

2017 SOCCER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Monday, January 23, 2017, 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

John Conlon, East Kentwood
Scott Dane, Grand Ledge
Brian Fuller, Harbor Beach
Kevin Guzzo, St Joseph
Doug Helmling, Clare
Ann Lowney, Clarkston
Dan Mesyar, Ludington

Chris Miller, Gobles
Amy Rossow, Grand Blanc
Mike Thayer, Auburn
John Ciecko, Bloomfield Hills (Guest)

MHSAA STAFF

Andy Frushour (Recorder)

The 2016-17 MHSAA Soccer Committee met in the MHSAA office to review topics involving soccer and the tournament series. The meeting began with a review of the MHSAA decision making process and charge of the Soccer Committee. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the coaches association.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

HEAD TRAUMA

The committee reviewed the in-depth head trauma discussion from the 2015 & 2016 meetings, and were presented 2015-16 statistics from the MHSAA's new Head Injury Reporting System and Concussion Care Insurance program. With all of the education of the past years, coaches are more aware of concussion issues. Coaches are more attentive to possible concussions during games, and in practice they spend time practicing proper heading technique. In the youth game, U.S. Soccer does not allow heading in games featuring kids under the age of 12 years old. Officials are also more aware and there has been a noticeable difference in the way aerial challenges are officiated. The committee will continue to monitor educational and rule making efforts from U.S. Soccer.

MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

An update was given on the activities of the Multi-Sport Task Force. The committee discussed the uniqueness of the youth soccer landscape, where specialization is becoming more and more prominent, and its effect on potential multi-sport athletes. A focus of the conversation was on U.S. Soccer's creation of development academies for girls (launching in fall 2017) which will offer three age groups that compete for high school-aged players. Similar to the boy's development academies, U.S. Soccer will require the girls to choose between playing club or high school. The committee understands competition for players between schools and for-profit clubs is challenging, but reiterated the MHSAA's need to continue selling the benefits of playing high school sports.

SOCCER ISSUES

Player safety, and the idea of practicing more and playing fewer games, was a common thread in discussion on the regular season and postseason. The committee reviewed the multi-team tournament rule and the physical effect of playing 180 minutes in one day. Some committee members suggest eliminating these tournaments altogether, while others would prefer the MHSAA allow two 80-minute games in addition to three 60-minute games. The committee also discussed counting each game in a multi-team tournament toward the season maximum, while simultaneously raising the season maximum by a game or two.

The committee also discussed the necessity of playing overtime periods during the regular season. Overtimes add more minutes to bodies already stressed from many games played during a compact season, and it lengthens game times by 30+ minutes thus delaying the return home from games. In addition, ties are common and accepted in the culture of soccer, and bringing statewide conformity to a regular season overtime rule would be welcomed. The committee also noted that many leagues play end-of-season tournaments, and an allowance for overtimes/shootout in bracketed regular season tournaments should be permitted.

The MHSAA Regional Tournament schedule was also discussed at length. Currently Regionals can be played with one day of rest in between games. Tuesday/Thursday and Wednesday/Friday schedules are quite common. The committee was presented feedback from coaches pushing for a change to require two days of rest in between the semifinal and final games. Coaches feel the extra day would give players fresh and rested legs for their most important game of the season.

The committee also looked at ways to make the District schedule less dense, especially in the girls tournament where there is one less day and a multitude of end-of-year school functions to avoid. A solution to move the first District game to the week before the Semifinals/Finals was discussed (to be used in both seasons). The committee will continue to seek feedback from coaches and administrators and revisit this topic at the 2018 meeting.

It was also noted that a number of Districts during the fall boys season played semifinals in a doubleheader format. While this works perfectly with lighted fields, it causes two problems for fields without lights: 1) the start time for the first game is often before school is out for the day, and 2) it pushes the second game later into the evening and causes daylight issues. In future tournaments the MHSAA will require Boys District hosts without lights to play semifinals at two separate sites (top line host).

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Positive feedback for the new four-game minimum rule for postseason eligibility.
- Participation levels of MS/JH Soccer, and an overview of the first year of sixth grade participation.
- Reviewed the seeding proposal from the 2016 Soccer Committee. Still not enough momentum to advance a proposal. Committee will be watching the Basketball Committee's seeding proposal.
- Reviewed feedback from administrators in the northern Districts in Div. 1 and Div. 2. The majority do not want to change to a blind draw format, but the committee did talk about the competitive versus practical nature of the geographic draw in these two Districts.
- In 2018 the committee will revisit moving the District draw window to earlier in the season.
- There is still no consensus in changing the overtime to a Golden Goal format.
- The MHSAA tournament ball – the Wilson Forte Hybrid II – received unanimous positive reviews.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Eliminate overtime periods and shootouts in the regular season. Allow leagues and conferences to have an overtime option for end-of-season bracketed tournaments (overtime not to exceed two 10-minute periods plus shootout). Allow waivers for multi-team tournaments which use shootouts to determine a winner. (10-0)

In the Regional round, require two days of rest in between the semifinal and final round. Game schedule could be Tuesday/Friday, Tuesday/Saturday or Wednesday/Saturday. If weather forces deviation from the schedule, two days of rest would not be required. (9-0)