

Let The Games Begin!

It has been said that without coaches, referees, umpires, judges and officials, our games are simply recess. In many parts of our state, we need more coaches and MHSAA registered officials to make sure the game experiences for our students continue uninterrupted.

Coaches and registered officials come from all walks of life. These women and men are teachers, business owners, doctors, lawyers, first responders and law enforcement officers. They give back to students because they often had great experiences as a student-athlete and simply want to “stay in the game” to allow kids of today that same privilege.

How can you join this team or help grow the ranks of coaches and officials? If you are interested in officiating, go to MHSAA and click on the **SCHOOLS** or **OFFICIALS** button. All the information you need is right at your fingertips.

If you have no interest in becoming a coach or official, you can still help the cause. When attending your next game, simply cheer positively for your team and remain quiet when something happens that you see differently. Common decency and respect are harder to find in these current times, and you can help support our coaches and officials by just letting them do their jobs!

Let's continue to come together and support everyone involved in school sports at a time when these events are needed more than ever.

Enjoy the game.



— *Mark Uyl*
MHSAA Executive Director

All you need is in your hands. Follow tournaments and coverage of all MHSAA sports throughout the year at MHSAA.com



Let The Games Begin!

Living each day with an “attitude of gratitude” is a daily pursuit that is worth chasing for us all.

As we move from the regular season into MHSAA tournaments, let’s take a moment to thank those working on the “athletic front lines” who have found ways to make athletic activity happen during these past few years. These athletic leaders in each of our school communities continue to work hard for our kids and are worthy of our respect.

At this event, the front-liners are the school administrators creating a safe environment, our coaches teaching kids about the game, and more importantly life lessons, and officials applying the rules impartially for fair competition. It also includes those working behind the scenes in athletic department offices and in sports medicine that make our games happen and happen safely.

This is the 100th year of the MHSAA and there is much to celebrate during this special year. Let’s remember and be thankful for the efforts of these special people and many others behind the scenes for making today’s contest possible.

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As we move down the tournament trail, we need to appreciate the opportunity to play these games while realizing the end result is not an all-or-nothing proposition. The sun will come up tomorrow for all participants and teams, and one of the lasting lessons of school sports is the outcome of a game or competition is never life-defining.

All too often, the immense pressure of winning or losing is brought to bear on kids and coaches – and that’s just not fair. There’s no doubt we all want to win, but in sports – just like in life – you can’t win all the time.

Many times, the most valuable lessons in sports and in life don’t come after wins and success. It’s getting back up after you have been knocked down, knowing that a temporary setback never defines a person in the long-term. That is what is important. That is what’s life-defining.

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Enjoy the game- and remember what’s most important today.



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(For Use in **QUARTERFINALS/SEMIFINALS** PROGRAMS Only)

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Deep tournament runs are the canvas that paint lifelong memories for all involved- the players, coaches, the families and school community. Congratulations to all on reaching the final stages of this MHSAA tournament.

We often like to talk about the 99 percent factor in high school sports. For approximately 99% of the participants, this is the biggest athletic stage they'll ever perform on, and the memories made are what they'll revisit in memories and reunions for years to come.

For that incredibly small group that will be blessed enough to continue playing competitive athletics beyond high school, the day will come at some point in their post-high school careers when they're asked about standout memories and accomplishments. Many will point back to this week – this team – playing with their friends from the neighborhood with the overwhelming community support.

That doesn't happen anywhere but in high school sports. Good luck to all involved today- you will be making memories that will last a lifetime in this 100th year of the MHSAA!



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(For Use in **DISTRICT PROGRAMS** Only; Or Regional if it is the first round of play)

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Sportsmanship Extends to Online Behavior

With the changes that have occurred in college sports the past couple of years, high school sports is truly the last level of pure amateur competition in our country – and the NFHS and its member state associations want it to remain that way.

As football, volleyball, soccer, cross country and other sports begin this fall, high school coaches and athletic/activity directors will be involved in preseason meetings to emphasize the expected outcomes of education-based sports, as well as speech, debate, music, theatre and other programs.

Among those fundamental values of education-based activities that must be discussed is sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior. More than winning, more than learning the skills of a sport, a focus on sportsmanship has been one of the defining elements of high school sports and other activities for more than 100 years.

Along with maintaining the sound traditions of sports and minimizing the risk of injury, NFHS playing rules encourage sportsmanship, and the first page in all NFHS rules publications includes a statement noting that “each athlete is responsible for exercising caution and good sportsmanship.”

In the past, with an emphasis on conduct on the playing field or court – or in the auditorium or rehearsal hall – sportsmanship has been defined as those qualities of behavior that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. More so than preparing students to play sports or another activity at the next level, one of the significant goals of education-based high school sports and activities is helping the 12 million-plus individuals in these programs to become responsible citizens.

And in today’s online world dominated by hand-held devices, that goal has become more challenging. Now, messages to students in high school sports and other activities about sportsmanship must be communicated before they hit the practice field or court because one inappropriate post, tweet or message could alter their lives forever.

At the recent virtual National Student Leadership Summit hosted by the NFHS, Christina Jontra of Neptune Navigate, one of the newest NFHS corporate partners, discussed the need for good sportsmanship online as much or more so than on the court or field.

In the digital age in which we live, participants in high school activity programs need to be aware that their character and respect for others should be the same, whether in the

sport or activity itself, or online.

As the popularity and influence of social media continues to surge, it is imperative that student-athletes, as well as coaches, administrators, parents and everyone involved in education-based athletics, are aware of the ways they can endanger themselves with their online behavior and understand the techniques they can employ to prevent that from happening.

In her recent presentation, Jontra noted five characteristics of good sportsmanship online – honesty, compassion, respect, responsibility and courage. Just as a student would respect an opponent on the field or in the debate room, the same must occur online.

At preseason meetings this fall, coaches and athletic/activity directors should encourage students in their programs to be mindful of online contact with individuals on opposing teams – particularly any bantering that could be perceived as cyberbullying. As Jontra mentioned in her message during the NSLS, hurtful words can ruin a person’s life forever.

Fortunately, during the season, the millions of high school students involved in sports and performing arts have less free time to spend online on a daily basis, but the time spent must be done in a positive manner. Not only could damaging words on social media affect a student’s chances for an athletic scholarship, inappropriate messages could also negatively impact future job possibilities as employers are more actively auditing social media.

Whether the setting is before hundreds of people at an actual game or event, or a private experience alone online, positive and respectful behavior should be the choice every time.



KARISSA NIEHOFF



— Karissa Niehoff
NFHS Executive Director

Fans:

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Bad behavior at high school athletic events
has gotten OUT OF CONTROL.

Are YOU part of the problem?

Always be respectful, encouraging and positive.

Let's come together to [#BenchBadBehavior](#) for good!

BenchBadBehavior.com



MHSAA Student Advisory Council in Place

Eight student-athletes who will be juniors at their schools during the 2024-25 academic year have been selected to serve two-year terms on the Michigan High School Athletic Association’s Student Advisory Council.

The Student Advisory Council is a 16-member group which provides feedback on issues impacting educational athletics from a student’s perspective, and also is involved in the operation of MHSAA championship events and other programming. Members of the Student Advisory Council serve for two years, beginning as juniors. Eight new members are selected annually to serve on the SAC, with nominations made by MHSAA member schools. The incoming juniors will join the group of eight seniors-to-be appointed a year ago.

Selected to begin serving on the Student Advisory Council in 2024-25 are: **Itzel Albarran**, Bronson; **Harper Barnhart**, Brownstown Woodhaven; **Diamond Cook**, Southfield Christian; **Henry Ewles**, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep; **Cole Haist**, Big Rapids; **Frannie Keeley**, Jenison; **Trey LaValley**, Romeo; and **Ethan Stine**, Bridgman.

Those eight new members were selected from 90 applicants. The first Student Advisory Council was formed for the 2006-07 school year. With the addition of this class beginning this summer, members will have represented 142 schools from 51 leagues plus independent schools that do not play in a league. Combined, the new appointees have participated in 10 MHSAA sports, and five will be the first SAC members from their respective schools.

The Student Advisory Council generally meets seven times each school year, and once more for a 24-hour leadership camp. In addition to assisting in the promotion of the educational value of interscholastic athletics, the Council discusses issues dealing with the 4 S’s of educational athletics: scholarship, sportsmanship, safety (including health and nutrition) and the sensible scope of athletic programs. There also is a fifth S discussed by the group – student leadership.

This school year, the Council handed out championship trophies at Finals events, led sessions during four Sportsmanship Summits and provided assistance at the Women In Sports Leadership Conference, pro-

vided feedback to the MHSAA Representative Council on proposed rule changes, worked on a mental health initiative, and wrote the script for a public service announcement on adult spectator sportsmanship that will be included in broadcasts beginning this upcoming school year.

The new additions to the SAC will join the Class of 2025 members who were selected a year ago: **Cale Bell**, Sault Ste. Marie; **Drew Cady**, Oxford; **Macy Jenkins**, Milford; **Isaiah Kabban**, Harbor Beach; **Ella Knudsen**, Leland; **Kaylee Kranz**, Clinton; **Joey Spada**, Kalamazoo Central; and **Aynalem Zoet**, Grandville Calvin Christian.

Student Advisory Council Belief Statement

Adopted Nov. 2007

As the voice of Michigan’s student-athletes, the Student Advisory Council’s role is to convey the message of how high school sports are supposed to be played. We are responsible for helping the MHSAA maintain a positive and healthy atmosphere in which interscholastic athletes can thrive.

We believe athletes should be competitive, sportsmanlike and excel academically. We believe students in the stands should have fun, but not take the focus away from the game. We believe coaches should act as teachers, helping student-athletes develop while still keeping high school sports in perspective. We believe that parents should always be positive role models and be supportive of their child’s decisions. We believe officials commit their own time to high school sports and respect should always be shown and given to them.

The most important goal for student-athletes is to enjoy high school sports while keeping a high level of respect between all those involved in the games.

– *Written by the Student Advisory Council, adopted by MHSAA Representative Council in Nov. 2007*

OFFICIALS:

ESSENTIAL MEMBERS OF EVERY STARTING LINEUP

Without officials, today's event would not be possible. They deserve thanks and appreciation for dedicating their nights and weekends, so our students can always play the sports they love.

Think you have what it takes to make the big calls?

Sign up today

HIGHSCHOOLOFFICIALS.COM



#BECOMEANOFFICIAL



Keeping Education the Focus of School Sports

Not long ago, leaders in the high school sports world were concerned about the fallout from the NCAA's decision to allow college athletes to monetize their success and profit from their own Name, Image and Likeness (NIL).

The NFHS expressed concern about high school athletes profiting from their NIL. After all, NFHS member state associations had rules in place that prohibited student-athletes from receiving money in any form that was connected to wearing their school uniform.

Since that historic ruling in college sports, 36 state high school associations have enacted NIL policies, with the Florida High School Athletic Association being the latest last week. The landscape has been considerably different at the high school level as no state association permits a student-athlete to profit from their NIL while wearing the school uniform or connected to the school in any fashion. High school NIL rules afford athletes the same entrepreneurial opportunities as any high school student.

While about two-thirds of the state associations have established NIL policies, the number of student-athletes involved in NIL deals has been minimal, and recent statistics from the Georgia High School Association confirm that belief. In an article in the Connect Savannah publication, the GHSA noted that since updating its NIL policies last October, only 44 (.01 percent) of 429,714 eligible student-athletes have signed and submitted NIL deals.

As the new model of college sports has evolved the past three years, the NFHS and its member state associations have been working to preserve the education-based nature of high school sports, while also providing athletes the same NIL opportunities as other high school students.

Now, a new challenge has appeared on the horizon with the recent announcement that the NCAA and its five power conferences have agreed to allow schools to directly pay players for the first time in the 100-plus-year history of college sports. While details are still pending, by the fall of 2025 schools could be sharing up to \$20 million per year with their athletes.

Opinions on the merits of paying college athletes differ, but there should be no argument at the high school level. High school sports, with almost eight million participants nationwide, are much different than college sports. High

school sports are about the team – not an individual's own personal pursuit of excellence. The primary reason that an overwhelming majority of high school students play sports is to have fun and spend significant and meaningful time with their peers. The focus is not on self but rather the team.

Although it is uncertain about how these changes will develop, this deterioration of the amateur concept at the college level must not affect the team-based concept in education-based high school sports. The age-old plan of colleges relying on high schools for their players will continue; however, high school coaches and administrators must guard against an individual's pursuit of a college scholarship – or direct payments in college sports – overriding the team's goals.

While the route to playing sports in college may change for the three to five percent of high school athletes who have that opportunity, the focus must remain on the overall high school educational experience. Some will play sports at the college level and move on to their chosen careers; others will take those values of teamwork, discipline and self-confidence from the playing field directly into their chosen careers.

Those days of playing for the love of the game may be gone at the college level, but there is nothing more fundamental to the past – and future – history of high school sports in the United States than the concept of amateurism. Let's do everything possible to keep education at the forefront of school-based sports.



KARISSA NIEHOFF



— Karissa Niehoff
NFHS Executive Director

Get in the Game. We Need You!

They don't make the headlines, their names are not in the box scores and they don't make the all-star teams. But perhaps the most important individuals in high school sports are the contest officials.

These individuals are so important that, in fact, there would be no organized competitive sports at the high school level without the men and women who officiate these contests every day across the country. Subtract the dedicated men and women who officiate high school sports, and competitive sports would no longer be organized; they would be chaotic.

In some areas of our country, high school officials are retiring faster than new ones are being added. And junior varsity, freshmen and middle school games are being postponed – or even cancelled – because there are not enough men and women to officiate them.

Anyone looking for a unique way to contribute to the local community should consider becoming a registered high school official. For individuals who played sports in high school, officiating is a great way to stay close to the sport after their playing days have ended. Officiating helps people stay in shape, expands their social and professional networks and offers part-time work that is flexible, yet pays. In fact, officiating is a form of community service, but with compensation.

Another benefit of officiating is that individuals become role models so that teenagers in the community can learn the life lessons that high school sports teach. Students learn to respect their opponents and the rules of the game and the importance of practicing good sportsmanship thanks, in part, to those men and women who officiate. And the objectivity and integrity that high



school officials display is an example that every young person needs to observe firsthand. In short, communities around the country will be stronger because of the life lessons that high school officials help teach the next generation.

Officiating is a great way to stay connected to sports and to give back to the local high school and community. We need dedicated men and women to become involved so that high school sports can continue to prosper for years to come.

Individuals interested in learning more about becoming a high school official, and beginning the application process, can do so at MHSAA.com on the Officials page.



Unacceptable Behavior: Still Happening

Unacceptable behavior at high school sporting events – it's still happening. And much of this deplorable behavior continues to be directed at the thousands of individuals who VOLUNTEER to serve as contest officials.

While many states have reported an increase in the number of individuals signing up to officiate high school sports – particularly in the past few years of recovery from the pandemic – surviving the constant questioning of calls, name-calling, profane language and even violent attacks remains a challenge for new officials.

This is supposed to be EDUCATION-BASED SPORTS. Yet, the NFHS has heard reports of coaches – and even student-athletes themselves – disrespecting officials on the court and field.

We have to do better. We must do better. As the slogan for our Bench Bad Behavior campaign says, Enough is Enough.

One of our sport directors attended a state basketball tournament a few weeks ago. The games were action-packed, the skill level was superb, the stands were packed. Two outstanding teams advanced to the championship game. The tournament was a great success – except for the behavior. In high school sports, however, that is an unacceptable exception. Coaches and players in the final game were constantly on the officials, questioning calls. Does winning, in and of itself, define success in high school sports? The answer should be a resounding NO!

Since the NFHS started its Become an Official campaign about seven years ago, more than 125,000 people have applied to become a high school official. These are individuals who had a desire to give up time on weeknights and weekends – for not much money – so that millions of high school students could be involved in sports.

These individuals officiate to give back to high school athletics. Do they get every call right every night? Absolutely not, just like coaches and student-athletes make mistakes at times.

High school sports need to be different than the college and professional levels, where players and coaches tend to complain about almost every call. High school sports are also

different than non-school youth travel teams, where the emphasis is on individual accomplishments and winning. While we wish the behavior of coaches and athletes at other levels presented a better role model, behavior in education-based high school sports must be different.

In a 2023 survey by the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), 35,000-plus officials who completed the survey indicated that while 40 percent of sportsmanship problems are caused by parents, 25 percent of the behavior issues were attributed to coaches. Not surprisingly, 50 percent of the survey respondents said coaches were the group most responsible for improving sportsmanship.

Bingo! In high school sports, coaches set the stage for the proper displays of sportsmanship and positive support for officials. If coaches are haranguing officials throughout the game, the message to players and fans is that type of behavior is acceptable. If coaches take the lead and show support for officials, others will follow.

In that same survey, 68 percent of the respondents said sportsmanship is getting worse – six years earlier in a similar survey 57 percent indicated behavior was getting worse. And 72 percent of the officials indicated they are treated unfairly by coaches. We are definitely going in the wrong direction!

This is extremely disappointing. We must do better. In high school sports, coaches must support those individuals who are serving as officials – those people who make it possible for the games to continue. The goal is for everyone to work together for the betterment of the eight million participants in high school sports.



KARISSA NIEHOFF



— Karissa Niehoff
NFHS Executive Director

*O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say does that star spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free,*

...and the home of the brave

A recent Harris poll found that two out of three American adults don't know all of the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner" - and many don't even know which song is our National Anthem or why it was written.

The song of our nation was penned by Washington attorney Francis Scott Key at a dramatic moment during the War of 1812. On the night of September 13, 1814, Key watched as our country was attacked by the British navy at Fort McHenry. After watching the rockets' red glare and bombs bursting in air throughout the night, dawn broke. Key was expecting to find Baltimore firmly under British control, but was stunned to see a battered but still flying American flag waving in the sunrise. So inspired was Key that he wrote the poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." Set to a tune attributed to John Stafford Smith, "To Anacreon in Heaven," it became America's national anthem in 1931.

There has been a noticeable decrease in the respect given the National Anthem presentation over the last few years. Whether it is team members joining hands and swinging them back and forth during the anthem or a student body screaming for the start of a competition over the last few notes of the song, or the prevalent wearing of hats and talking on cell phones during the anthem, school sports

provide us with the vehicle to remind everyone of the manner in which we pay respect to the flag, our nation, and the competition that it precedes.

Students, participants and spectators are reminded that when the National Anthem is played,

they should remove their hats, stand at attention, face the flag, and place their right hand over their heart from the first note of the music until the last note.

Learn more about the National Anthem Program on the web at: nationalanthemproject.org





October is
**NATIONAL
HIGH SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES
MONTH**

Join us in celebrating all the groups that make high school sports and performing arts programs possible!

You can show your appreciation each week by using the hashtag **#HSActivitiesMonth** on social media.



#HSActivitiesMonth

NOTHING OUTPERFORMS INCLUSION!

While we all want our students to succeed today, what's also valuable is ensuring that inclusion is always at play. When a diverse group of students share one common pursuit, they develop compassion and empathy for their teammates and competitors.

That's the best possible outcome in high school sports—because every team and every student wins!

**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.**



PlayPerformCompeteTogether.com

In non-school sports, nobody's cheering for you.
In high school sports, everybody is.

Nothing brings communities together like high school sports. Whether it's playing a Friday night game in a sold-out gym or making a run at a conference championship, nothing compares to the thrill of wearing the uniform of your high school.



This message presented by the Michigan High School Athletic Association and the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION COME WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL UNIFORM.



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and the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.



Is there a Cap
on your Season?

MHSAA[®]
michigan high school athletic association

School Sports:

**Excellence
Without Excess**



School & Sports:
plenty of room
for both



MHSAA

michigan high school athletic association

**Excellence
Without Excess**

