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Cover Story: Making the Grade With Our Brand



4 MHSAA Championship events provide the greatest exposure for the Association, but efforts take place year-round at state and local levels to deliver school sports to consumers who command more interaction than ever before.

MHSAA Staff

Randy Allen, Assistant Director
Tony Bihn, Director of Information Systems
Jordan Cobb, Assistant Director, Information Systems
Andy Frushour, Director of Brand Management
Nate Hampton, Assistant Director
John R. Johnson, Communications Director
Rob Kaminski, Publications and Website Coordinator
Geoff Kimmerly, Media & Content Coordinator
Camala Kinder, Administrative Assistant
Gina Mazzolini, Assistant Director
Peggy Montpas, Accounting Manager
Andrea Osters, Program & Development Assistant
Thomas M. Rashid, Associate Director
John E. Roberts, Executive Director
Laura Roberts, Receptionist/Officials Registrar
Mark Uyl, Assistant Director
Jamie VanDerMoere, Administrative Assistant
Faye Verellen, Administrative Assistant
Debbie Waddell, Executive Assistant
Tricia Wieferich, Administrative Assistant
Kathy Vrugink Westdorp, Assistant Director
Karen Yonkers, Executive Assistant

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The Vault – 20

Nimrod Nation
 Sometimes a successful branding campaign just finds you. Of course, being a Nimrod helps.



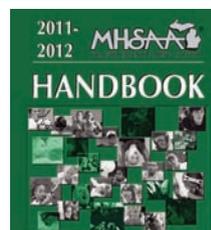
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Classifications Announced
 Classifications for the 2012-13 school year have been posted, signaling the start of a new year.



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Links in the Chain
 Like branding efforts, MHSAA Rules and Regulations are often the product of many linked components to offer greater recognition and cohesiveness.



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Our Brand



I enjoy a strong, black, cup of coffee; and I will drive miles out of my way and pass many places where coffee can be purchased, just to get to the place I like the best. I like its product, its people and its atmosphere.

Well, every day, people drive out of their way and pass many other forms of sports and entertainment to get to a place they seem to prefer: high school sports. They could do a lot of other things, but they drive past them to get to high school sporting events. They do so because they like our product, our people and our atmosphere.

We need to remember this and promote the features to which people have been so loyal.

- On the high school level we cannot possibly compete with the glitz and glamour of major college and professional sports. If we would try to do so, they would bury us with their million-dollar promotional budgets.
- On the high school level we should not even momentarily try to copy the approaches of most non-school youth sports programs. If we would try to do so, it would blur the distinctive mission that gives us credibility and weaves our programs into the fabric of communities.

The only way the brand of high school sports survives is by knowing its role and exploiting its niche in the marketplace. Ours is wholesome, local, amateur, educational athletics. Student-centered and school-sponsored sports. That's why interscholastic athletics exists, and it's why people give priority to these programs with their precious time and money.

If we reach for the excesses of commercialized athletics or resort to the exploitation of the off-brands of youth sports, we jeopardize the future of school sports.

What we have in high school sports is a unique American tradition, one that still attracts communities, cheerleaders, pep bands. One that has homecomings, mascots, organized student cheering sections and a host of other features entirely lacking from travel soccer and ice hockey or non-school basketball and volleyball.

- Could any youth sports program but schools' have a "Battle of the Fans" as we did this winter, attracting viewers to watch student-produced videos more than 20,500 times, and drawing 8,500 voters to select the winning school?
- Could any youth sports program other than schools' attract 1,636 applicants from 386 schools for 32 \$1,000 college academic scholarships, as we did in the MHSAA/Farm Bureau Scholar-Athlete Program, now in its 23rd year of existence?

Such initiatives are the "trademarks" of high school sports – student-centered promotions consistent with the educational mission of sponsoring schools. These traits are the soul of school sports, as school sports strengthen the pulse of the surrounding community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John E Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John E. "Jack" Roberts
MHSAA Executive Director



We're Talkin' Practice

Football Practice Blog Kicks Off Debate

"I can write either the most inspired or inane words about most topics, and not generate a comment," wrote MHSAA Executive Director Jack Roberts in his April 10 Blog, "Best Practices." "But mention 'football,' and opinions come fast and usually furious.."

Following is a sampling of opinions when the topics of reduced practice time and contact periods were broached.

I'm sorry but I disagree with 95 percent of what is said in this piece. When I started coaching football in 1991 there were two-and-a-half weeks of two-a-days, today you get one-and-a-half, tops. Now you want to talk about player safety, and restricting practice more than it is now would put that in jeopardy. I as a coach worry that the limited time that we have now puts our kids in a bad spot and it rushes us as coaches to find the time for conditioning and football aspects. Prohibiting two-a-days would be a major problem.

– Clay Pelham

I can't agree more with this article. Everybody is trying to keep up with the Joneses. If they are practicing 20 hours, then I need to also. Players at most high schools have access to year-round weight training and conditioning so I don't see the argument of needing it as valid. Yes, players need to get into football shape, but banging heads for a longer time is not the answer. Blocking and tackling can be taught with drills that are low impact.

– Jim L.

I normally agree with the majority of Jack Roberts' positions on issues regarding high school athletics. Not so, in this case. To compare early season high

"Yes, players need to get into football shape, but banging heads for a longer time is not the answer. Blocking and tackling can be taught with drills that are low impact."

school practice with college and pro is invalid. We in high school football in Michigan currently have less than three weeks of official practice to prepare for our first games. College and pro programs have much more time, with more experienced and skilled players. We need that time to properly teach safe blocking and tackling techniques, as well as condition and prepare a team. Jack is right about one thing. It is on the practice field where most of the great teaching and learning happens in high school football.

– Scott Farley

Restricting practice time and contact time will do two things: promote injury; and reduce quality.

On a team with upwards of 40-70 players (or more), coaches need the time to ensure that each player is properly prepared to enter a game without fear of injury – and with proper technical aptitude. These same coaches also need time to ensure that their team is prepared to win. In order to do this, repetitions are not divvied equally. When the MHSAA reduces practice time, either quality will be reduced with it, or safety.

– Sean Moran

I think instead of limiting two-a-days, you could require that one of the two be a helmet-only practice. That would help with the contact issue and the heat issue. We cannot really compare ourselves to the NFL when it has all those preseason games and we have about three weeks total to get a team ready. That is only 12 practices with pads.

– Chad Phillips

As a former athletic trainer and now athletic administrator, I would welcome these changes. For years I have tried to talk sense into coaches about the harm that the lack of heat acclimation can do to an athlete's body. Too many times coaches get lost (or perhaps a better term – lose focus) that this is a game and should be safe and fun for the student-athletes involved. The "old school" method is no longer the safest and, as you said, the "best practice" to use.

– James Meek

I will say it again. If things don't change, football in the schools will be dead in 10 years. It will turn into AAU (ugh). The only sport that must have a school association is football. All other sports can, and will, continue to grow outside of the MHSAA framework.

– Dave Myron

Shots on Goal offers readers a forum for feedback. Submit your opinions, share your experiences or offer suggestions to benchmarks@mhsaa.com. Be sure to visit MHSAA.com for MHSAA Executive Director Jack Roberts' twice-weekly blogs. Comments are encouraged, and may also appear here in **Shots on Goal**.



MHSAA Championships put school sports up in lights at the pinnacle of each season. The branding of our product, however, is an ongoing, adaptive process co-authored by state and local administrators on a daily basis.

While traveling Michigan, invariably – and without warning – our triggers are tripped by bigger-than-life visions which interrupt our music, audiobooks, newscasts or a rare silent moment void of any thoughts whatsoever. These intruders grab the wheel, cut short our escapes and send us on a detour back to reality; and we can do nothing about it.

There are the golden arches. Hmmm, what’s for dinner? When is dinner? Do I have a lunch meeting?

There’s that guy with dark rimmed glasses, charcoal work clothing and hoards of people behind him, his “network.” Hmmm, do I have my phone? Is my phone charged? I forgot to return that text. Will there be connectivity where I’m headed?

There is the green and yellow flower named bp sprouting from the asphalt. Hmmm, check the gas gauge. Do I need gas? I hope not. Why is gas so high anyway? It’s ridiculous. Maybe I need a new vehicle.

Mentally we are miles away from the comforts we were enjoying just seconds earlier as our thoughts careen into a cerebral roadblock. Irritating? Perhaps. Yet, ironically, we all aim to *be* these diversions. To be *that successful* in what we do; in what we *stand for*.

It’s all about **branding**, and no matter what the profession, businesses yearn to elicit this type of unconscious response from the public. It’s the ultimate success in branding.

In the first three words of this story, you might have even thought, “Pure Michigan,” when processing the words “traveling Michigan.” As for the golden arches, they aren’t even gold; they are yellow. But, that doesn’t make them any less symbolic or suggestive.

Sticking with the color theme, in this state, maize isn’t the color of corn. It’s three wings illuminating a dark blue football helmet. A block “S” – no matter what color appears before the eye – is always green in the milliseconds it takes to get from the optic nerve to the mind.

Brand recognition. It’s what schools want on the local level. It’s what the MHSAA wants on the state level. Our audience and supporters – our *consumers* – have options aplenty for their entertainment dollar, including college and professional teams which too often dominate sports conversations in our communities, urban and rural.



So, where does school sports fit in? The MHSAA knows there is a niche for our games and participants. School administrators and coaches know it. Promoting our product, our brand, has never been more paramount. Such an initiative is in perpetual motion, from the MHSAA office to local school districts. School sports is a product worth peddling.

“When we talk branding, there are two levels we need to focus on,” said Andy Frushour, MHSAA director of brand management. “First, the macro level, is what the MHSAA needs to do to brand school sports as a whole. Remember, brand is in the eyes of the consumer, not the product. It’s how others view our product; so we need to get them to share the same feelings we have for school sports.

“The other level – and it’s important to note that both are of equal importance – is the micro level. What do schools do locally to brand their athletics in their communities?” Frushour said. “Working toward the same goal, to make high school sports the most viable athletic entertainment choice for our consumers, is attainable at both levels. When people make the choice to attend our events over other forms of entertainment, it reflects a measure of success for our branding efforts.”

So, here is our niche, our corner in the market. This, as MHSAA Executive Director Jack Roberts promotes to the membership, in speaking engagements and blogs throughout the year, is what makes school sports unique: we have “wholesome, local, amateur, educational athletics,” all quite different from collegiate, professional and community-based athletic programs.

Most of all, there is a built-in audience for school sports, composed of classmates, parents and community members. Getting them to nibble at the bait and return for serving after serving on the school athletic menu is the key.

“We’ve always enjoyed a somewhat captive audience in school sports, but what we need to be keenly aware of is how that audience has changed,” Roberts said. “Today’s students are technologically savvy beyond what any of us could have imagined at their age. It’s not enough to put our teams in uniform, schedule the games and open the doors.

“Spectators today want to *participate*. They want to be *engaged*,” Roberts said. “We need to offer those opportunities, because that’s what other levels of athletics are offering.”

“Working toward the same goal, to make high school sports the most viable athletic entertainment choice for our consumers, is attainable at both levels. When people make the choice to attend our events over other forms of entertainment, it reflects a measure of success for our branding efforts.”

RULES AND ENGAGEMENT

People like to be part of something; they like to be included. And, people – or businesses, associations, agencies – want to be liked; to be favored.

Therein lies the challenge for regulatory bodies such as the MHSAA. People like being told, “Yes.” The MHSAA, like its brethren at other state associations and counterparts at the NCAA and professional leagues, often times has to say, “No.”

Roberts discusses this dynamic surrounding the MHSAA in “*From the Director*” on page 16.

The MHSAA, to many onlookers, is like one of its 13,000-plus registered officials. It exists out of necessity and is tolerated or largely ignored until it makes what the audience perceives as an unfair ruling. No matter how accurately and compassionately the Association metes out the proper ruling and subsequent action (which in fact are put in place by its members), it can expect jeers over cheers.

In fact, during an informal session with

MHSAA Student Advisory Council members, it was revealed that the mention of “MHSAA” elicited two predominant responses: 1) “state championships,” and 2) “bad guys; rules-makers and enforcers; taking away eligibility.” This from *beneficiaries* of MHSAA programs.

People want the church picnic; they aren’t interested in theology. People want tax refunds; they view the IRS with skepticism. People travel miles to stadiums and spend hours glued to their television sets each Sunday during the fall; they loathe the NFL for allegedly taking the fun out of their game.

The genesis of the MHSAA was rooted in rules which protect and promote the value of educational athletics. Those roots are there to stay, but they also provide the foundation for an attractive and growing array of programs and initiatives aimed to break down barriers, invite the masses inside the walls, and usher in a *brand* new era.

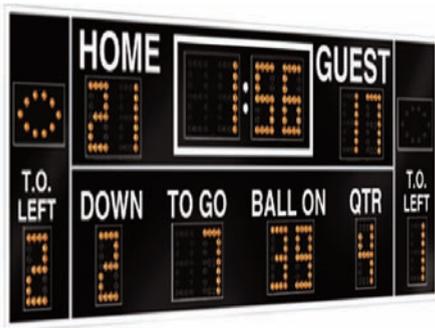
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KEEPING SCORE

The proliferation of information technology has forever changed product-consumer relationships, forcing businesses to re-assess vehicles for interaction, or get left behind.

It's also opened the floodgates to communication between constituents and associations like the MHSAA. Accessibility has never been easier.

"A decade or two ago, the MHSAA office would not receive 200 telephone calls per day or 200 letters per week," Roberts said in his March 2 blog on MHSAA.com "Now, every second of the workday and long into the evening and all weekend long, 100 to 1,000 people or more are making contact with the MHSAA at MHSAA.com."



Once a one-way street on which most of the pedestrians were administrators, coaches or officials, the faces and flow are changing.

When the MHSAA launched its first website in 1998, the mission was to provide online resources for the three groups mentioned above. MHSAA directors and staff, many of them the same people who hold the same positions in the office today, wanted nothing to do with the site becoming "sport-sticker;" becoming an entertainment medium; becoming a news source.

Times change.

The metamorphosis is spurred by the expectations of our many publics. Branding is as much reactive as proactive, no surprise because it's the end user who formulates and dictates what our brand should be.

MHSAA.com's ScoreCenter is now drawing droves of fans to the site. Want website traffic? Provide scores, and lots of them, for all sports. Concerted efforts have gone into the creation of a page that does nothing but generate scores, and it can be populated not only by administrators and staff, but by anyone in the public who registers.

"The spikes in our web traffic directly reflect the public's yearning for scores," Frushour said. "By looking at the analytics charts, one can easily see the Friday nights in the fall and the winter tournament weekends by the peaks in the graph."

The MHSAA.com ScoreCenter page drew 313,467 unique visitors from the beginning of the 2011 MHSAA Football season through the end of the recently completed winter tournaments.

Only the home page of MHSAA.com and the football home page attracted a greater number of unique visitors during that time (it should be noted that a significant percentage of visitors likely were hitting the football page looking for scores, as links to statewide scores and schedules appear on that page as well as ScoreCenter).

And, many of those frequenting ScoreCenter are not just browsing.

"In the early stages, a high percentage of scores were entered by staff," Frushour said. "Now, with the increased popularity and familiarity, ScoreCenter is being populated by athletic directors, coaches and the public, the way we intended."

What's more, during tournament time when scores are of utmost interest to the fans, MHSAA.com is beginning to unseat the competition as the place to go first.

KNOW THE SCORE

Once something that was left to newspapers and television stations, scores are now at the forefront of MHSAA.com, generating interest and driving traffic.

"A decade or two ago, the MHSAA office would not receive 200 telephone calls per day or 200 letters per week. Now, every second of the workday and long into the evening and all weekend long, 100 to 1,000 people or more are making contact with the MHSAA at MHSAA.com."

In an attempt to gather and publish all scores, staff would rely on other sites around the state to complete the task at hand; to find scores not reported to the MHSAA. Most recently, staff has taken note that competitor sites often have no score until MHSAA ScoreCenter has the result in place. The landscape is shifting, aiding the MHSAA in its quest to become something it never envisioned little more than a decade ago.

For those too impatient to wait for final scores, jump on Twitter to get near blow-by-blow accounts of many games as they progress. In the "give-me-news-now" demand that reflects today's culture, fans and media alike can keep interested audiences updated from the palms of their hands.

During the football playoffs, you could have found that the quarterback for Lansing Catholic had completed his first 20 passes during one game before the local news came on. This March, when it seemed that a Class D Boys Basketball Quarterfinal score resembled more closely an NBA score, MHSAA staff knew it was accurate because they'd been following it on Twitter.

PUTTING A FACE ON OUR NAME

The MHSAA's greatest asset is its students. Without them, we need no coaches, administrators, officials, and, yes, even our rules and regulations.

And yet, until recently, there was very little interaction with them. The MHSAA's plunge into Facebook and Twitter has changed that.

"Our student-athletes have been seeking a way to directly interact with the MHSAA for years," said Andrea Osters, MHSAA program and development assistant. "Channels like Facebook and Twitter allow them to do just that: engage and interact with us *and* each other."

Less than two years ago, in the fall of 2010, the MHSAA proudly reported that its Facebook page had nearly 1,400 fans. This March, in a two-week span during the MHSAA Girls and Boys Basketball Finals, the Association's page gained 224 fans, bringing the total to 9,196.

Similarly, the MHSAA's Twitter followers increased by 9.5 percent during that same time, no doubt aided by close to 400 live, in-game tweets during the course of those 24 games. In 2010, we boasted about an increase of 60 followers in a month. The 9.5% increase mentioned here represented 228 new followers in 10 days.

"Now more than ever, students have more access to online functionality and tools than ever before; and the touch of a button on a smartphone can be all it takes to start a conversation," Osters



ABOUT FACE

In the spring of 2010, the MHSAA took its first steps into the social media arena. The number of followers has increased steadily, but especially spikes during tournament time, when communication is concentrated and constant. MHSAA staff sent 384 live, in-game tweets over the two Basketball Finals weekends in March.



Before 2012 Girls Basketball Finals

Twitter: 2,399 Followers; 1,770 Updates

Facebook: 8,972 Fans

After 2012 Boys Basketball Finals

Twitter: 2,627 Followers (+228, or 9.5%);
2,154 updates

Facebook: 9,196 Fans (+224, or 2.5%)

said. "The MHSAA wanted to be a part of that talk, and give students a way to stay connected with an organization that arguably, prior to social media, didn't seem all that approachable to the very demographic it served."

Growth has been steady, and by using more methods to attract them, the MHSAA can expect a continued rise, perhaps even great spikes, in youthful followers.

Given the competitive makeup and mindset of student-athletes in general, it should come as no surprise that the most successful social media campaigns in the last two years were contests directly involving students and their schools.

In 2011, on its first anniversary of Facebook and Twitter presence, the MHSAA invited followers to vote for their favorite "Buzzer Beater" of all-time, pitting great Boys and Girls Basketball Tournament game finishes against one another in a bracket-style format.

The contest drew more than 11,000 viewers to the MHSAA YouTube channel, and thousands more "stuffed" the virtual ballot box to voice their opinions on the winning clip.

A year later, the focus shifted from the court to the bleachers, shining the spotlight on school rooting sections. The "Battle of the Fans" resonated loudly throughout the MHSAA's Twitter, Facebook and YouTube mediums, as avid followers determined which cheering sections supported their schools and classmates in the loudest and most innovative manners while adhering to the principles of sportsmanship and fair play (See related story, page 22).

More than 20,500 people viewed applications from 19 schools online, and 12,400 more fans viewed MHSAA-produced videos of the finalists.

A Facebook poll then drew 8,500 voters who voiced their choices.

"With the contests serving as the hook, new followers also discovered a place to come for MHSAA announcements, tournament information and news," Osters said. "Combined with live in-game updates on Facebook and Twitter, our reach continues to expand beyond the office walls."

Preceding the increased electronic communication, MHSAA personnel in recent years traveled (and continue to travel) the state's highways to conduct student sportsmanship summits and cap-

Programs like the MHSAA Student Advisory Council have put students into the middle of Association activities in recent years.

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tains conferences for leagues and associations. It has taken its show on the road to educate coaches through the Coaches Advancement Program.

It has stayed home and invited thousands to Women In Sports Leadership Conferences over the years, and recently asked students to play a role in its foundation – rules and regulations – by forming a Student Advisory Council to represent the diverse cross-section of young people who inhabit Michigan's hallways.

The structure at 1661 Ramblewood is developing a personality, a face to go with the logo on its brick facade. The profile is a composite of students, parents, fans, administrators, coaches and officials who are beginning to learn that the MHSAA is a mirror. The MHSAA is them.



GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY
Posted Friday, March 30, 2012
Adrian senior Zach Sarault had never seen, on the ground in front of him, the damage caused by a tornado. Living only 40 miles from where a storm had torn through Center on March 15, he was close enough to get an idea of what had ripped through the home of one of the Maples' Southeastern Conference rivals. And that distance was little more than an afterthought in deciding to help out a member of the 'track family'.



MAN BITES DOG

That's news, according to the old adage, implying news is made when the tables are turned. In today's high-tech world, the vehicle for gathering and delivering news has changed dramatically. Public relations agencies – and associations like the MHSAA – used to contrive ways to get their clients in the news.

In the case of high school sports, the competition was with other levels of athletics for space in the daily and weekly newspapers and statewide radio stations. As for video, forget it. Aside from football and basketball finals, television coverage was a sovereign, impenetrable frontier reserved only for collegiate and professional athletics.

Along came the Internet.

With people no longer having to wait for the morning paper to get their information, newspapers began losing ad dollars, decreasing in size and ultimately – in worst case scenarios – shutting down their presses for good.

"Ironically, the same force that is suffocating the newspaper industry has provided great opportunity for those organizations with resources and an audience," said Geoff Kimmerly, who came to the MHSAA as its media and content coordinator in September 2011 after a decade as prep editor of

the *Lansing State Journal*.

Scarcity of space in the state's sports sections is viewed as an opportunity for the MHSAA to attract the avid prep enthusiast. A chance for the MHSAA to clamp its incisors on the dog; to create its own news flow.

Enter the MHSAA "Second Half."

"Our efforts have all the support needed to build a strong media product – notably, proactive and creative IT and Web departments that have backed Second Half from the start and continue to allow us the opportunities to both build quickly and evolve as we find better ways to serve our audience." Kimmerly said. "It's up to us as the branding team to produce worthwhile content and get word out that Second Half is up and running and is the place high

school fans want to start their day."

The MHSAA's companion website was launched in February after spirited discussions for a name, including Bleachers, First Pitch and Grandstands. It

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO POST

The decline in print media has left a void for local prep coverage in many communities, but spurred an opportunity at the MHSAA. Join us for the "Second Half."

was determined Second Half best encompassed the site. It's the other half of MHSAA.com; the stories and people behind the scores. It's another step to

assist in forwarding the Association's brand.

Think a little bit Grantland, a little bit Deadspin, and a whole lot of Michigan's people, places and players. Second Half readership continues to rise, and, not unexpectedly, hits its peak during tournament time.

In little more than two months, Second Half has attracted nearly 100,000 pageviews to its content, including a peak of 7,875 pageviews on Saturday, March 3, the date of the Individual Wrestling and Competitive Cheer Finals. The follow-up stories to the two events rank among the top 10 most-visited pages in the site's young existence.

"The analytics show that we have a diverse audience, and reflects the popularity of all sports versus a select few," Kimmerly said. "It's another area where we can corner the market, so to speak. While people might find news for the so-called higher profile sports like boys and girls basketball through a variety of outlets, we promote all of our sports."





FEEL LIKE YOU'RE BEING WATCHED?

MHSAA.tv has given high school sports fans hours of local and statewide programming to be viewed anytime, anywhere. People are “tuning in” in record numbers.

Also of note, the popularity Second Half has enjoyed in its infancy has come with very little data-heavy content.

“We know that schedules and scores drive content, and we’ve incorporated Coaches Association Rankings into Second Half,” Kimmerly said. “But the fact that our following has grown fairly rapidly is encouraging because it shows people really are coming there for the feature stories.”

While the Second Half logo is displayed prominently on the MHSAA.com home page, much of its traffic is generated from tournament results pages, tweets and Facebook posts, all part of the grand plan to invite the public into the MHSAA and welcome readers to stay. When people come for scores, now they can seamlessly get the story behind the numbers.

The fact that the stories are supplemented by event photos and surrounded by a clean, contemporary look doesn’t hurt. Nor does the magic link, “Videos.”

At least as many people who seek information online are seeking to be entertained. The Videos tab on Second Half is the most frequently clicked link from the 2H home page. The weekly “Social Studies” department of Second Half offers a compilation of videos from around the country – some athletic, some not – each Thursday.

SUPPLY AND (ON)DEMAND

One of the basic premises of business is supply and demand. Do people want what you have?

Based on recent MHSAA.tv numbers, the answer is a resounding “Yes” as to whether people want to view high school sporting events in Michigan.

Again, the Web has cleared a stream for school sports video content, and the MHSAA has taken

advantage to promote its brand of entertaining, affordable, local athletics.

The MHSAA has built partnerships with PlayON! Sports, FOX Sports Detroit, EZStream and Comcast to deliver the most comprehensive online video and audio package that any state association has to offer.

A TOP 10 OF OUR OWN

Top 10 MHSAA schools as of April 10 in terms of high school athletic events produced via local portal on MHSAA.tv this school year:

- Bangor 68
- Owosso 56
- Bear Lake 51
- Calumet 48
- East Lansing 40
- Greenville 40
- Rockford 38
- Brethren 35
- Montrose 34
- North Branch 28

Modest beginnings and limited programming in 2008-09 accomplished the underlying mission of MHSAA.tv. More than 86,000 unique visitors put their eyes on the site’s content, validating the site’s launch and the potential for growth. Web streaming was indeed a viable way to showcase the MHSAA’s product to an eager public.

Online viewership of MHSAA events tripled in the first three years, and although the 2011-12 school year is just two-thirds completed, a record following has already been attained.

MHSAA.tv has generated 1.54 million pageviews from Aug. 1 to March 31, surpassing the previous record of 1.48 million pageviews during the entire 2010-11 school year. More than 950,000 pageviews took place during winter tournaments, when live streaming of the Upper Peninsula Swimming & Diving Finals, Team Dual Wrestling Finals, Individual Wrestling Finals, Girls Competitive Cheer Finals, Ice Hockey Semifinals, Girls Basketball Semifinals and Boys Basketball Semifinals took place.

Combined with MHSAA Network content streamed live on FOXSportsDetroit.com, the figure approaches 2 million, as viewers visited the MHSAA’s partner site to the tune of a record 456,200 pageviews.

The biggest draw of the year to date was the three-day period from March 1-3, when the Individual Wrestling and Cheer Finals attracted just under a half-million views. In the weeks to follow,

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the Girls and Boys Basketball Tournaments drew another 150,000 pageviews.

All of which equates to greater exposure for the Association, which enjoys the most clicks during its tournaments. All contests – regular-season and postseason – are also archived and available at any time, and thus the MHSAA brand enjoys a residual effect for its efforts.

“There is a growing appetite for tournament content, yet not everyone can get to the games,” said John Johnson, MHSAA communications director. “The advent of streaming video and audio of our tournaments give fans who would otherwise not be able to attend a real-time experience, and as a result we have more eyeballs than ever before taking in the action.”

At the local level, the MHSAA invited schools to join its Digital Broadcasting Program in 2009-10, providing schools with a safe place to stream events. More than 50 schools are taking advantage of the program to promote school events. Many schools not only stream athletic events within their local portals, but also daily newscasts, concerts, school board meetings and other student activities.

“High school sports and other activities in general are a great fit for the internet, as local schools can reach out to their constituents, communities and alumni to put the good things happening every day on display,” Johnson said.

In addition, the MHSAA Network provides live streaming audio of its Basketball Semifinals and Finals, filling a gap to fans without broadband internet connections and for those games televised on FOX Sports Detroit live that are not accompanied by simultaneous video streams. During this year’s Girls and Boys Basketball Semifinals and Finals, over 8,500 pageviews of audio content took place on the internet; all 24 games were broadcast over-the-air live in mid-Michigan; and all Finals were carried for the 25th consecutive year on a statewide network of over-the-air radio stations.

MATCHMAKING

Sponsorship in any business endeavor is a most welcome commodity, but is of even greater importance to non-profit organizations such as the MHSAA.

However, in the same vein that the Association chooses what programs and initiatives to promote, the MHSAA also is selective when approached by corporate partners and sponsors. If programs overwhelm and undermine the core values and principles of this service organization, they will quickly



Terry McNamara, Royal Oak

NOW SERVING

Since the 2008-09 school year, the MHSAA has enjoyed the presence and sponsorship of Farmers Insurance at many of its championships. Like the MHSAA, Farmers is rooted in local, community-based service and principles.

be dismissed, as will potential sponsorship suitors with conflicting messages.

Farm Bureau Insurance, for instance, has long been associated with the MHSAA Scholar-Athlete Awards, one of the most visible and renowned programs celebrating the combination of excellence inside and outside the classrooms.

In 2008, the MHSAA partnered with Home Team Marketing to assist in aligning additional sponsorship for its tournament sports.

“Our mission is to support high school athletics, and to secure companies whose values align closely with that of our client, in this case the MHSAA,” said Dan Malone, group director at Home Team Marketing. “We are in constant communication with Andy Frushour to discuss potential companies regarding missions that reflect the goals of the MHSAA.”

Home Team Marketing brought Farmers Insurance to the MHSAA family prior to the 2008-09 season. Farmers is the presenting sponsor for the MHSAA Football Finals, and enjoys a presence at all MHSAA tournament events except Basketball.

Visitors to the MHSAA Finals will also recognize Meijer and Country Fresh as members of the MHSAA sponsorship team. Michigan companies with strong ties in local communities, the two were a solid fit.

As the MHSAA continues to advance its product to statewide audiences, Malone’s enthusiasm mirrors that of the MHSAA Staff.

“The Battle of the Fans, the Second Half website...these are things we need to monetize and present to sponsors,” Malone said. “The more fan-oriented the platform, the greater number of avenues we have to explore when seeking sponsorship. The development of the mobile app provides similar opportunities.”

Also in frequent communication with Frushour and other members of the MHSAA Staff throughout the 2011-12 school year has been new officially licensed MHSAA Championship Apparel vendor E.A. Graphics of Sterling Heights.

“Our forte has always been onsite merchandising,” said E.A. Graphics President Bob Artymovich, also long-time golf coach at Warren Regina. “We’ve been doing this for 38 years, and we are always looking for ways we can better serve an organiza-

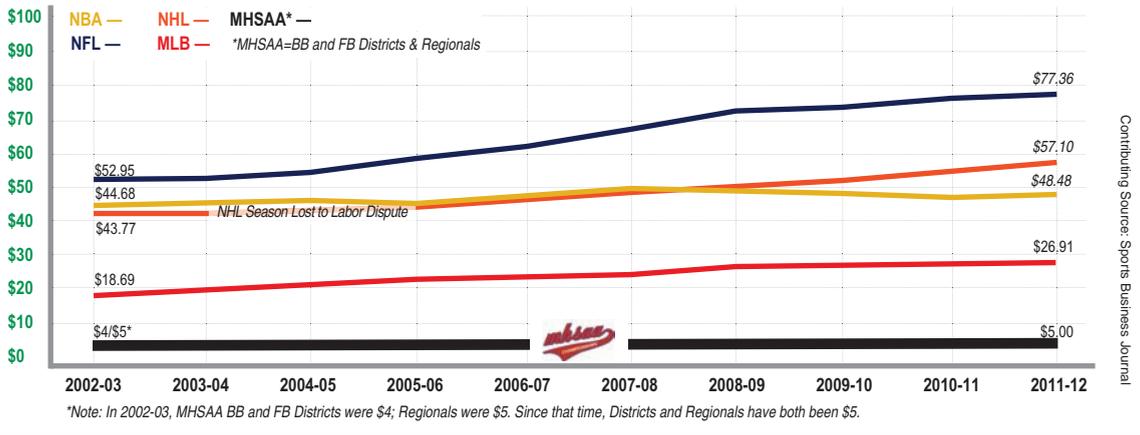
“A” for Affordability

One of the hallmarks of school-based athletic events has always been the focus on quality sports at an affordable price – providing a great spectator experience at a high value.

While ticket prices at collegiate and professional sporting events continue to rise, high school games, matches and meets remain the most inexpensive, family-friendly option on the market.

As illustrated below, *regular-season* ticket prices for professional sports leagues have risen dramatically in recent years, while the modest charge for *tournament* admission to local, amateur high school events has remained as unchanged as the participants: classmates, family members and the kids down the street.

Come On Down! This Price Is Right Average ticket prices since 2002-03



tion. We’ve worked with other non-profits, March of Dimes, rotary clubs, and the MHSAA was a relationship we valued.”

E.A. Graphics has extensive experience in national licensing work as well, beginning with the fandom of the 1985 Chicago Bears’ Super Bowl team. Such exposure to the whims and ever-changing styles and fads has brought a bit more flare to the MHSAA merchandise.



DIFFERENT STROKES

MHSAA Championships apparel vendor E.A. Graphics has pumped some new life into many tournament items, yielding unique best-sellers.

Prospective designs, slogans and iterations of the MHSAA logos are always first cleared with the MHSAA, but clearly some initiative has given souvenirs a, well, younger look.

“The best-selling shirt at the Girls Golf Finals this fall was a t-shirt with the MHSAA logo that said ‘Friends Don’t Let Friends 3-Putt,’” said Frushour. “I wouldn’t have thought that, but we’ve enjoyed the efforts to be attractive to our participants. Not all ideas are approved, but we’ll continue the trend toward some alternative types of shirts.”

More traditional championship shirts still adorn the large semi trailer which transforms into a souvenir and custom apparel factory once onsite. But,

another new wrinkle in the fabric business has proven to be a favorite for the whole family.

“We might expand the shirts with participants’ names on the backs to more sports next year,” said Artymovich, referring to shirts containing all members of a team’s roster on the back. “We had them at eight or 10 events so far and they’ve done very well.”

Another recent partnership targeted to benefit member schools is the MHSAA’s link with Utah-based company ArbiterSports. Already a leader in software development and programming for contest officials, Arbiter has worked closely with the MHSAA and MIAAA to produce a suite of tools to meet the needs of athletic directors, coaches and parents (in addition to expanding capabilities involving officials) as the demands of today’s increasingly interactive society escalate (See “Getting I.T.,” page 36).

Who is the MHSAA? We are wholesome, local, amateur, educational athletics, perhaps just as we’ve always been.

And, just like before, it’s up to the consumer to determine our brand’s worth vs. our competition.

The significant change in recent months is that we have more of our product in the marketplace now than ever before, and the accessibility and opportunity for customer engagement has never been greater.

It’s a brand new game.

— Rob Kaminski

MHSAA Website and Publications Coordinator

The Root of School Sports is Right Next Door

A bank of lights rising from a field. A row of school buses parked along a city street. The ting of an aluminum bat and the roar of a crowd somewhere in the distance.

Must be a game nearby.

Therein lies the advantage that high school and middle school sporting events have over any other variety. It's local, nearby; right in someone's back yard.

And, in the scenarios above, the event has promoted itself for free. People know the games are going on. Now, to just get them there...

As is the case regarding all facets of the MHSAA, the Association is only as strong as local leadership. Its very rules and regulations are determined by representatives from schools across Michigan.

So, when the branding of school sports is discussed, it begins with the efforts in hallways and gymnasiums, along the streets and storefronts, of counties, townships and cities throughout the state.

Unlike the MHSAA, which often has to fight through its own existence as a regulatory organization to gain favor from those distanced from school sports, the members themselves have a built-in home field advantage defined by the boundaries surrounding their schools.

Those circumstances provide a base for successful branding, but do not, however, leave administrators without challenges of a different nature.

Today's students have plenty of entertainment options to satisfy their free hours, not the least of which include multiple televised sporting events on any given night, professional and college.

Community members have more ways to spend a buck than ever before, but in many cases have less disposable time and money.

Schools themselves are seeing the effects of smaller staffs required to do the same work. Many nights, it's all one can do to open the doors and host an event, much less play the role of booster president, marketing director and school spirit coordinator.

The good news is, there are ways to paint the town with your school colors and willing partners to assist.

As mentioned earlier in this issue, many schools are taking advantage of MHSAA.tv to stream

events. Not only can the exposure introduce schools to new audiences, but the programs could also lead to additional sources of revenue.

"We started streaming events in December 2010, using MHSAA.tv," said Calumet Athletic Director Sean Jacques. "Our CLK Foundation – the fundraising arm of our school district – paid the \$3,000 start-up fee for our portal on MHSAA.tv, and in exchange we gave them the banner ad on all of our streams. They wanted a greater presence to drive traffic to their site, and the relationship has worked."

Calumet is among the leaders in MHSAA.tv programming, streaming 48 events through early April.

"This summer one of our projects is go after local businesses for other spots on our .tv site," Jacques said. "Our local businesses know that this type of support is mostly a donation, but it's another method of support that we haven't been able to offer in the past."

At Cranbrook-Kingswood in Bloomfield Hills, hockey coach Andy Weidenbach has turned game streams into a revenue producer, thanks in large part to landing Little Caesars as a banner sponsor.

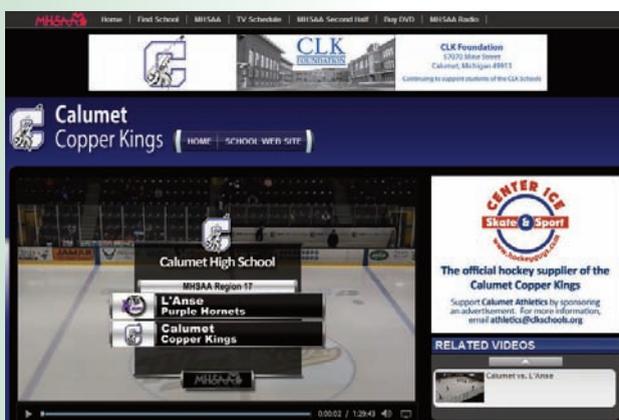
"The MHSAA.tv site has a large and highly visible network, which has enabled us to reach new audiences," Weidenbach said. "We had sponsors prior to our association with MHSAA.tv, but now

with a greater viewing audience, we have been able to increase sponsor participation and revenue."

"Andy took it upon himself to do the groundwork; fundraising, securing Little Caesars as a sponsor, and dealing with the logistics of production," said Athletic Director Steve Graf. "He has done an outstanding job and my department is strategizing on how to piggyback Andy's efforts to maximize Cranbrook athletics exposure."

In most cases, MHSAA.tv programming is a student-run production. Incorporating more student participation into athletic events is a winning combination, during a time when many schools are reporting a decline in student attendance.

"Our community attendance has always been good," said Morley-Stanwood Athletic Director Clark Huntley. "With a football playoff run, MHSAA Volleyball and Girls Basketball championships this year, attendance has increased. We live in a small community, and 'word of mouth' travels quickly.



NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Schools such as Calumet are taking advantage of the MHSAA.tv program to create a local portal and reach new audiences while attracting sponsors to offset the cost.

“But, even with some very good team success, our student attendance has decreased a small amount overall.”

Similarly, down the road in Rockford where its volleyball team also enjoyed an MHSAA title, student attendance is a concern.

“Much of it depends on team success,” said Rockford Athletic Director Tim Erickson. “Overall we did not see an increase in volleyball attendance even though we were state champs. And, in basketball when girls play second, the attendance has dropped dramatically for both boys and girls.”

Across the state in the sprawling suburbs of Detroit, Lake Orion and Macomb Dakota high schools report some of the same student trends.

“We began selling year-long student athletic passes three years ago,” said Lake Orion Athletic Director William Reiss, whose Dragons have enjoyed a 2010 MHSAA Football title, a 2011 Volleyball runner-up finish and a trip to the 2010 Ice Hockey Semifinals in recent years. “Since that time, student season-ticket sales have tripled, but they make up only 10-15 percent of the gate. The bulk of sales come from our walk-up window at the hands of community members and alumni.”

Dakota Athletic Director Mike Fusco said his school’s volleyball attendance rose significantly

thanks to a successful season last fall, but the basketball numbers for both genders were down slightly.

Which leaves administrators searching for that hook to reel in students and community members alike. Promoting engagement and involvement has helped.

“The MHSAA Battle of the Fans was a huge success for us,” said Rockford’s Erickson. “Our student group ‘Ram Nation’ has regular theme nights and tries to support all sports through a Facebook page.”

At nearby Lowell High School, AD Barry Hobla contemplates going the route that Reiss took at Lake Orion a few years back.

“We may need to revisit what we charge students to attend events and come up with some creative ticket packages to encourage attendance,” said Hobla. “Our league has realigned and there is a belief that the tougher, more challenging, schedules may impact attendance, but it could have an adverse effect if success suffers. We have to learn to market our events better; they are no longer the only game in town and the focus of a community.”

In the Lansing area, Holt AD Rick Schmidt echoes those thoughts.

“I think the biggest challenge is just the difficult

– continued next page



Terry McNamara, Royal Oak

EVERYONE LOVES A WINNER

Attendance figures are often directly related to team success. At Morley-Stanwood this school year, students have enjoyed more than their share, as the volleyball and girls basketball teams have brought home MHSAA Championship hardware.



TEAMING UP

Schools have had success drawing community members to multiple events on the same day, such as Portland's 10th Annual Spring Sports Carnival which took place in April. The school hosted track, tennis, soccer, baseball and softball events during the day.

economic situation families and communities are facing," Schmidt says. "There are also many competitors for people's time and money."

In fact, some of the competition for that valuable time and money comes from within each school's walls. The sheer number of events at any given school might serve to restrict nights that people choose to go out, without outside competition even factoring into the equation.

A decade ago, Portland Athletic Director Kevin Veale looked at the unwieldy matrix of dates, times and sports fighting for spectators in his community and decided to try something. This April 14, the school's 10th "Spring Sports Carnival" took place.

"Every spring, we have a date when all of our spring sports host home events; except golf, because of its off-campus nature," Veale said. "It's a unique event, and from the top of the football press box it's a pretty awesome scene to view baseball, softball, tennis, soccer and track events taking place at one time."

"Our crowds depend on the weather, of course, but the community has grown well aware of the event, and our local businesses and boosters get behind it," he adds. "We do special concessions, too. One year we barbecued half chickens, and this year it was cheeseburgers, with a lot of the food and supplies donated."

Fusco, meanwhile, used multiple events to his advantage at Dakota this winter.

"We began to group games together to create an 'event atmosphere'" he said. "That helped with attendance at girls basketball and boys swimming and diving events. We had six of these combination events during the winter – same

night at the same location – and they were pretty successful."

Lake Orion and Lowell also reach their communities via local television and radio presence. Lowell has school-run operations which either air contests on a delayed broadcast (video) or broadcasts them live (audio). In Lake Orion, games are taped and replayed a week later at local restaurants and establishments, which advertise the specific nights that the games will be shown.

Most schools house athletic spirit stores as well, to outfit students in the proper gear while generating a bit of revenue. The in-house stores also offer 100 percent control over revenue and proper use of the logo and school colors.

Schools could be losing opportunities outside of their buildings, however, when larger retailers attempt to swoop in and ride a team's success.

For over a year, the MHSAA has worked with the Licensing Resource Group of Holland, Mich., on its national high school licensing program. LRG works with large retailers (like Wal-Mart, Meijer and Dunham's) to make sure only licensed merchandise is tagged and put on store racks, and that schools receive a royalty for the sales.

"For many years, you could walk into a big box store at the start of the school year, purchase merchandise with your school's logos and colors, and not have a penny of the proceeds go back to your school," said MHSAA Executive Director Jack Roberts. "Through our association with Licensing Resource Group, schools can now benefit from the sale of these spirit items."

To date, the MHSAA has paid schools a total of nearly \$20,000 through its relationship with LRG, monies



Birds of a Different Feather

The re-inventing of Portland's Raider Bird

It seemed innocent enough at the time. A coach browses an apparel magazine or website, sees a logo that is a bit more contemporary than his school's current logo, and the school begins to incorporate the logo into uniforms and facilities.

"As I recall, the manufacturer said the logo was not copyrighted," said Portland AD Kevin Veale. "This was around 1997-98, and then when I became AD we had an older version of our bird and this new version. We were kind of using both, and I fully phased in the new bird."



From a branding standpoint, it was certainly the wise thing to do. Consistency in color and logo promotes greater recognition and affiliation. But somewhere along the line – and the origins are unclear – administrators at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., recognized that its Cardinal mascot had a twin living in Portland, Mich., and began to squawk.

"Our first communication with Ball State was via letter through an attorney about three years ago," Veale said.

So, the new Raider Bird wings were clipped, and Portland High School alumnus Rex Rainey took the project under his wing. Rainey, a graphic designer and son of former Portland faculty member Derrick Rainey, revised and revived the bird to give Portland its current identity.

With assistance from MHSAA partner LRG, schools can properly protect their colors and logos, or create new branding campaigns.

Most likely, as in the Portland case, there are students or community members close at hand who would welcome such a chance to give back to their alma mater. Schools can then simply enlist LRG to help with licensing. Check out nfhslicensing.com or scan the QR code from the preceding page.



which otherwise would have fallen into other pockets. The potential exists for so much more.

"We think the potential from high school merchandise sales is bigger than it is with colleges," said Dick Welsh, general manager-high school division at LRG. "There are 400,000 student-athletes in the NCAA. There are 7.5 million high school student-athletes. From the research we've done, each student-athlete has eight people behind them who may potentially buy products relating to high school sports. You do the extrapolation, and it's enormous."

MHSAA Tournaments can also rally students and community members while boosting school tills.

"The average crowd at one of our Varsity football games is 2,000," Reiss said. "But the right mix of opponent, coupled with our success, has brought crowds in excess of 11,000 for a single contest."

Tournament time is also t-shirt time as the bandwagon grows with each stop en route to MHSAA Finals events. It's also a good time for schools to generate more revenue through apparel sales, but administrators are warned to follow

proper protocol and provide only officially licensed MHSAA Championship merchandise.

In conjunction with apparel partner E.A. Graphics of Sterling Heights, the MHSAA sent \$50,089.42 so far this year to tournament site hosts at pre-Finals levels in Cross Country, Competitive Cheer, Wrestling and Bowling.

E.A. Graphics President Bob Artymovich thinks the total can be greater.

"I am happy with the way things have gone in our first year with the MHSAA," Artymovich said. "Our consignment levels with schools were phenomenal, and everyone was happy with the out-of-stock order forms we provided (if E.A. ran out of a style, size, etc., the product would be printed and

shipped within days following the event).

"If there's one thing we need to improve upon moving forward, we have to get ADs on board earlier leading up to the District and Regional events, to allow for schools to take full advantage of our services."

— Rob Kaminski



ROCKIN' THE HOUSE

School rooting sections such as Rockford's Ram Nation can help build a following through theme nights and social media presence.

Often Times “No” is the Best Way to Serve

No one likes to be told “No.” People like to get what they want, what they ask for; and they are likely to feel warmer toward those who grant their wishes than toward those who deny it.

As a result, public relations is a simpler matter for enterprises which can always give people what they desire than for those which often cannot. And establishing and maintaining a positive “brand” is an easier task for the former than the latter.

A letter from a grandmother of two MHSAA Scholar-Athlete Award winners – both recipients of \$1,000 scholarships from Farm Bureau Insurance – gets to the heart of this challenge.

She was grateful for the MHSAA’s focus on academic excellence and for the college tuition assistance, but she was frustrated and disappointed that the MHSAA’s policies would not allow an average but disabled student to participate in school sports. The positive feelings she had about the MHSAA **programs** were being undermined by the negative feelings she had about MHSAA **policies**.

A public relations agency might advise leadership to drop the policies and push the programs to keep the association’s image in high-gloss polish. The problem with that PR fix is that it forgets or ignores the first purpose for creating the association.

Statewide high school associations like the MHSAA were formed to standardize rules of eligibility. Even before there were standardizing rules of play, registration of contest officials, defined seasons, competition limits and postseason tournaments, member schools had seen the need for an association to help standardize and enforce student eligibility rules, the first two of which are an enrollment minimum and an age maximum – still the first two rules in the *MHSAA Handbook*.

If finances or other factors would force an association to strip away all but the most basic and essential functions, the popular programs would be among the discarded “fat,” and the remaining lean would be the so-called unpopular rules.

The regulatory function of the association was its first and remains its foremost responsibility. Do away with the MHSAA, and its successor organization would be charged with the same duty and likely develop the same rules through local school administrators and the same democratic policies now utilized.

Therefore, the public face of the association – the “brand,” in marketing terms – cannot ignore this unique, historically important function, and it should not try to forget it. It would be dishonest to bury the bottom line burden of the MHSAA. It is better to blend it with the association’s more appealing duties.

The MHSAA balances its core responsibility of regulation with service and support to its core constituents.

- For **athletic directors** – for example, the MHSAA conducts required New Athletic Director Orientations in East Lansing and in-service programs for all athletic directors at multiple sites across the state each year.
- For **coaches** – for example, the MHSAA developed and delivers a comprehensive, six-level face-to-face education program anytime and anywhere member schools, leagues and coaches associations collect a dozen or more coaches.
- For **officials** – for example, the MHSAA registers, conducts rules meetings for and insures 13,000 contest officials in 14 sports each year.

Over the past 25 years, the MHSAA has added programs and services that involve **student-athletes** directly. For example:

- Women in Sports Leadership Conference
- Sportsmanship Summits
- Team Captains Clinics
- Scholar-Athlete Program
- Student Advisory Council

And during the past four years, the MHSAA has engaged directly many millions of people through MHSAA.tv and MHSAA.com. No state association has done more with social media.

So, when it’s all taken together – tournaments in 28 sports, training for student and adult leaders, rules intended to enhance fairness, safety and the educational mission of schools – what’s our **brand**? What do we **value**? What is it that we **do**? What **business** are we in?

Ultimately, the association doesn’t really get to decide those things. The brand is what the on-looker sees, not what the leader suggests. But leadership isn’t powerless in this, isn’t without influence in the branding. For whatever the association pays attention to – what it monitors, rewards or penalizes – informs its brand.

To the extent that the MHSAA celebrates scholarship, sportsmanship, safety and a sane and sensible perspective, promotes amateurism and affordability, and provides clean competition and community connections – to the extent the MHSAA protects and promotes the value and values of educational athletics – the MHSAA brands school sports in a way that is unique in the world of sports and establishes itself as a servant in this American tradition.

Ultimately, the role of the MHSAA is to **serve** more than it is to please; and the inescapable reality for a statewide high school athletic association is that service means saying “**No**” at least as much as saying “**Yes**.”

AIA365.com Helps to Fuel Arizona High School Brand

In January, Arizona Interscholastic Association Associate Executive Director Charles Schmidt visited with MHSAA Staff for an informal brainstorming session on a range of topics, including marketing and branding.

Just as the MHSAA has turned to the Web for greater presence to a wider and younger audience, so, too, has the Arizona Interscholastic Association.

While MHSAA.com first spawned MHSAA.tv, followed by the new SecondHalf.MHSAA.com, Arizona rolled video, news, blogs and features into AIA365.com at one time in 2009.

At the same time, the AIA logo underwent a facelift, incorporating the colors of the state flag, with the tagline “Our Students, Our Teams . . . Our Future.”

With a series of action shots of student-athletes fading in and out on the state’s administrative site, AIAonline.org, and an endless loop of all 274 school logos traversing AIA365.com, it’s clear that student and school engagement has become a focal point. Click on one of the school logos, and visitors are taken to a school portal within AIA365 so the presentation remains consistent and the relationship between school and Association becomes one.

“In Arizona, it seems everyone is from somewhere else,” said AIA Associate Executive Director Charles Schmidt. “You don’t have a familial tie to high schools like other areas of the country. So, there is a great need for marketing and brand promotion.”

And, a big target is the students and schools themselves; to provide as much content as possible geared toward those groups.

AIA365.com is fitting that niche with loads of videos, scores, ranking, and news features, written by a pair of staff writers employed by the AIA.

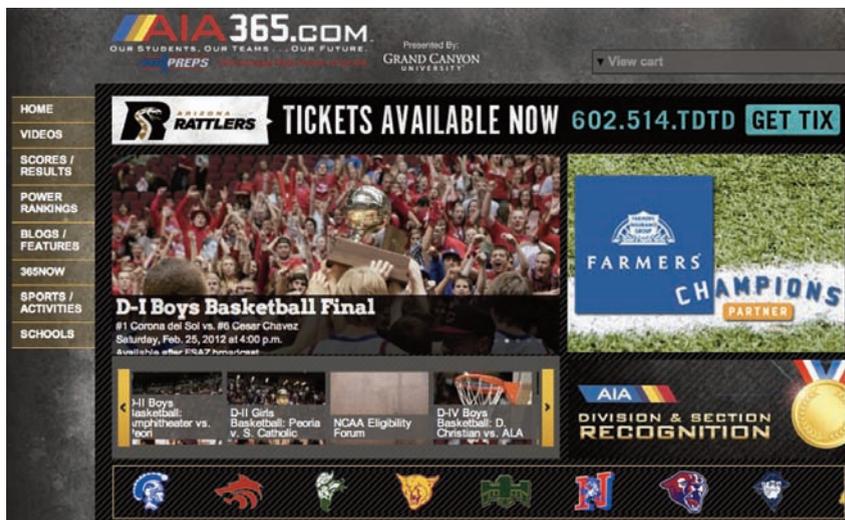
The videos are a key component to the site, not only for the eyeballs they attract, but for the opportunities they provide the AIA.

“We need to get control of the vehicle for delivering our message, and our television and internet productions provide that platform,” Schmidt said.

The site has been a hit with more than just the audience. Grand Canyon University, Farmers Insurance and the Arizona Rattlers of the Arena Foot-

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The Arizona Interscholastic Association’s ancillary website, AIA365, has developed into a content-rich platform which attracts visitors and sponsors alike.



ball League have all moved in as tenants on AIA365.

“We have opportunities that we never had before AIA365,” Schmidt said. “We went to about \$1million in sponsorship in three years. The sponsorship money is ‘soft money.’ If we don’t have that, AIA365 doesn’t produce 500 games next year.”

But, the sponsors seem to be buying into the AIA mission. In the case of Farmers, the AIA received special permission to color the Farmers logo AIA-blue, further branding the AIA product.

“The idea is that when people see the Farmers logo in blue, it means Arizona High School Championships,” Schmidt said.

Currently in the works is a mascot makeover program inviting schools and students to design and vote on a new mascot for the AIA. Once selected, the mascot will be driven to various tournaments and other engagements in the underwriting sponsor’s make of vehicle.

Another way Arizona has tied sponsors to its events and realized savings at the same time is to eliminate individual medals at team events. Winning teams are presented a trophy, but the student-athletes get championship hats with a sponsor’s mark, much like has become the norm following NCAA and professional championships.

— Rob Kaminski

How High School Sports Save Our Schools

Education writers rarely examine high school sports, but something is happening there that might help pull our schools out of the doldrums.

In the last school year, a new national survey found that 7.7 million boys and girls took part in high school sports. This is 55.5 percent of all students, according to the report from the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the 22nd straight year that participation had increased.

Despite two major recessions and numerous threats to cut athletic budgets to save academics, high schools have found ways to not only keep sports alive but increase the number of students



MHSAA File Photo

playing. We have data indicating sports and other extracurricular activities do better than academic classes in teaching leadership, teamwork, time management and other skills crucial for success in the workplace.

Coaches might be the only faculty members still allowed by our culture and educational practice to get tough with students not making the proper effort. They have the advantage of teaching what are essentially elective non-credit courses. They can insist on standards of behavior that classroom teachers often cannot enforce because the stakes of dismissing or letting students drop their courses are too high.

I thought about this as I watched for the first time in many years my high school's football team, the Knights of Hillsdale High, in San Mateo, Calif. It was an exciting, high-scoring game, even though we lost, 49-35, to a team of behemoths from Mountain View. I understood why that sport is still No. 1 for boys. Last year, it had 1.1 million participants, almost twice as many as No. 2 track and field, which draws 579,000 students.

The other top 10 boys' sports, in descending order, were basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling,

cross country, tennis, golf and swimming/diving. (I was a nerdish and poor athlete, but participation helped me. I got a letter jacket I wore everywhere I went.)

The influence of sports on girls is growing even faster. Their participation is up 63 percent in the last 20 years, compared with 31 percent for boys. Their top sport is track and field, with 475,265 participants, followed by basketball, volleyball, fast-pitch softball, soccer, cross country, tennis, swimming/diving, competitive spirit squads and lacrosse, in that order. The survey missed some small schools with about 4 percent of U.S. enrollment.

We Californians can grumble about pigskin worship making Texas No. 1, beating us in participation 786,626 to 774,767, even though the Golden State's population is 42 percent larger. (Virginia ranks 15th with 175,435 participants. Maryland is 22nd with 114,223.) But all states would benefit from more participation.

Coaches have rare opportunities to teach today's youth lessons which other faculty members cannot.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has published a list of what it calls life and career skills, including flexibility and adaptability, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility. Many teens find the most congenial way to acquire such competencies is after-school activities.

A 2008 paper by Christy Lleras in the *Journal of Social Science Research* said students who participated in sports and other activities in high school earned more 10 years later, even when compared to those with similar test scores. A 2005 paper by Peter Kuhn and Catherine Weinberger in the *Journal of Labor Economics* found similar results for men who occupied leadership positions in high school. They cited evidence that leadership is not just a natural talent but can be learned by participating in extracurricular activities.

Students do better in activities they choose. If we provide more of them, led by committed adults, maybe even part-timers or volunteers, that can make a difference.

We know the bad news about education. Dropout rates are high. Achievement scores are stagnant. But sports participation is going up, despite pressure to cut it back. Let's cheer about that, and look for a way to draw more students in. With more depth on defense, for instance, Hillsdale might win next time.

— Jay Mathews, *The Washington Post*

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Leaving High School Early? New Frontier Upon Us

The benefits behind a high school football player graduating a semester early to enroll in college and participate in spring practice have always confused me.

Why rush growing up?

By leaving behind the final 4 1/2 months of high school – everything from representing your school one last time in a spring sport to possibly missing the senior prom — an athlete forfeits valuable learning opportunities and social development they'll never get back.

High school is just a four-year window that closes way too fast. College, on the other hand, will always be there.

Desert Pines High's Leon Hayes, a safety who recently enrolled early at UTEP, is helping change my opinion. By learning the ins and outs of the UTEP defensive schemes in spring practice and starting in the college team's weight training program, the 18-year-old Hayes feels he'll have a leg up in the fall when it comes to competing for playing time.

It's the same primary argument several others have in jump-starting their college careers — a decision, until talking with Hayes, I often viewed as a risk.

"It really wasn't that hard of a decision," Hayes said. "Yeah, it was hard leaving some of the people, but it was going to happen eventually."

Early enrollment has become prominent the past decade with more players opting to head off prematurely to college. Some thrive and use the extra practice in the spring to make an impact as freshmen. Others still wind up needing a red-shirt year to get familiar to the pace of the college game — Liberty High graduate Sam Tai, for instance, took part in UCLA's spring drills last year and still red-shirted.

You can't fault Hayes' dedication and confidence he is making the right move.

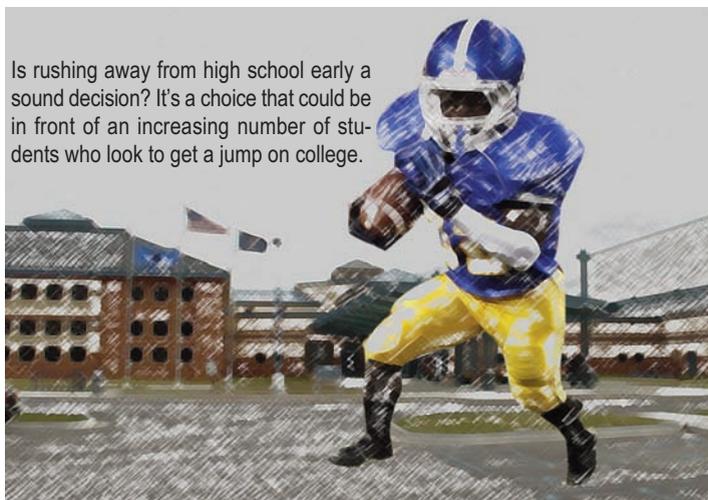
When he learned of the opportunity to enroll early at UTEP, he took a three-week online U.S. Government course to fulfill his final obligation at

Desert Pines to graduate. He earned a B, opening the door for his next class to be this week at UTEP.

"I really think it is a good move for him," Desert Pines coach Paul Bennett said. "At first, I wasn't happy with it, but it is what he wants to do. The biggest thing is he has put forth the effort to do it. It takes a special person to handle (the change) and Leon is one of those guys."

"The recruiters were telling me that as an incoming freshman he won't be a deer in the headlights in the fall," the coach said.

But what about all of those once-in-a-lifetime high school experiences he'll be missing? For Hayes, it's not that big of an ordeal.



Is rushing away from high school early a sound decision? It's a choice that could be in front of an increasing number of students who look to get a jump on college.

A three-year participant on the Desert Pines track team, Hayes was a Sunrise Regional qualifier last year and would have competed in the 100- and 200-meter races, and several relay teams. "I would rather be on the football field than track. Football is the sport I'll be playing in college," he said.

As for the senior prom, which he could still return to Las Vegas to attend, "I'd have to find a date first," said Hayes, who will return in May to participate in graduation. "But I won homecoming king and really did all of that stuff at the beginning of the year."

Making the early move to college requires someone with extreme maturity and discipline. After all, leaving home for the first time can be full of trials and tribulations, and often can be problematic for any teenager. Hayes seems like he can handle leaving early for college, which includes living unsupervised in the dorms and other responsibilities of being independent.

It's an era of college football I'm still not sold on, but more than willing to accept in cheering for Hayes to represent our Las Vegas community at the next level.

— Ray Brewer, *Las Vegas Sun*

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“Without Sports, Who Would Cheer for the Nimrods”



Commercials Put Watersmeet on the Map Nearly a Decade Ago

Early in 2004 the nation discovered Watersmeet, Michigan. Funny, because the hunting and fishing paradise nestled in the Ottawa National Forest along the western edge of the Upper Peninsula was likely more familiar to Wisconsin residents than the inhabitants of its own home state given its border location.

But when 81-year-old Watersmeet resident Dale Jenkins, clad in classic hunter's orange, closed one of ESPN's "Without Sports" commercials with fists clenched while proclaiming "Go Nimrods," it became a basketball hotbed.

Moreover, people nationwide didn't just want to root for Nimrods; they wanted to be Nimrods.

Clothing orders began pouring not only from around the country, but in some cases overseas. Fitting for a place that might as well have been the end of the earth prior to the ad spots. Sometimes a branding campaign just finds *you*.

Following is an Associated Press account of the mania that followed ESPN's exposure of the tiny U.P. town.

In most places, calling someone a "nimrod" might earn you a cold stare or a fat lip. Not in Watersmeet, a rural township of 1,500 in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where "Nimrods" is a badge of honor, the nickname of sports teams at the local school, which serves all grades and whose principal also doubles as coach and superintendent.

Now that the oddball moniker has inspired a series of commercials on ESPN, it has become a claim to fame.

The cable television network began airing three 30-second spots featuring the Watersmeet Town-



AN ORIGINAL NIMROD

Dale Jenkins was the star of Watersmeet's "Without Sports" commercial seven decades after he starred for the first Nimrods' basketball team in the 1930s.

ship Nimrods boys' basketball team. They are part of ESPN's "Without Sports" advertising campaign, which celebrates the social and cultural importance of athletics.

Two of the ads show the Nimrods playing against another team as local residents voice pride in their team. In the third, 81-year-old Dale Jenkins, who played with the original Nimrods in the 1930s, sings the school fight song.

Each ends with the narrator asking, "Without sports, who would cheer for the Nimrods?"

The spots have struck a chord.

Watersmeet Township, a K-12 school with 228 students, including 77 high school students, has been deluged with requests for merchandise with the Nimrods logo, some coming from as far away as Germany. The school has sold more than \$35,000 in T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, coffee mugs and other items.

In the midst of the Nimrod explosion, Jenkins and coach, principal and superintendent George Peterson III flew to Los Angeles to appear Monday on NBC's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno."

"It's unbelievable," Peterson said.



The community has basked in the attention – poetic justice after the ribbing they have taken over the years, he said.

“It builds character for our kids,” Peterson said. “It’s taught them a lesson that you need to find out about people before judging them.”

“Nimrods” apparently wasn’t considered disparaging in 1904, when the school named itself after a biblical character described in Genesis as a mighty hunter and great king.

Hunting is a way of life in Watersmeet, located in the Ottawa National Forest about eight miles



BURSTING ONTO THE SCENE

In the 100 years between the school adopting the Nimrod nickname in 1904 and the ESPN commercials a century later, the name certainly suffered through a variety of connotations, but student pride never wavered.

north of the Wisconsin line. The school logo depicts the head of a bearded hunter wearing a coonskin cap.

But why not change the name later, when it became a putdown? When scenes from the sitcom “Cheers” showed Carla the barmaid deriding patrons Norm and Cliff as “nimrods”?

Peterson surveyed the student body in the late 1980s. The response: Nimrods forever. “To them, the only insult was being asked” whether to abandon their beloved tradition, he said.

Excitement ran high when the ESPN crew visited in December. Jenkins, a retired mechanic, was filmed singing the fight song in his garage, surrounded by fishing gear.

“Both of my daughters were cheerleaders when they were in school, and they were always coming home and singing the song,” he said. “You can’t forget it.”

The opening lines: “Watersmeet, the school that can’t be beat, where the spirit’s always high. Friends or foes, we have no cares or woes, for we are good sports, win or lose or tie.”

ESPN marketing manager Kevin Kirksey, who filmed the ad, said he was smitten with the community’s wholesomeness and loyalty to its team.

“We’re playing on the funny name, but the real story is how sports brings people together in small towns across America,” he said.

“Whatever happens, we’re Nimrods and proud of it,” Peterson said.

Watersmeet Administrator/Coach George Peterson recalls . . .

“When ESPN arrived we didn’t have a school store. Producer Brett Morgen asked me if we had a few shirts or hats laying around and I replied I had about a dozen hats and shirts in my office closet. He replied, ‘You may need a few more!’ After ESPN, “The Tonight Show,” and “CBS Sunday Morning” we asked for help from the community to get our merchandise out to all parts of the *world*. We pulled in a gross revenue of just over \$500,000 in the first two years. We quickly were able to open a store in our beautiful school and had a full-time manager to run it for about a year. You couldn’t imagine it; Nimrod gear being sent to Australia, England, Canada and all 50 states. We quickly teamed up with Bob Lanier Enterprises from Milwaukee, Wis., so people could order Nimrod merchandise online. We are still partners today.

“In recent years, the sales have fallen considerably. We still have the store which is now run by my office and the school business office. Around the holidays it can get busy. All the profits go into a scholarship fund for any Nimrod who continues their education beyond the K-12 setting. One day last summer I had a busy afternoon with people from Tennessee, Indiana, New York, Iowa, and Illinois stopping in. We do well during the summer and snowmobile season.”

“Battle of the Fans” Engages Students, Promotes Spirit

We are going to dance and have some fun. That was hardly the entire story behind this season’s inaugural MHSAA “Battle of the Fans” champion.

But energy – from the opening tip to the final buzzer and despite a blowout win decided early on – is what set Frankenmuth High School’s fans a notch above four other finalists in this season’s search to find Michigan’s top student cheering section.

"It's kinda what we wanted to do when we started out. We really wanted to be the biggest, the best, the most creative, the loudest, the most outgoing. And that's obviously what we've done now," said Frankenmuth senior Brennan Webb, one of the section's founders and leaders. "I could tell since we started doing this last year and this year, people started bringing better student sections to games against us because they knew we were going to bring (fans). We influenced all the teams we've played. It's really awesome. You feel good."

When it came to atmosphere – positive, festive and fun – the Eagles started early and didn't stop until long after the final buzzer sounded.

Frankenmuth was chosen based on votes both by the MHSAA’s 16-member Student Advisory Council and a public vote on the MHSAA’s Facebook page. More than 8,500 fans voted in the MHSAA Facebook poll, with those results then equated against a school’s enrollment.

Based on votes per student, Reese topped the Facebook poll, followed by Petoskey and Frankenmuth in third. The Student Advisory Council based its vote on the following criteria: positive sportsmanship, volume of student section, school spirit, originality of cheers, organization of group and student section leadership.

The SAC vote put Frankenmuth over the top.

Other numbers to consider from this season’s contest: The 19 application videos were watched more than 20,500 times, and the MHSAA-produced videos from our tour stops have more than 12,400 views. The message of sportsmanship and the benefits of a strong student section have been heard.

And here are a few common themes we saw during the MHSAA tour of the five finalists.

- **Have pride in your school, and support your classmates.** For all five sections, it’s that simple. Creating a positive cheering atmosphere transforms game night for not just fans, but the athletes they’re rooting on.
- **Get organized.** Facebook was the main mode for that, although Rockford also is leaps ahead of most when it comes to communicating via Twitter.
- **Work with the administration, not against.** These five sections all have understandings with their administrators – who in turn trust them to be appropriate, and allow them to get creative.

- **It really does pay off.** Finalists proved they could be loud, positive, fun and, above all, supportive *without* bashing the opposing team.

Bottom line: All five finalists are winners for simply getting involved. All brought something new and plenty of excitement to games that have been played for nearly 100 years in this state. And all deserve special recognition.

First, we'll recognize the four runners-up:

No Rest, No Weary Award: Grand Rapids Christian’s Eagle Nation

What we saw: The best halftime show in the state. Eagle Nation supports its team on the floor, but halftime belongs to the fans – and the Eagles deliver. Breaks are few and last maybe 20 seconds apiece. It’s like a show within a game; when the second quarter ends, Eagle Nation hits the stage.

Why we’re fans: If the word is unity, the definition is Grand Rapids Christian. We visited on Neon Night, which was embraced by everyone – and not just the cheering section, but the players who came out for warm-ups sporting pieces of neon flare as well. Eagle Nation is more than 400 strong, and keeping that many fans organized and active for an entire game is a daunting task. But Eagle Nation pulls it off and sets the foundation for the future by meeting with middle school students to pass on their lessons in appropriate sportsmanship.

A-Plus Award: Petoskey’s Blue Crew

What we saw: The Blue Crew, as the section has been known for nearly a decade, didn’t mutter a negative word the entire game against West Branch Ogemaw Heights – a game, by the way, that clinched a league championship for the Northmen’s boys team. That, in itself, is laudable. And this section has more history than the other four finalists combined.

Why we’re fans: The Blue Crew builds support from all over, be it elementary and middle schoolers who gather at the sides of the section, or alumni and parents who add to the cause. Petoskey’s opponents are spread all over the northern Lower Peninsula – and the Blue Crew logs plenty of miles to keep up. The student council provides consistent and strong leadership. And don’t forget about the jazz band, which we felt was on par with any we’ve heard at college games.

All-In Award: Reese’s Rowdy Rockets

What we saw: At Reese, the smallest community among our finalists, it’s truly a community effort. Nearly half of the student body filled the section, on top of the crew of parents, relatives and other residents who support the Rockets on a regular basis. Oh, and despite having such a small voting base, the Rockets rocked our Facebook poll with easily the highest percentage of voters compared to the size of the school’s student body.



Geoff Kimmerly, Lansing

EAGLES TAKE FLIGHT TO WIN “BATTLE”

The competition was loud and proud, but in the end, Frankenmuth’s effort on “German Night” put the Eagles’ throng over the top to capture the MHSAA’s first-ever “Battle of the Fans” contest.

Why we’re fans: The Rowdy Rockets get going early – and keep going all game. The pregame announcement of “Hey Rockets, guess what? It’s game time,” sets the tone for the rest of the night. And Reese did some things that bigger schools probably couldn’t pull off, like creating a tunnel for the players as they entered the gym and staging a class-vs.-class tug-of-war during halftime.

Pure Power Award: Rockford’s Ram Nation

What we saw: What seemed like a thousand fans in black T-shirts blocking out an entire side of Rockford’s gym. The number was closer to 500, but the magnitude was obvious; Rockford is the biggest school among the finalists, and represented as such.

Why we’re fans: Rockford’s lights out introductions (watch the video to see it) easily was our favorite gimmick – which makes sense if you’ve also seen the video of its baby powder explosion during football season. Ram Nation has great ideas and executes them. And they get a special shout out for making every home game a fund raiser for some charity – the support from Ram Nation extends to its athletes, but outside the building as well.

But there can be only one winner. Drum roll, please ...

Battle of the Fans Champion: Frankenmuth

What we saw: All five finalists created an atmosphere of fun. But Frankenmuth’s defined festive. No finalist rallied from start to finish like the Eagles. The other four brought a number of positives to the table. Frankenmuth combined them all.

Why we’re fans: Everyone is invited. That’s become a theme of Frankenmuth’s section, which encourages participation from not just other Eagles fans, but opposing fans as well.

They danced a lot and sang some too, but were into the game the entire time. Frankenmuth’s cheerers had specific cheers for each player, for free throws, for pregame introductions and just about anything else that goes into a basketball game. And like Petoskey, not a negative word was heard – unless the Eagles fans were making fun of themselves or their players for air-balling a shot or getting one blocked.

We visited for a theme night, which would be a big hit on its own. But leaders kept the full section engaged for the entire game.

And talk about creative. A lot of sections do great things that they’ve never seen before, but we have. Not so at Frankenmuth; originality reigned.

“I hope we can start a really huge tradition for our school,” Webb said. “People will know this is how it started, and this is how it’s going to be.”

— Geoff Kimmerly
MHSAA Media & Content Coordinator

Lending Hands Lift Family from Ruins

Adrian senior Zach Sarrault had never seen, on the ground in front of him, the damage caused by a tornado.

Living only 40 miles from where a storm had torn through Dexter on March 15, he was close enough to get an idea of what had ripped through the home of one of the Maples' Southeastern Conference rivals.

And that distance was little more than an afterthought in deciding to help out a member of the "track family."

The tornado that day was driven by winds of up to 140 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service, and media reports said the storm damaged 100 homes and destroyed 10. One of those belonged to Dexter girls cross country coaches Katie and Bob Jazwinski – who with their children survived the storm in a bedroom closet.



photo courtesy of the Jazwinski Family

"We knew we needed to go up there and help," Sarrault said.

"I was really shocked by what it did. To see the roofs and blown-off siding. And the Dexter coaches' house wasn't even there anymore."

Adrian coach Leo Lauver, his assistant coach and assistant coach's wife and 21 members of their team – basically all who weren't part of the school's band and orchestra concerts that day – loaded into a bus and spent most of the daylight hours March 24 helping not only the Jazwinskis, but their neighbors as well.

A number of schools and teams have been represented in the Dexter clean-up efforts. Jazwinski said he's seen athletes and coaches from Ann Arbor Pioneer, Pinckney, Chelsea, Ann Arbor Skyline, Whitmore Lake and the USA junior hockey team also based in Ann Arbor.

All have been appreciated. And most of that group had some kind of previous relationship with Dexter, or the Jazwinskis in particular.

"Adrian is a blue-collar town. It's the right thing. You don't think about it. You go help. That's what we do here. We're a family, and Dexter is part of that family."

But they'd known Adrian's track people mostly through competition, and that was about it.

"My wife and I thought we were out of tears, but once we saw the Adrian bus pull up to our demolished house, we had tears flowing again, this time tears of joy and happiness," the Jazwinskis wrote in a letter to Adrian superintendent Chris Timmis. "They have touched our lives for eternity."

Lauver described the work as "cut down, cut down, cut down. Move, move, move." Bob Jazwinski said his neighborhood isn't

HELPING HANDS
Adrian boys track and field athletes assist in cleanup following a tornado that tore through Dexter on March 15.

one where people buy in as much for the houses as for the landscape – which included a number of mature trees including century-old oaks and 50-foot tall pines.

The tornado cleared many of those like it was building a golf course.

"It was a no-brainer," said Lauver, in his 28th season coaching the Maples. "Adrian is a blue-collar town. It's the right thing. You don't think about it. You go help. That's what we do here. ... We're a family, and Dexter is part of that family."

Lauver first introduced the idea to his team the Monday after the storm. The athletes bought in immediately.

Thorns resulted in a few scratches, and the work was hard. But the Salvation Army donated gloves, and a local catering company was among those who fed the volunteers – who Bob Jazwinski had to order to eat because they were working so hard.

One of his neighbors, a Dexter cross country mom, had been in tears over all the debris scattered around her yard. The Maples cleaned up all of it, and now she calls Jazwinski just about daily to send along her thanks.

"They were very grateful. Everybody out there," Sarrault said. "A Pioneer coach had a house there too, and I remember him telling us he'd never been so grateful to see an Adrian bus roll up.

"It really brought us together as a team, knowing we can help out other people. It will probably bring us into doing more volunteering."

The family has received additional offers of help, including from the men’s gymnastics team from the University of Michigan – where Katie was a five-time All-American in cross country and track.

Bob Jazwinski said he and his family will move out of a hotel Wednesday. They’re working through preliminary steps at this point. But when it’s time to rebuild, Lauer – who has a background in landscaping – pledged the Maples for a return trip.

“The support of people who know us is pretty spectacular,” Bob Jazwinski said. “But to see a group of athletes from another team, that’s competitive (with us), drop everything, all the competitiveness is gone, and just want to help somebody, for us, is overwhelming.”

“We’ll always be friends now, for sure.”

– Geoff Kimmerly



photo courtesy of the Jazwinski Family

Cass Tech Earns Governor’s Council Award

The Detroit Cass Tech football team was one of the most-celebrated champions from the 2011 MHSAA Football Finals after winning its first title with a convincing 49-13 victory over Detroit Catholic Central.

The Technicians were honored again in April with the Inspiring Story/Event Award from the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports and the Michigan Fitness Foundation.

The Governor's Fitness Awards annually recognize individuals, public officials and organizations committed to healthy living. The Inspiring Story Award is a special recognition given this season in honor of the Technicians, who entered the postseason unranked and also added to the victory's mystique by walking to Ford Field instead of busing in from the school's campus less than a mile away.

Cass Tech received the honor at the annual banquet April 26 at Ford Field.



ONE FOR THE HOME TEAM

Ford Field is right in the back yard of Detroit Cass Tech High School, but the journey to reach the stadium always seemed so far until the Technicians brought home the 2011 title.

Scholar-Athlete Class of 2012 Honored

The Michigan High School Athletic Association/Farm Bureau Insurance Scholar-Athlete Award has been recognizing the top student-athletes for 23 years. Applicants for the Scholar-Athlete Award must meet the following criteria: A minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale; and must have previously won a varsity letter. Applicants also show involvement in other school and community activities; submit two letters of recommendation and a 500-word essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics.

Recipients of the 2011-12 Scholar-Athlete Award receive a \$1,000 college scholarship to be used at the college, university, or trade school of their choice during the 2012-13 school year. This year, 1,636 applications from 386 schools were received for the 32 scholarships. Class A students were guaranteed 12 winners, Class B eight winners, Class C six winners and Class D four winners. Two at-large winners were also selected.

All scholarship recipients were honored in ceremonies at halftime of the Class C Boys Basketball Final at the Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing on March 24.



32 student-athletes from around the state are honored during the MHSAA Boys Basketball Finals each year for academic excellence.

2012 Scholar-Athlete Award Winners

Sara Marie Barron, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, Class B
 Kathryn MacDermid Bollman, Williamston, Class B
 Kelsey Butcher, Morrice, Class D
 Julie Buursma, Holland Christian, Class B
 Brendon Clover, White Lake Lakeland, Class A
 Jordan S. Daley, Grand Rapids Christian, Class B
 Amanda Marie Fodera, Fraser, Class A
 Nathaniel P. Gaynor, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, Class B
 Christopher Robert Hagan, East Lansing, Class A
 Jonathan Andrew Harper, Clare Class C
 Alexander Hassan, Ann Arbor Huron, Class A
 Josh Hoogendoorn, Jenison, Class A
 Hannah Marie Howarth, Gibraltar Carlson, Class A
 Nick Iacobellis, DeWitt, Class A
 Megan Kangas, Norway, Class C
 Andrew Kelley, Allegan, Class B

Seth Kintigh, Jackson Christian Class D
 Trevor Lewis, Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker, Class C
 Lena Madison, New Buffalo, Class C
 Sean McBrayer, Unionville-Sebewaing, Class C
 Rachel Neumann, Flint Powers Catholic, Class B
 Nick Huston Parnell, Spring Lake, Class B
 Sabeek Pradhan, Hillsdale Academy, Class D
 Abigail Rawling, Rochester, Class A
 Dana Schrauben, Lake Orion, Class A
 Jamie Lyn Seppanen, Eben Jct Sup. Central, Class D
 Heather Smith, Farmington Hills Mercy, Class A
 Alexis Stanton, Jenison, Class A
 Elyse Ann Louise Starck, Morley-Stanwood, Class C
 Jessica Turner, Birmingham Groves, Class A
 Craig Zebell, Dowagiac, Class B
 Garret Zuk, White Lake Lakeland, Class A



Barron



Bollman



Butcher



Buursma



Clover



Daley



Fodera



Gaynor



Hagan



Harper



Hassan



Hoogendoorn



Howarth



Iacobellis



Kangas



Kelley



Kintigh



Lewis



Madison



McBrayer



Neumann



Parnell



Pradhan



Rawling



Schrauben



Seppanen



Smith



Stanton



Starck



Turner



Zebell



Zuk

Visit the Students page of MHSAA.com for a Scholar-Athlete History, and for 2012-13 Application Information

Janet Gillette Receives 2012 WISL Award

A fixture in Comstock Park athletics for 40 years, Janet Gillette previously has been recognized on local, regional and statewide levels for her contributions mostly as the high school's athletic director. On Feb. 5 she received the MHSAA's 25th Women In Sports Leadership Award.

Each year, the Representative Council considers the achievements of women coaches, officials and athletic administrators affiliated with the MHSAA who show exemplary leadership capabilities and positive contributions to athletics. The award was presented during the Women In Sports Leadership Conference banquet at the Lexington Lansing Hotel.



Janet Gillette

Gillette is a 1973 graduate of Comstock Park, and began coaching at the school just a year later. A four-sport athlete in high school, she eventually coached girls tennis, softball, volleyball and middle school basketball while also joining the district's teaching staff in 1977. Gillette then served as the high school athletic director from 1990 until retiring after the 2009-10 school year.

"One of my quotes that people always hear is there's no greater privilege in life than to have an impact on a young person. I got to do that every day," Gillette said. "And they impacted my life as well."

Under her leadership, Comstock Park served host to numerous MHSAA postseason tournaments, including 15 Lower Peninsula Track and Field Finals and multiple Girls Competitive Cheer Finals. Gillette also was active with the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association, serving as a presenter at numerous conferences and developing a coaches handbook.

"Few administrators have such a long record of hosting MHSAA Finals, evidence again of Janet Gillette's drive to contribute not only at Comstock Park, but to high school sports on a larger scale," said John E. "Jack" Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. "Her involvement with female athletics dates back nearly to their inception. Jan's impact will continue to be felt for years to come, and her contributions set a high standard for administrators in the future. We're proud to honor her with the Women In Sports Leadership Award."

Gillette is a member of the Comstock Park Athletic Hall of Fame. She also was recognized as Regional Athletic Director of the Year by the MIAAA,

Athletic Director of the Year by the Michigan Competitive Cheer Coaches Association and the West Michigan Basketball-Football Association, and Comstock Park Employee of the Year in 2004. She received the MHSAA's Allen W. Bush Award in 2006 for her service to high school athletics.

In the community, Gillette has served as a coach in the Northwest Little League and has been active with the Alpine Baptist Church as an AWANA Director and a Sunday School teacher. She earned an Associate's Degree from Grand Rapids Community College in 1975, where she also played basketball and softball, and a Bachelor's Degree in physical education from Grand Valley State University in 1977.

The first Women In Sports Leadership Award was presented in 1990. Past recipients are:

- 1990 – Carol Seavoy, L'Anse
- 1991 – Diane Laffey, Harper Woods
- 1992 – Patricia Ashby, Scotts
- 1993 – Jo Lake, Grosse Pointe
- 1994 – Brenda Gatlin, Detroit
- 1995 – Jane Bennett, Ann Arbor
- 1996 – Cheryl Amos-Helmicki, Huntington Woods
- 1997 – Delores L. Elswick, Detroit
- 1998 – Karen S. Leinaar, Delton
- 1999 – Kathy McGee, Flint
- 2000 – Pat Richardson, Grass Lake
- 2001 – Suzanne Martin, East Lansing
- 2002 – Susan Barthold, Kentwood
- 2003 – Nancy Clark, Flint
- 2004 – Kathy Vrugink Westdorp, Grand Rapids
- 2005 – Barbara Redding, Capac
- 2006 – Melanie Miller, Lansing
- 2007 – Jan Sander, Warren Woods
- 2008 – Jane Bos, Grand Rapids
- 2009 – Gail Ganakas, Flint; Deb VanKuiken, Holly
- 2010 – Gina Mazzolini, East Lansing
- 2011 – Ellen Pugh, Ogemaw Heights; Patti Tibaldi, Traverse City



Bill Mick Named 2012 Forsythe Award Winner

For more than four decades, Bill Mick contributed to high school athletics as a coach, administrator and then mentor to those who followed him in those roles. For those and many more contributions, he is the 2012 recipient of the MHSAA's Charles E. Forsythe Award.

The annual award is in its 35th year of existence and is named after former MHSAA Executive Director Charles E. Forsythe, the Association's first full-time and longest-serving chief executive. Forsythe Award recipients are selected each year by the MHSAA Representative Council, based on an individual's outstanding contribution to the interscholastic athletics community. Mick received his honor at halftime of the MHSAA Class B Boys Basketball Championship game March 24 at the Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing.

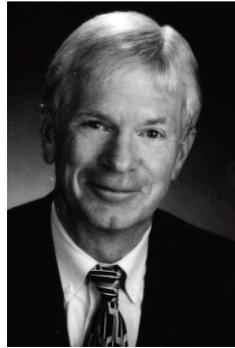
Mick began his career at Bullock Creek Public Schools from 1963-76, first as a science and physical education teacher and later as a counselor and Guidance Department head. He then moved to Midland Public Schools, serving as a counselor at Midland High and then Counseling Department Head at Midland Dow until becoming the district's Coordinator of Health, Physical Education and Athletics from 1985-97. Mick finished his educational career as a part-time counselor at Midland's Windower High School from 1997-2002 and then again at Bullock Creek High School from 2002-03.

Among his various contributions to athletics, Mick served on the MHSAA Representative Council for three years and in a variety of roles with the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA) over 24 years. He coached cross country, track, football and basketball, and has served as an instructor in the MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program.

Mick also was an MHSAA Track Finals meet manager for three years and served as executive secretary of the Mid-Michigan B league for five.

"Bill Mick contributed to high school athletics in a number of mentorship capacities during his career, and he remained engaged in that service after his retirement," said MHSAA Executive Director John E. "Jack" Roberts. "Through his work with the MHSAA and MIAAA, Bill has provided valuable training to the next generation of leaders. We're proud to honor Bill Mick with the Forsythe Award."

Mick has received multiple honors from the MIAAA, including the State Award of Merit in 2002 and Distinguished Service Award in 2008. He also received the MHSAA's Al Bush Award in 1998 for his many contributions to the association, and the Midland Area Community Foundation's Lloyd Os-



Bill Mick

born Award in 1997 for his service to youth and athletics in that community. He was inducted into the Midland County Sports Hall of Fame in 1998.

A Tawas High School and Albion College graduate, Mick also received a master's degree from Central Michigan University and did post-graduate work at Saginaw Valley State University.

Past recipients of the Charles E. Forsythe Award are:

- 1978 - Brick Fowler, Port Huron; Paul Smarks, Warren
- 1979 - Earl Messner, Reed City; Howard Beatty, Saginaw
- 1980 - Max Carey, Freesoil
- 1981 - Steven Sluka, Grand Haven; Samuel Madden, Detroit
- 1982 - Ernest Buckholz, Mt. Clemens;
T. Arthur Treloar, Petoskey
- 1983 - Leroy Dues, Detroit; Richard Maher, Sturgis
- 1984 - William Hart, Marquette; Donald Stamats, Caro
- 1985 - John Cotton, Farmington; Robert James, Warren
- 1986 - William Robinson, Detroit; Irving Soderland, Norway
- 1987 - Jack Streidl, Plainwell; Wayne Hellenga, Decatur
- 1988 - Jack Johnson, Dearborn;
Alan Williams, North Adams
- 1989 - Walter Bazylewicz, Berkley; Dennis Kiley, Jackson
- 1990 - Webster Morrison, Pickford;
Herbert Quade, Benton Harbor
- 1991 - Clifford Buckmaster, Petoskey;
Donald Domke, Northville
- 1992 - William Maskill, Kalamazoo;
Thomas G. McShannock, Muskegon
- 1993 - Roy A. Allen Jr., Detroit; John Duncan, Cedarville
- 1994 - Kermit Ambrose, Royal Oak
- 1995 - Bob Perry, Lowell
- 1996 - Charles H. Jones, Royal Oak
- 1997 - Michael A. Foster, Richland;
Robert G. Grimes, Battle Creek
- 1998 - Lofton C. Greene, River Rouge;
Joseph J. Todey, Essexville
- 1999 - Bernie Larson, Battle Creek
- 2000 - Blake Hagman, Kalamazoo;
Jerry Cvengros, Escanaba
- 2001 - Norm Johnson, Bangor; George Lovich, Canton
- 2002 - John Fundukian, Novi
- 2003 - Ken Semelsberger, Port Huron
- 2004 - Marco Marcet, Frankenmuth
- 2005 - Jim Feldkamp, Troy
- 2006 - Dan McShannock, Midland; Dail Prucka, Monroe
- 2007 - Keith Eldred, Williamston;
Tom Hickman, Spring Lake
- 2008 - Jamie Gent, Haslett;
William Newkirk, Sanford-Meridian
- 2009 - Paul Ellinger, Cheboygan
- 2010 - Rudy Godefroidt, Hemlock; Mike Boyd, Waterford
- 2011 - Eric C. Federico, Trenton



Classifications Announced for 2012-13

Classifications for Michigan High School Athletic Association elections and post-season tournaments in traditionally classified sports (A, B, C, D) for the 2012-13 school year have been announced, as well as the enrollment breaks for tournaments set up by divisions.

Classifications for the upcoming school year are based on a second semester count date, which for MHSAA purposes was Feb. 8. The enrollment figure submitted for athletic classification purposes may be different from the count submitted for school aid purposes, as it does not include students ineligible for athletic competition because they reached their 19th birthday prior to September 1 of the current school year and will not include alternative education students if none are allowed athletic eligibility by the local school district.

After all the counts are submitted, tournament-qualified member schools are ranked according to enrollment, and then split as closely into quarters as possible. For 2012-13, there are 760 tournament-qualified member schools and 190 schools in each class.

Effective with the 2012-13 school year, schools with 911 or more students are in Class A in MHSAA postseason tournament competition. The enrollment limits for Class B are 449 to 910; Class C is 217 to 448; and schools with enrollments of 216 and fewer are Class D. The breaks decreased 41 students between Classes A and B and 17 between Classes B and C, and increased one between Classes C and D.

The new classification breaks will see 29 schools move up in class for 2012-13, while 24 schools will move down.

Schools were recently notified of their classification. MHSAA Executive Director Jack Roberts said that schools may not subsequently lower their enrollment figure. However, if revised enrollment figures should be higher and indicate that a school should be playing in a higher class, that school would be moved up.

Schools have the option to play at any higher classification for a minimum of two years, but must exercise the option by April 15 for fall sports, Aug. 15 for winter sports, and Oct. 15 for spring sports.

MHSAA tournament sports conducted in traditional classifications for 2012-13 are Basketball and Girls Volleyball. Football will use traditional classifications to determine playoff points.

Sports which will compete in nearly equal divisions are: Baseball, Bowling, Girls Competitive Cheer, Lower Peninsula Cross Country, Lower Peninsula Golf, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Lower Peninsula Soccer, Skiing, Softball, Lower Peninsula Swimming and Diving, Lower Peninsula Tennis, Lower Peninsula Track and Field, and Wrestling.

Visit the respective sports pages on the MHSAA Website to review the divisional alignments. The divisions and qualifiers for the MHSAA Football Play-

offs will be announced on Selection Sunday, Oct. 21, 2012.

Here is the list of schools changing classification for 2012-13 (This list does not include schools opting up in class/division for tournaments).

Moving Up From Class B to Class A

St. Joseph
East Grand Rapids
Hamtramck
Riverview Community
Sault Ste. Marie Sault Area
Grand Rapids Christian
Fowlerville
Fruitport
Linden
Coldwater

Moving Down From Class A to Class B

Warren Fitzgerald
Warren Regina
Flint Northwestern
Flint Northern
St. Clair
Grand Rapids Creston
Trenton
Detroit Central
Detroit Pershing

Moving Up From Class C to Class B

River Rouge
Farwell Area
Kentwood Grand River Preparatory
Leslie
Clare
Detroit Henry Ford School for Creative Studies
Kalkaska
Napoleon
Southfield Bradford Academy

Moving Down From Class B to Class C

Dearborn Advanced Technology Academy
Detroit Westside Academy
Harper Woods
Hemlock
Highland Park Community
Muskegon Heights
Detroit Frederick Douglass

Moving Up From Class D to Class C

Ypsilanti Arbor Prep
Grand Rapids Wellspring Preparatory
Detroit DEPSA Early College of Excellence
Wixom St. Catherine of Siena Academy
Detroit Jalen Rose Leadership Academy
Three Oaks River Valley
Detroit Collegiate Prep
Harper Woods HEART Academy
Saginaw Michigan Lutheran Seminary
West Bloomfield Frankel Jewish Academy

Moving Down From Class C to Class D

Mendon
Mt. Pleasant Beal City
Fife Lake Forest Area
Suttons Bay
St. Ignace La Salle
Mesick
Rudyard
Saginaw Buena Vista

CAP: Coaching the Coaches

What are the legal responsibilities of coaches and the steps involved in risk management? How do you set a motivational climate for your athletes or a positive, task-oriented practice climate? How should you select and train captains and/or what are some keys to leading your team? How do you prepare to practice like a champion? These and many more questions are discussed at MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program clinics.



The MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program is a series of modules taught by qualified instructors who go through yearly program review, training and the sharing of best practices. It includes the opportunity for coaches to learn and be reminded of their role and responsibility within the school district and how coaching is beyond the “Xs and Os.” It results in coaches being trained to deal with the many additional coaching responsibilities that they are faced with as well as understanding the importance of communication with the many constituents of which they have daily contact.

Following are some reactions to CAP courses from attendees.

- *“I received many new ideas to implement into practice for my entire season.”*
- *“Great! I learned so much – it will certainly help in my upcoming season.”*
- *“The session had a lot of useful information that pertains to the real-life experience.”*
- *“Great presentation. Nice resources to reflect on later.”*
- *“Excellent! Eye-opening!”*

Michigan is one of just a few states which continues to offer its own coaches education program in a face-to-face delivery format. CAP is developed to maximize interaction among participants. Open discussion and engagement of the participant is a priority and additional expectations include clear learning objectives; interaction, problem-solving exercises, collaboration between coaches, group

and individual exercises, supplemented with related resources and materials.

CAP is included in many school district clinics and professional development days. In addition, school districts and conferences are requesting and requiring veteran and novice coaches to progress through various levels of the program.

One such district, Birch Run Schools, has required its coaches to complete all six levels of CAP (See related story in “Overtime” on page 44.

In 2009-10, with all six levels available to Michigan coaches and Michigan colleges and universities, attendance in CAP jumped to more than 2,000. The progress of coaches within the pro-

The MHSAA CAP Courses cover a wide range of topics to prepare coaches for the tremendous opportunity they have to educate and influence student-athletes.

gram has been unparalleled, with many coaches obtaining certification in all six levels of the coursework.

CAP sessions offers the added value benefits of SB-CEUs for continuing education; a \$1 million insurance policy for each year of proficient coursework; and *GamePlans* – an online newsletter chocked full of great coaching articles and tips, sent six times per school year to all participants.

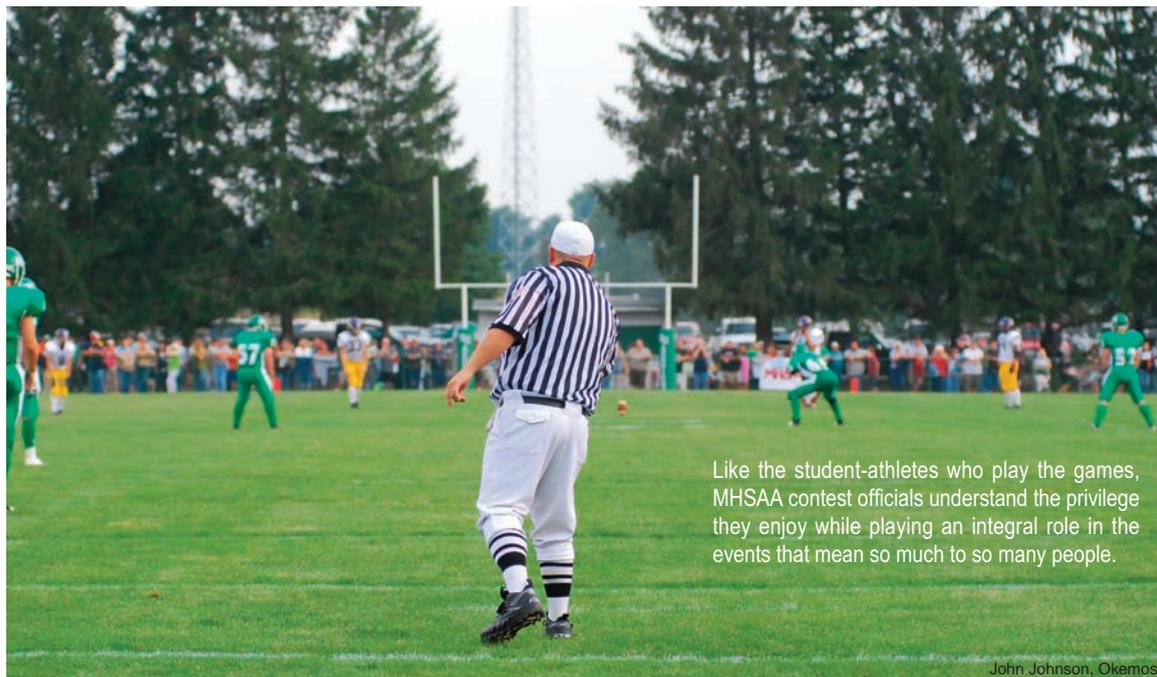
Each CAP level offers distinctive learning modules and includes a variety of instructional opportunities. The coursework does not need to be done in sequence; however certification does occur in a chronological approach. Certification occurs after the completion of CAP 1 and CAP 2 and then following successful completion of each additional level.

For details on each CAP level, a list of courses and online registration, click on the “Education” tab at the top of MHSAA.com, or scan the QR code below.

There is no better way to assist in changing the culture of the school and educate those with such a great responsibility—our coaches.

–Kathy Vrugink Westdorp
MHSAA Assistant Director





Like the student-athletes who play the games, MHSAA contest officials understand the privilege they enjoy while playing an integral role in the events that mean so much to so many people.

John Johnson, Okemos

Why You Should Consider Wearing Stripes

Some people reverently call this special group the most important people at a sporting event. Others dub them stupid, sightless and senseless, usually in a high-pitched scream.

Polar opposites. Good or bad. Black or white.

Yes, we're talking about game officials and referees. It's those guys, most often wearing the traditional zebra-striped shirts, that conjure such a range of emotion. Of course, without them, the games simply could not be played.

Their job requirements include strong shoulders, thick skulls, a capacity for consistency, a love for the game and the kids and a passion to do it right. Clearly, they are not in it for money or a new pair of glasses.

"All the officials are just like any ball player, some are above the others," OK Conference commissioner Jim Haskins said. "All are working very hard to do the best job they can, though. The West Michigan officials group is a good one to work with. We just cannot play without them. They go out of their way to help us out."

Each Tuesday and Friday night, the OK Conference must find 150 varsity basketball officials. Other local leagues, like the Alliance League and the River Valley Conference, need to find quality officials, too, on these same nights.

When you include officials at middle school, freshman and JV games, more than 450 are needed each week just for the OK Conference. That's a lot of men and women taking nightly doses of abuse. And you know what? The officials around

here only talk about the positive parts of their jobs.

Bob Wojcik, a past president of the West Michigan Officials Association, began officiating when he was 21. Now, 31 years later, he loves it more than ever. He even learned a greater appreciation for officiating after undergoing surgery on a birth defect in his ankle in 2004. Doctors doubted he would return. He is back and doing as well as ever. He is even back to doing collegiate games.

"I love it," Wojcik said. "I take nothing for granted, not since surgery, and I encourage others to try officiating. We spend a lot of time in the WMOA recruiting new officials, usually right in college or just out of it. We take time to train them, send them to camps and clinics."

Of course, there also are some 50-year-old guys just beginning their officiating careers. Wojcik, aka Wojo, said that's unusual. But when he gets a person with a passion to be as good an official as he can be, those guys are more than welcome, too.

Take Howie Beardsley, a former sports writer for *The Grand Rapids Press*. Two years ago he called up Wojo, and asked, "How to get started?"

Wojcik said Beardsley, now 55, was on a mission.

"Howie stuck with that mission, he went full-bore into it," Wojcik said. "It was refreshing to see someone who was already familiar with the local sports scene getting into giving back."

Beardsley, who also works at Hope Network West Lake Campus in Lowell as a resident advocate helping mentally disabled adults, said the local veteran officials work closely with rookies to get

them ready to move on up as quickly as possible.

“The neat thing about it is that the local officials take this very, very seriously,” Beardsley said. “The expect us and our association to be the best. I thought no one would give a hoot about me at first, and it was absolutely the opposite.

“It’s fun. I absolutely love it. I take it very seriously. When the games are done, I get to go home, take a shower and relax. No deadline,” he added with a laugh.

Beardsley and the rest of the officiating crews in every interscholastic sport are VIPs to the OK Conference. Many nights, Haskins, along with assistant commissioners Dave Bos and Steve Scholten, go to conference events to say hello to the officials, see how they are being treated by the schools, fans and players and make sure they are getting paid appropriately.

The OK Conference also has six observers who attend various games to watch officials, especially the ones at the lower levels, to see whether they are ready for varsity contests.

“Their evaluations are not the critical ones, these are not for ratings, but what they do is observe, talk to the officials about mechanics and different things they can do to be better,” Haskins said. “They are there to help, not to criticize.

“We’re looking for new officials all the time. We treat all the ones we have as best we can.”

“It’s those guys, most often wearing the traditional zebra-striped shirts, that conjure such a range of emotion. Of course, without them, the games simply could not be played.”

around 13,000 folks registered to officiate, and it’s still hard to get all our game slots filled,” said John Johnson, MHSAA communications director. “We continue to bang the drum for all officials in every sport.”

There you have it. You love the game. Quit complaining about officials. None of them are in it to get at your kid. Go register yourself online and become one of those guys in the stripes.

Officials know they are not perfect, and they will admit they might have blown a call to the coaches. We all make mistakes, and all you can do is say you’re sorry and move on.

— Jane Bos
Grand Rapids Press

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**Get
in the
Game**

Register at
MHSAA.com



MDOA Golf Outing to Assist Officials for Kids

The Metro Detroit Officials Association is hosting a golf outing Sunday, June 24, to benefit Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals in support of the Referees For Reading program at Beaumont Children’s Hospital. The program is one of the initiatives made possible by Officials For Kids and the generosity of local MHSAA Officials in Southeastern Michigan.

The sixth annual event will take place at Whispering Willows in Livonia. Please contact Robert Williams at (313) 919-3609 for details and registration information. Cost is \$100 per golfer and includes lunch and a buffet dinner, in addition to the chance to compete for team and individual prizes.

The event raised approximately \$12,500 for Referees For Reading in the first five years. The program allows hospitalized children at Beaumont Children’s Hospital to receive a bedside visit from a volunteer with a mobile Referees for Reading Book Cart. Each child is able to select and keep a new, age-appropriate book from the cart.

Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals receiving donations through the Officials For Kids programs are: Beaumont Hospital (Royal Oak); Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital (Grand Rapids); Sparrow Hospital (Lansing); and Hurley Medical Center (Flint).

The MHSAA is proud to accept donations from registering officials, and will continue to promote Officials for Kids to its membership. For more information, please visit the Officials for Kids page of MHSAA.com, or contact Andi Osters: aosters@mhsaa.com.



Rules of the Games

Sharpen your skills with the following rules questions. Answers appear at the bottom of the next page.

Baseball

- B1 hits a line drive back at the pitcher and the ball, without touching the pitcher, hits directly off the pitcher's plate and rebounds directly into the third base dugout. The proper ruling on this play is:
 - Ground rule double. Award B1 second base.
 - Umpire's discretion. In this case, place B1 at first base since the ball was not hit out of the infield.
 - Foul ball.
- R1 on first base with a 2-2 count with one out. The next pitch to B2 is low and in the dirt, and the ball deflects into the air off the catcher's shoulder. The ball comes straight down and lands in the shirt pocket of the plate umpire. The plate umpire properly calls time and:
 - Award R1 third base as whenever a thrown ball goes out of play, two bases are awarded.
 - Award R1 second base as whenever a pitch goes out of play, one base is awarded.
 - Keeps R1 at first base. Common sense tells us that R1 would not have advanced on this play.
 - Pulls the ball out of his pocket and drops the ball on the ground. The ball remains live and in play.
- Bases loaded with R3 on third, R2 on second and R1 on first with two outs with score tied 4-4 in the bottom of the sixth inning. The batter hits a ball 400 feet, over the fence for a home run, and the runners begin to advance. R1, who has been a problem for the umpires the entire game, maliciously runs over the second baseman on his way to second base. The umpires see this happen and correctly call "time," declares R1 out and ejects him from the game. How many runs are scored on this play?
 - 4
 - 3
 - 2
 - 1
 - None
- What is the properly penalty when a batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat?
 - Call the batter out and eject him from the game.
 - Call the batter out and eject him and the head coach from the game.
 - Call the batter out and restrict the head coach to the dugout for the remainder of the game if this is the first use of an illegal bat in that game.



Softball

- Which of the following statements are true regarding pitching regulations?
 - The hands must be separated prior to pitching when taking a position on the pitching plate.
 - A backward or "rocker" step is allowed with the non-pivot foot prior to the hands coming together.
 - Prior to the pitch, the hands must come together for a minimum of 10 seconds.
 - The forward step must be within the 24 inch width of the pitching plate.
 - When taking the initial position on the pitchers plate, both feet must be in contact with the plate.
- When a player is discovered using an altered bat:
 - The batter is out and a team warning is given.
 - The batter is out and ejected and the coach is restricted to the dugout.
 - The batter is out and both the batter and coach are ejected.
- A team is properly using the DP/FLEX as the game starts. In the third inning, the DP leaves the game and the FLEX bats. Which of the following are true:
 - The FLEX must bat in the same position as the DP had in the batting order.
 - The DP is not eligible for re-entry.
 - The FLEX may move to a different position in the batting order.
 - The DP may re-enter the game later and occupy the same position in the batting order as before.
- In the third inning, a team coach calls time and goes to the field to talk to the pitcher for the first time in the game. In the 4th inning, the coach makes a second visit to the field to talk with the pitcher. The plate umpire should:
 - Record the defensive conferences on his lineup card and inform the coach each time he/she has used a defensive conference.
 - Require that the coach remove the pitcher from the game.
 - Leave the base umpire keep track of the defensive conferences.
 - Rely on the home team scorekeeper to keep track of defensive conferences.

Soccer

- The referee observes the goalkeeper moving laterally along the goal line before the penalty kick is taken. The kick is blocked by the goalkeeper and goes out of bounds.
 - The referee shall award a re-kick.
 - The referee shall award a corner kick.
 - The referee shall award a goal kick.

2. Player A1 takes a corner kick that hits the goal post and rebounds back to A1, who then kicks the ball into the goal.
 - a. The referee should allow the goal.
 - b. The referee should allow an indirect free kick to the opponent from the spot of infringement.
 - c. The referee should allow a direct free kick to the opponent from the spot of infringement.
3. Player A1 is in an offside position after having made a play on goal. The ball is kicked up field by the goalkeeper and intercepted by Player A3. A3 sends the ball back into the box with A1 in an offside condition, but A1 is not active in the play. Which is correct?
 - a. Player A1 should be declared offside. Award indirect free kick.
 - b. Player A1 should be declared offside. Award direct free kick.
 - c. Player A1 should not be declared offside.

Girls Lacrosse

1. Attack player A1 has the ball in front of goal between 12 and 15m, and teammate A2 is being guarded deep and to the side of the goal circle by a defensive player. The low attack (A2) player begins to run across the goal and her defensive player (D2) stops and tries to play A1, moving straight on to her, more than an arm and sticks length away. This is:
 - a. A legal play.
 - b. An illegal play; minor foul.
 - c. An illegal play; major foul.
2. Illegal use of the crosse includes a cross-check which is (check all that apply):
 - a. Use of the shaft of the crosse to hit or push an opponent.
 - b. Use of the shaft of the crosse to displace an opponent.
 - c. Blocking an opponent by moving into her path without giving her a chance to stop or change direction.
 - d. Thrusting, jabbing, pushing or displacing any part of an opponent's body.
3. The definition of the crosse in the sphere major foul is (check all that apply):
 - a. A player may not reach into or through the sphere or hold her crosse around the throat of an opponent.



- b. A player may not directly poke or wave the crosse near an opponent's face.
 - c. Defense players are no longer allowed to go through the sphere to execute a check.
4. Blue player attempts a pass across the field to her teammate. The teammate misses the pass but plays it off her body to prevent the ball from going out of bounds. This is:
 - a. A legal play.
 - b. An illegal play; minor foul.
 - c. An illegal play; major foul.

Boys Lacrosse

1. Officials arrive at a field without a complete center line (or shadow line) marked through the middle of the field. The home coach is unable to make a correction and the game will be played without the complete center line.
 - a. Warn the home team, begin the game with a normal face off and contact the MHSAA.
 - b. Begin the game with an illegal procedure penalty against the home team (award the ball to the visiting team) and contact the MHSAA.
 - c. Assess a 30 second penalty to the home team and begin with a normal face off.
 - d. Assess a 30 second releasable penalty and award the ball to the visitors.
2. In which of the following situations is the 10 second count applicable?
 - a. After crossing the center line with possession.
 - b. After initially gaining possession in the offensive half of the field.
 - c. After regaining possession in the offensive half of the field following a defensive possession.
 - d. All of the above.
3. During a faceoff, it is legal for a player to:
 - a. Direct the course of the ball by moving his own crosse.
 - b. Place any body part on his own crosse or his opponents.
 - c. Use his own crosse to pin down the crosse of an opponent.
 - d. Kick the opponent's crosse.
4. If at any point the ball becomes stuck in the front or back of the crosse the correct ruling is
 - a. After allowing the player a reasonable time to dislodge the ball, blow the whistle.
 - b. Immediate whistle, award ball to the team without the ball.
 - c. So long as the player has possession of the crosse, there is no whistle.
 - d. Allow the player to pick up his crosse if he has dropped it and play on.

Baseball Answers: 1-c (2-16-1); 2-b (5-1-1 g, 8-3-3 d); 3-e (9-1); 4-c (1-3-5, 4-1-3 a & b Penalty, 8-4-1 a)

Softball Answers: 1-a, b, d (6-1, 1 & 2, Note); 2-c (7-4-2); 3-a, d (3-3-6); 4-a (3-7-1)

Soccer Answers: 1-b (14-1-3); 2-b (17-1-5); 3-c (11-1-3)

Girls Lacrosse Answers: 1-c (6-2); 2-a, b, d (6-1); 3-a, b, c (6-1); 4-b (5-9)

Boys Lacrosse Answers: 1-b (1-2-1); 2-d (4-15-1-); 3-a (4-3-5); 4-b (4-7-1)

Game On! ArbiterGame Set to Take Flight in 2012

ARBITERGAME OVERVIEW

ArbiterGame is the new online game scheduling tool from ArbiterSports, creators of software for sports leagues for nearly 30 years. ArbiterGame will be released to Michigan schools beginning May 23, 2012.

Newest ArbiterSports Product

ArbiterGame is the latest product from ArbiterSports, part of the NCAA Spectrum, and the industry leader in officiating assigning, training and payments software. ArbiterGame will be the only game scheduling software to fully integrate with ArbiterOne assigning, seamlessly transferring game information between ADs and between ADs and their assigners. And best of all, ArbiterGame will be backed by commitment to exceptional customer service.

Chosen by MHSAA

MHSAA selected ArbiterGame before it was built, allowing MHSAA and many of its member schools to work closely with us to ensure that ArbiterGame meets the needs of Michigan's school athletic departments. MHSAA has purchased ArbiterGame for its member high schools for the 2012-13 school year and has negotiated a discounted rate for junior high schools of just \$90. MHSAA has also purchased ArbiterOne assigning for all high school assigners for 2012-13. (Average prices elsewhere are \$300-350 for ArbiterGame and \$6 per official for ArbiterOne.)

Best to Use in Leagues

Because ArbiterGame is designed to make it easy for you to synchronize game information with your opponents and assigners, you'll find ArbiterGame most useful when your opponents are using ArbiterGame, too. For this reason we recommend leagues consider adopting ArbiterGame as a group.

Phased Release

ArbiterGame will be released in phases, beginning with the Early Release to Michigan schools on May 23, 2012. No school is required to use ArbiterGame and because the Early Release won't include all of our planned features, we hope this document and your conversations with staff will help you decide when it will make sense for you to start using ArbiterGame. The feature release schedule is outlined below.

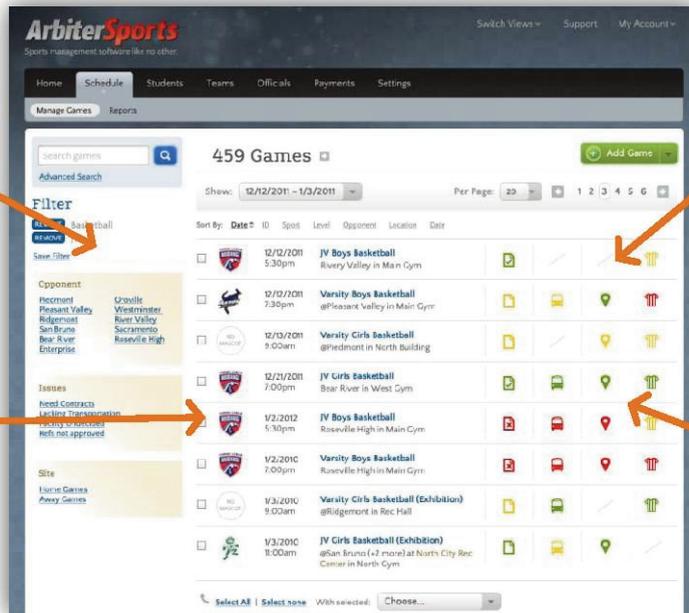
ARBITERGAME FEATURE RELEASE SCHEDULE

	May	Aug	Oct	Dec	2013
Game Scheduling					
add, edit and delete games	■				
electronic game contracts -- no more fax or mail	■				
automatic opponent calendar syncing	■				
import from Excel -- add games in bulk	■				
double-booking prevention	■				
schedule practices, concerts and school events		■			
schedule meets with 3 or more teams				■	
schedule tournaments				■	
Team Management					
default settings - home site, time, assigner, etc.	■				
team coaches and personnel		■			
team rosters w/ position, jersey, height, weight		■			
team histories by year			■		
Transportation request tracking					
track current status with transportation officer	■				
SchoolDude: integration with TripDirect				■	
Site Management					
track current status from facilities coordinator	■				
define and manage satellite sites	■				
SchoolDude: integration with FSDirect				■	
Game Officials					
automatic sync with ArbiterOne assigning	■				
assign your own officials	■				
Arbiter360 integration -- view registration status					■

ARBITERGAME AT A GLANCE

Easily filter games by sport, level, opponent, home/away, or games with issues.

Mascot shows whether your team is home or away.



View the status of each game's contract, facility and transportation requests, and game officials at a glance. Users can click any icon for full details.

Red, yellow and green icons indicate whether contest details need to be entered, are pending, or approved.

ArbiterGame Early Release for Michigan schools on May 23, 2012

	May	Aug	Oct	Dec	2013
RefPay electronic payments					
pay officials electronically					
track officiating payment histories					
create and email 1099s to officials					
Player & Student Management					
import students from Excel					
manage player info, including emergency contact					
Master Eligibility List export					
basic player award certificates					
MHSAA.com Integration					
automatically send schedule to MHSAA.com					
automatic import of MHSAA post-season games					
Game worker scheduling					
schedule game workers for games					
pay game workers with single click using RefPay					
Reports					
game schedule					
transportation schedule					
facility schedule					
team rosters					
opponent rosters					
coach rosters					
schedules by team					
game programs					
Report Center					

Schedule subject to re-prioritization based on user feedback

Two By Two: Rules Often Team Up to Deliver Intent

The rules of interscholastic athletics are interconnected. Often rules work in pairs or larger combinations to accomplish an outcome that educators desire for school sports. For example . . .

- The amateur status and awards rules were for many years separate Sections of Regulation I, but they were so interconnected that beginning with the 2010-11 school year they were combined into one Section.
- Sections 4 and 5 of Regulation I discuss maximum semesters of enrollment (Section 4) and maximum semesters of competition (Section 5); and while they are closely related, they are not identical and both are needed to frustrate “red shirting” and to facilitate students’ normal academic progress through high school.

The “linkage” between the amateur status and awards rules, as well as the maximum enrollment and competition rules, have been obvious by their proximity within the MHSAA Handbook, but connections just as strong and important exist elsewhere. None of these connections is more important than those that exist between the Sections of Regulation II – Rules for Contests Involving Senior High Schools, which together promote a scope of competition in interscholastic athletics that tends to be consistent with the mission of schools and to provide a perspective that conforms to schools’ educational objectives.

Several of these Sections have been particularly effective tools to help maintain a sane and sensible scope for school sports when most other sports programs for youth and adults tend increasingly toward more and more of everything, fostering a “keep up with the Joneses” attitude that promotes an “arms race” in sports.

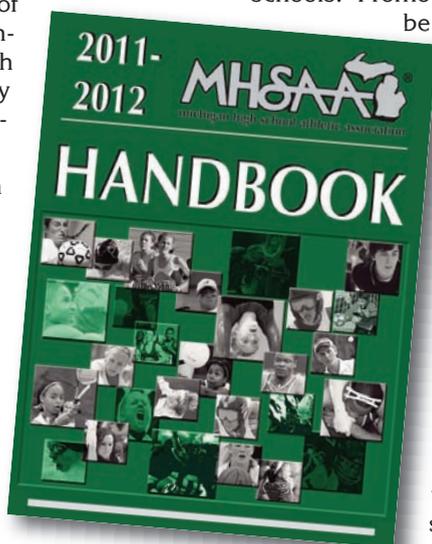
- Regulation II, Section 3 includes that the compensation of coaches must be exclusively through schools and be commensurate with compensation for classroom teachers’ schedules for supplementary assignments. Bonuses from boosters or schools to secure, retain or reward coaches have no place in school sports in Michigan.

- Regulation II, Section 5 describes the policies and procedures for approval of multi-team events with instate schools only when the events are sponsored by a non-member school, organization or individual, while Section 6 does the same for contests involving out-of-state schools. Promoters for their own profit will not be able to exploit Michigan schools or their higher profile athletes, coaches or teams.

- It is in Section 6 that the limit on interstate travel distance is found. Any time an MHSAA member school is at an event that involves schools from beyond Michigan and its bordering states and province (Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin and Ontario), no school involved from any state or province may travel more than 600 highway miles round-trip. The effect is that Michigan schools will not host or travel to events that are national in scope.

- Regulation II, Section 9 outlines special in-season rules for football; Section 10 does the same for other sports; and Section 11 provides the out-of-season limitations for all sports. The desired result is that one school is not forced to schedule more activities out of season or more contests during the season to keep up with other schools.
- Regulation II, Section 12 prohibits competition following the MHSAA Finals in each sport, while Section 13 prohibits schools’ involvement in all-star events involving undergraduates and national high school championships.
- Regulation II, Section 14 outlines multimedia/Internet policies, including that schools may not permit their regular season events to be video broadcast live.

While we are not always successful, it is intended that MHSAA member schools promote academics above athletics and put caring for the health and welfare of students ahead of a never-ending pursuit of larger trophies and grander titles, which often favors the higher profile sports, schools, players and coaches at the expense of less popular sports, smaller schools, subvarsity teams and less heralded individuals. This is the purpose of Regulation II, accomplished through the words of these nine interdependent Sections.



The Only Official Interpretations are Those Received in Writing



Inform Students, Coaches and Parents of Summer Dead Period

Each school sets its own summer dead period – a seven-consecutive day “zero player and coach contact period” for all sports and all coaches – no functions, fundraisers, parades, etc.

Non-school baseball and softball teams may continue their schedule during the dead period.

Set the period from a school’s last day of participation in any MHSAA tournament to Aug. 1. It is recommended that the dead period include the 4th of July.

There is no requirement to report, but there is a requirement to designate and observe a dead period.

Please include ALL sports, especially tennis and swimming in the discussions. Be sure to publicize your summer dead period to all parties and the community at large.



<< Spring Sport Officials << Ratings Due June 1

Spring is notoriously the season during which MHSAA schools lapse in their duty to rate contest officials.

We understand the number of contests taking place, the chaotic nature of scheduling due to weather, and the anticipation of summer vacation, but ratings must be submitted for officials at all levels, and on time: June 1. Not only do ratings supply feedback for officials and tournament assignments – they are a requirement your school and coaches are to follow. Please accomplish this detail in baseball, softball, soccer and lacrosse.



Schedule Membership Resolution for Board of Education Meetings

When the Representative Council meets each May, the rules are finalized for the coming school year, and meeting minutes are mailed to each member school. Every member school Board of Education or governing body of a nonpublic school wishing to join the MHSAA for the coming school year must vote to do so and adopt the rules as its own.

The MHSAA Membership Resolution must be signed by the Board of Education and returned to the MHSAA. Please complete both sides of the form: on the reverse side, list schools in your district that will be MHSAA members and include the current enrollment number for 7th and 8th grades. When membership lapses, insurance coverage, among other matters, is jeopardized.

Administrators: Please be sure to schedule the MHSAA Membership Resolution for your upcoming Board of Education Meeting – Membership Resolution Forms are mailed to superintendents and athletic directors each May and are due back to the MHSAA by July 31.

MHSAA Representative Council

William Chilman IV**

Superintendent
Beal City Public Schools
Class C-D — Northern Lower Peninsula

James Derocher**, President

Superintendent
Negaunee Public Schools
Class C-D — Upper Peninsula

Ken Dietz*

Athletic Director
Watervliet High School
Class C-D — Southwestern Michigan

Scott Grimes**, Vice President

Assistant Superintendent of Human Services
Grand Haven High School
Statewide At-Large

Kyle Guerrant (ex-officio)

Director , Coordinated School Health & Safety Programs Unit,
Michigan Dept. of Education, Lansing
Designee

Kris Isom* Athletic Director

Adrian Madison High School
Class C-D — Southeastern Michigan

Carmen Kennedy**

Assistant Principal / Athletic Director
St. Clair Shores South Lake High School
Appointee

Maureen Klocke*

Athletic Director
Yale Public Schools
Appointee

Karen Leinaar*

Athletic Director
Bear Lake High School
Statewide At-Large

Jason Mellema*

Superintendent
Pewamo-Westphalia Schools
Junior High/Middle Schools

Vic Michaels**, Secretary-Treasurer

Director of Physical Education & Athletics Archdiocese of Detroit
Private and Parochial Schools

Steve Newkirk**

Principal
Clare Middle School
Junior High/Middle Schools

Peter C. Ryan**

Athletic Director
Saginaw Township Community Schools
Class A-B — Northern Lower Peninsula

Fred Smith**

Athletic Director
Buchanan High School
Class A-B — Southwestern Michigan

Paula Steele*

Principal
Perry High School
Appointee

John Thompson**

Athletic Director
Brighton High School
Class A-B — Southeastern Michigan

Al Unger*

Athletic Director
Kingsford High School
Class A-B — Upper Peninsula

Alvin Ward**

Administrator of Athletics
Detroit Public Schools
City of Detroit

Mark Woodson**

Director of Student Development and Athletics
Romulus High School
Appointee

*Term Expires December 2013

**Term Expires December 2012

ANALYSIS OF MHSAA MEMBERSHIP

April 10, 2012

763 Total High Schools

652 (85%) Total Public Schools

- 50 (7%) Charter (Public School Academies)
- 602 (79%) Traditional Schools

111 (15%) Total Nonpublic Schools

- 101 (13%) Religious
- 10 (1%) Secular Non-Public

768 Total Junior High/Middle Schools

699 (91%) Total Public Schools

- 27 (4%) Charter (Public School Academies)
- 672 (88%) Traditional Schools

69 (9%) Total Nonpublic Schools

- 65 (8%) Religious
- 4 (0.5%) Secular

Happy New Year! Prep for 2012-13 School Year

ArbiterGame-MHSAA Scheduling and Training: ADs and secretaries are encouraged to explore the new scheduling software which is operational May 23, 2012, for fall sports. When logged into MHSAA.com under School Administrator Services personnel can view ArbiterGame Updates. Be sure to register in advance for one of the training sessions during the week of June 4, 2012, at locations around the state. There are also programs in the MHSAA Office on May 30 and 31, 2012, for each league to designate an AD and a secretary as their league expert/liaison.

MHSAA.com School Year Start Up: Beginning in mid-July, all athletic directors must log into MHSAA.com and update school contact information for administrators and coaches and double-check the sports the MHSAA shows your school as sponsoring. Adding or dropping a sport must be done in writing on school letterhead. Accurate coach information allows for rules meeting completion. ADs are urged to submit their mobile phone numbers which are kept private and used for necessary contact by MHSAA staff.

Fall Sports Rules Meetings: Head coaches are required to complete an online rules meeting. Many schools are having all staff members complete a meeting due in part to the strong health and safety content – and the presentations will continue to include important concussion information. If schools require assistant coaches to complete a rules meeting, ADs must enter their information on MHSAA.com. Increasingly, schools have an internal policy requiring coaches complete a meeting before the first contest. The windows for completing a fall sports rules meeting are as follows:

- Football, Volleyball, Soccer: Monday, July 23 – Thursday, Sept. 6, 2012;
- Cross Country, Golf, Tennis, Swimming & Diving: Monday, Aug. 6 – Thursday, Sept. 13, 2012

The penalty for failure to complete a meeting by the deadline: Head coach cannot be present at the site where their team is participating in the MHSAA Tournament in that sport for that season.

New AD Orientation: Newly hired high school athletic directors or those hired after Dec. 1, 2011, are required to attend an AD Orientation in the MHSAA in East Lansing. There are three dates to choose from: Aug. 2, 14 or Sept. 18 (for those hired later). Each program runs from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Advance registration is preferred and available through MHSAA.com. Because it is often difficult to identify new ADs during the summer, please assist us in contacting your new colleagues. The orientation requirement is waived for a new athletic director who has served in a member high school as an AD for at least one school year of the previous five.

AD In-service and Update Meetings: Athletic directors should plan now to attend an AD In-Service and Update Meeting in the fall. While attendance is strong, some ADs have not attended as their duties have increased. We suggest the opposite approach and urge those who have not attended recently to make it a point of emphasis. Attending these efficient “2-in-1” programs improves leadership and service skills and can make your work less of a burden. Please note there are new dates for the meetings in Kalamazoo (Wednesday, Sept. 26), Warren (Monday, Oct. 1), and Lansing (Thursday, Oct. 4). The full schedule of all meetings and the registration form appears on MHSAA.com.

The MHSAA Office **Summer Hours** are 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday from June 25-July 27. Normal Monday-Friday hours resume Aug. 1 (8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; close Fridays at 4 p.m.).

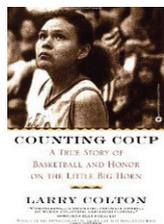
Efficiency is Effective...

The MHSAA is always willing to assist with issues concerning Association regulations. Please remember, however, the most efficient method of communication with the MHSAA on eligibility questions is through the athletic director or principal. Athletic directors should gather all information necessary on a question and then call or write the MHSAA. Coaches or parents calling the MHSAA on eligibility matters can create confusion and delay. ADs or principals are encouraged to contact the MHSAA office directly. Please follow this efficient path of communication.

Three-Pointers from Big Sky Country

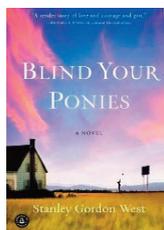
Three books have recently attempted to capture the essence of at least a snapshot of school basketball in Montana.

- *Counting Coup: A True Story of Basketball and Honor on the Little Big Horn* (Hachette Book Group, 2001) by Larry Colton wins the gold medal in this group. It takes place in



and around the Crow Indian Reservation in south central Montana. As we follow the high school senior basketball season of Crow Indian Sharon LaForge, we are forced to “marvel at her bravery, (and) recoil at her choices” and are made to wonder about hundreds of years of public policy in America. This is a complicated and compelling work.

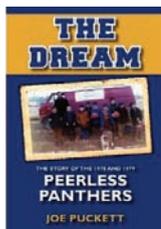
- *Blind Your Ponies* (Algonquin Books, 2011) is the silver medalist here. This novel by Minnesota author Stanley Gordon West tells the



tale of a high school basketball team which has lost 93 consecutive games. It's a resurrection story that is touching but, at 500-plus pages, can also be tedious.

- Finishing a distant third in this Montana trio is *The Dream* (Aubade Publishing, 2010) by Joe Puckett. It's not just the story of the 1978 and 1979 boys basketball team at Peerless High School, it's a celebration of the author's extended family and a eulogy for Peerless High School that was closed in 2009. Puck-

ett's purpose, he writes, is to assure that the stories and legacies are remembered. He confesses that *The Dream* “is



unabashedly nostalgic.”

And it is. So much so that the reader almost cries out: “Get over it. Grow up. Get on with life.”

But the passion and, yes, the nostalgia, are so like feelings for high school sports else-

“... we are forced to ‘marvel at her bravery, (and) recoil at her choices’ and are made to wonder about hundreds of years of public policy in America. This is a complicated and compelling work.”

where that we get it – we understand that these high school years are so unique and special that people often overinvest as they occur and hang on too long after they end.

Closer to Home . . .

Three of our Michigan colleagues have recently released publications.

- David J. Hulings, who we know as a high school soccer coach and many others know as a youth and senior pastor and motivational coach, published *Just Middle Manager* in 2009 (Tate Publishing). It's a leadership fable about becoming the next great leader where you live, work and play.

- Jerry Hendrick, best known as men's tennis coach at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, published *I Love You (But You Should Have Won!)* in 2010 (Fairway Press). It intends to be a guide for parents with children who play sports.

- Dan Saferstein has just released *Your Coaching Legacy* (Trusted Guide Press, 2012). Dr. Saferstein is a licensed psychologist in Ann Arbor whose previous publications include *Strength in You: A Student Athlete's Guide to Competition and Life* (Trusted Guide Press, 2006).

Politically Incorrect, Maybe; but Effective

One of the best received speakers in the long history of the summer meetings of the National Federation of State High School Associations is Kathy DeBoer, a Michigan State University alumna who's now executive director of the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

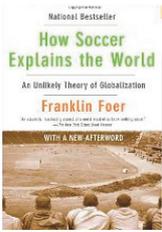
Her speech two decades ago was an entertaining and enlightening look at how men and women are different, which many people attempt to debate or ignore. Ms. DeBoer was convincing that if you understand gender differences, embrace them and capitalize on them, you can be a far more effective teacher, coach, administrator, business person or spouse.

This message is captured in the 2004 publication (Coaches Choice) titled *Gender and Competition: How Men and Women Approach Work and Play Differently*.

This book, and its author, are valuable resources for our labors in the sports world, and for our daily personal relationships.

The World According to Soccer

The audaciously titled *How Soccer Explains the World* (Harper Collins, 2004) will be appealing to those who are devotees of the international soccer scene, and especially so for those who have also studied world history through books or travel.



In a genre of generally low literary standards, this work by Franklin Foer is an exception, with vivid descriptions of events and people the author met during a year-long odyssey that attempts to explain the failure of globalization to erode ancient tribal hatreds and the persistent

corruption in both politics and sports. The author dares to suggest that soccer not only can explain globalization but also has served to blunt racism, religious bigotry and the return to tribalism.

This is a work of sports, social science and humor that takes the reader to sporting and social/political conflicts in the Balkans, Brazil, Italy, Holland, Hungary, England and Northern Ireland.

And an Afterword offers a prescription for winning the World Cup, or at least might improve the reader's odds should he/she wish to bet on the outcome.

Read any good books? We'd love to know. Send recommendations to benchmarks@mhsaa.com.

Bulletin Board Material

"It is not slickness, polish, uniqueness, or cleverness that makes a brand a brand. It is truth." – Harry Beckwith, Author/Marketer

"If you don't get noticed, you don't have anything. You just have to be noticed, but the art is in getting noticed naturally, without screaming or without tricks." – Leo Burnett, Advertising Icon

"A product is something made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by the customer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated; a successful brand is timeless." – Stephen King, Advertising Publisher

"The more you engage with customers the clearer things become and the easier it is to determine what you should be doing." – John Russell, President, Harley-Davidson

Basketball Experience Aims to Reach Higher in 2012

Now in its fourth year, BCAM and the MHSAA have united to bring the perfect venue for underclass basketball players to "showcase" their talents and maybe reach a higher level after high school.

The Reaching Higher Experience is the "Advanced Placement Course" in high school basketball. This **NCAA-approved** event will provide each student-athlete an understanding of what it takes to succeed academically, athletically and socially at the college level.

Player invitations for the 2012 events have now been sent to schools.

The Boys event is slated for July 18, 2012, and the Girls event takes place July 26, both at South Lyon High School.

Visit MHSAA.com and BCAM.org for updated information.



Birch Run Takes Initiative in Coaches Education

Birch Run Schools has taken a proactive approach and commitment to coaches education in requiring their head coaches to take all six levels of the MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program (CAP) in a three-year period. The program has been embraced by the head coaches and the assistants within the program have also committed to taking CAP.

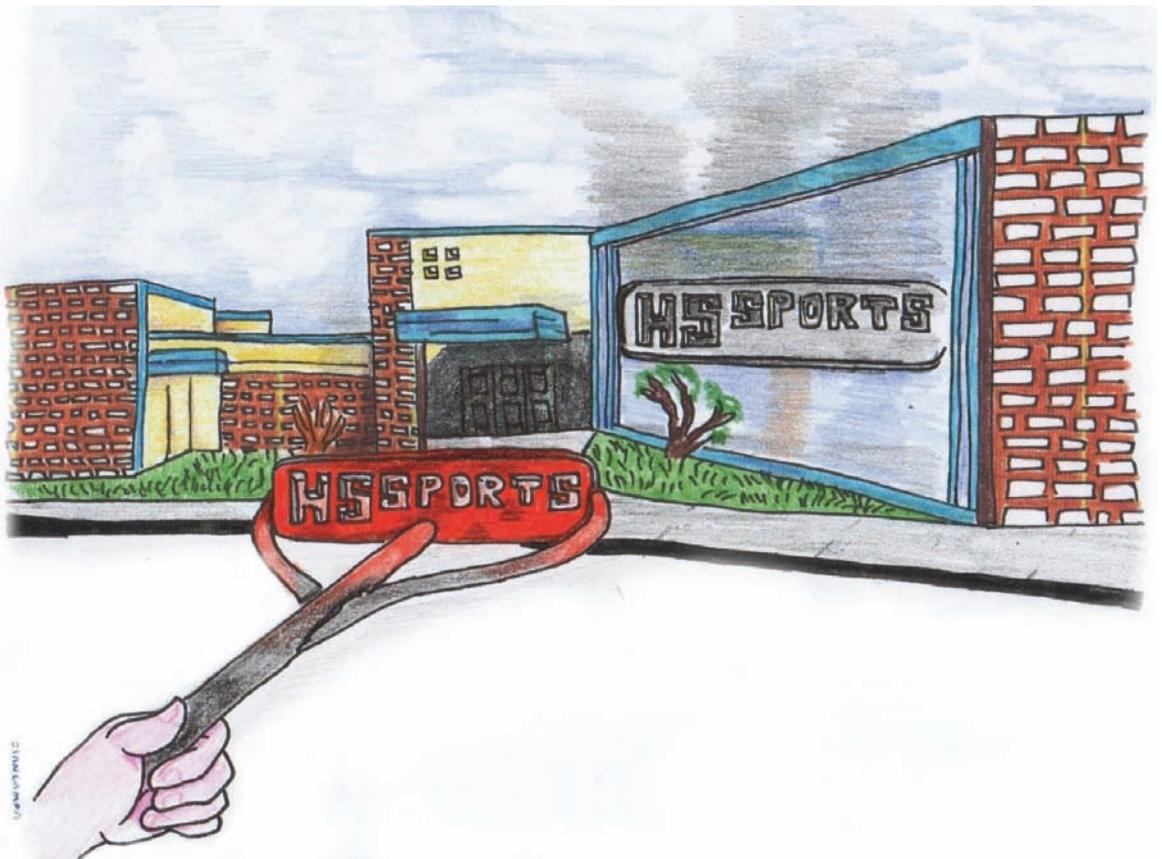
Birch Run has already offered several well-attended programs and three of the head coaches have already completed all six levels of CAP in a four-month span (December-March).

Superintendent Dave Bush indicates that once he, Birch Run Athletic Director Phil Periard and the Birch Run Board of Education reviewed the program, they realized the great value it carries for the coaching staff. As a district, they are committed to professional development for classroom educators as well as the need for professional development for coaching educators.

“So much of the MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program is relevant to the success of a coach, and CAP emphasizes the many components that are necessary to running a successful athletic program – beyond the Xs and Os,” Bush said.

“The modules reflect the many roles and responsibilities a coaching educator has while coaching a team. The communication strands throughout the curriculum are imperative to the success of a coach. This is a priority for our head coaches and the many modules covered will be useful in placing our students in a safer educational atmosphere.”

Congratulations to Birch Run for their proactive approach.



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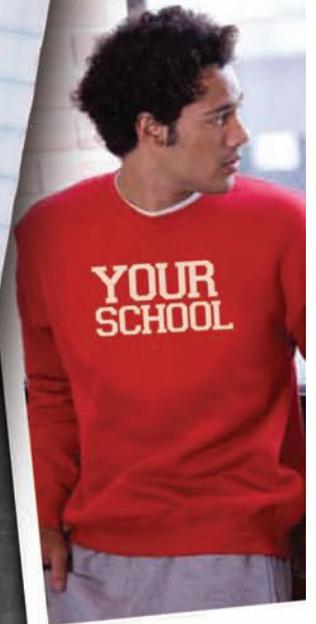
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