teams and schools participating in the 2025 MHSAA Girls Lacrosse Tournament were shared with the committee. There may be additional schools that will still offer girls lacrosse in the 2024-25 season. Division 1 and Division 2 enrollment numbers were also studied, and 49 teams are presently in Division 1 (enrollment 1,710 and above) and 45 teams are in Division 2 (enrollment 1,709 and below). Schools participating in the MHSAA Girls Lacrosse Tournament have continued to increase in numbers throughout the years. The initial tournament in 2004-05 consisted of 39 teams (50 schools) to now more than double the current status.

There was a review of the current tournament structure including a discussion of the Michigan Power Ranking (MPR) system that is now being utilized in girls lacrosse. Information regarding the MPR rating formula included the provision of measuring a team’s strength relative to other teams, based on games played against other MHSAA teams’ strengths while separating the top two on opposite sides of the bracket in a regional tournament. The rest of the bracket is configured randomly. It will be especially important that scores are reported early and often for this formula to be effective.

Girls lacrosse tournament dates were reviewed. The online rules meeting for girls lacrosse will be available on February 10, 2025, and ends on April 17, 2025. Practice for girls lacrosse begins Monday, March 10, 2025, and the first available contest date is Wednesday, March 19, 2025. The 2024 Girls Lacrosse Tournament was also reviewed for additional points of information.

The tournament format and expected Regional/Semifinal sites were evaluated and there will be four Regionals in Division 1 and four regionals in Division 2. Currently, there are several games that will be played as “Pre-Regional” games. The Division 1 structure is currently at 12-12-12-11 and the Division 2 structure is currently at 11-11-11-12. There will be three field officials for the Regional Finals game, the Semifinals and the Finals. The committee also reviewed the intended Regional sites and several sites for the Semifinal games. Host managers may host all levels of the Regional Tournament if desired.

Currently, the 2025 Girls and Boys Lacrosse Tournament will be played at the University of Michigan Lacrosse Stadium, with the Boys and Girls Finals games alternating between Friday and Saturday from year to year. The corresponding times from last year are expected to be continued.

The alternate site travel accommodation rule for lacrosse was reviewed which indicates that MHSAA staff may change the date, time and location of a previously scheduled tournament game if the originally scheduled game involves extensive travel for both teams and an acceptable site can be secured. The determination includes consultation with both teams and the Tournament Manager and may require that the competing teams secure an acceptable field.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MHSAA REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

There were no recommendations to the Representative Council.