

2016 SOCCER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Monday, January 25, 2015, 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Bell, Freeland
Nick Binder, Mason
Scott Dane, Grand Ledge
Brian Fuller, Harbor Beach
Kevin Guzzo, St Joseph
Doug Helmling, Clare
Orlando Medina, Harrison Twp

Stacy Punczal, Farmington Hills
Zach VanDuinen, Lansing
Hally Yonko, Ann Arbor

MHSAA STAFF

Andy Frushour (Recorder)

The 2015-16 MHSAA Soccer Committee met in the MHSAA office to review topics involving soccer and the tournament series. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision making process and charge of the Soccer Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

HEAD TRAUMA

The 2016 committee reviewed new information gathered since the 2015 meeting including the new US Soccer recommendations for heading in youth games and practices, the football practice model for limiting collision practices, and the MHSAA's concussion insurance policy and data collection program. An emphasis on regulating dangerous aerial challenges was discussed as a way to use current rules to limit potential head injuries. While knowledge on concussion detection and concussion care has gotten better in the last few years, and the spread of baseline testing has increased, confusing diagnoses from one doctor to the next and the lack of a consistent return-to-participate progression plans makes this issue difficult for schools to manage. Teams do focus short periods of practice for working on heading technique, but most soccer training occurs with the ball on the ground so limiting heading in practices may be unnecessary. The committee noted if major playing rules changes are to be made, the changes should come from global or national governing bodies (FIFA and NFHS).

MHSAA HANDBOOK

The committee reviewed new, upcoming and potential MHSAA Handbook changes including out-of-season rotations, sixth grade inclusion on junior high teams and urban and JV cooperative programs. The longest discussion was about the new four-game minimum for postseason eligibility. Committee members wondered if a nine-game minimum (half of a season) may be more appropriate, and it discussed a process whereby late-season roster additions must be reported to the MHSAA. The committee felt a strong athletic administrator and coach, backed with good school policy, could limit the occurrences of "ringers" added to rosters at tournament time. The committee will monitor the rule this spring and revisit at the 2017 meeting.

MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

With an MHSAA Multi-Sport Participation Task Force on the horizon, the committee discussed many issues the task force will address in the coming months. A number of common themes and arguments were highlighted in the conversation: the need to take a physical/mental break from a sport, possible burnout and overuse injuries, educating parents before students reach middle school, coordination and communication between high school coaches and encouraging coaches to accommodate players who want to play other sports, eliminating pay-to-play, the role college coaches play in encouraging specialization, and creating a reward program for multi-sport athletes.

SEEDING

Seeding the MHSAA tournament was again discussed by the committee, but there is no consensus to move away from the blind draw format. The MHSAA Soccer Administrator has heard similar sentiments from coaches within the last year: the majority prefers a blind draw. It was noted that coaches were not likely to be in favor of a seeding proposal without understanding the specific mechanics of a plan. A sample proposal to seed the top two teams in each District was distributed, and a few changes were suggested by the group. This proposal will be circulated over the next year, and then discussed again at the 2017 Soccer Committee meeting.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Middle school/junior high students playing in high school games.
- Maintaining current postseason roster size.
- Review of new MHSAA Finals sites: MSU (for all four games) and Comstock Park HS.
- Postseason games on grass versus turf. There were comments about schools intentionally growing long grass, so a brief expectation statement with a focus on an acceptable range for grass length, will be developed for review in 2017.
- The new MHSAA tournament ball – Wilson's Forte Hybrid II – was passed around. The ball will be used starting in Fall 2016.
- A plan for adjusting the boys and girls District schedule to move the first round to the week prior to the traditional District week, leaving just the semifinal and final for District week, will be developed and discussed in 2017.
- The issues of hosts without lights playing two semifinals in one night.
- The MHSAA will work with the coaches association to build a field inventory to help assign postseason games. This database will detail field size, grass/turf, lights, bleacher space, and other amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

There were no recommendations to the Representative Council.