

2020 MHSAA SOCCER COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, January 16, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dee Crowley, Lowell
Ken Delaney, Coldwater (MHSSCA)
Dave Feldman, Bloomfield Hills
Josh Glerum, Zeeland
Doug Guenther, Saginaw
Kevin Guzzo, St. Joseph (MIAAA)
Steve Horn, Williamston

Gary Kinzer, Novi
Chris Riker, Portage
Brandon Wheeler, Leland
Paige Mielke, Novi (Guest/MATS)

MHSAA STAFF

Andy Frushour (Recorder)

The 2019-20 MHSAA Soccer Committee met in the John E. "Jack" Roberts MHSAA building 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

SAFETY

The committee reviewed the MHSAA Head Injury Report for 2018-19, specifically to compare Boys and Girls Soccer to other MHSAA sports. The number of head injuries, and the rate of head injuries, has remained fairly stable over the last three years. Coaches are more cognizant of possible concussions, and athletic trainers focus on managing care once head injuries are reported. Heading restrictions for youth players were enacted a number of years ago, and those players are now starting to reach the high school ranks. Coaches report giving more attention to teaching heading technique (that wasn't taught at a younger age), and even then, boys show greater aptitude for heading than girls. Strength training, including a focus on shoulders and upper body, can be beneficial for all players.

PARTICIPATION

While varsity soccer participation numbers are stable, maintaining subvarsity teams is becoming a concern in some areas. An attitude of "if I don't make varsity, then I'll play club" is common in areas with many club teams. Junior high/middle school soccer is popular in a few areas of the state and high school coaches love the continuity JH/MS brings to the high school program, but schools struggle with devoting resources when most kids that age are playing club soccer. Relaxing the Limited Team Membership rule at the JH/MS level has been helpful, but the committee is interested finding more ways to bridge the game without removing the rule altogether.

MPR/SEEDING

Feedback from the first season of MPR and seeding was favorable. A MHSSCA survey reported 80.9% of coaches were "happy" with the system, and 62.1% prefer the District tournament played over a week-and-a-half instead of one week. Two-thirds (43-of-64) of Districts culminated with a #1 vs #2 matchup, and the higher seeded team won 81% of all District games. 56-of-64 District champions were seeded teams. The coaches association did a phenomenal job communicating with coaches about score entry and most scores were posted by 10 p.m. each night. MHSAA soccer score/schedule website traffic was up more than two-fold, and attendance at District Finals increased by 15% compared to the previous five-year average.

While most feedback was positive, coaches and administrators did have some common requests and suggestions. Coaches want to seed all teams in a District (81.8% according to the MHSSCA survey), and many suggest higher seeded teams should automatically get byes and home games. Some also wish to expand the seeding to the Regional level of the tournament. To discourage teams from manipulating schedule or results, the coaches association executive board suggested the release of the "bracket formula" could be later in the season; the committee agrees, and it will be posted one week prior to the draw during the 2020 girls season. There is some concern that coaches will try to manipulate the MPR formula by playing many smaller teams with great records, and others want to be rewarded for playing schools from higher divisions. Finally, the committee did not recommend changing shootout results to ties instead wins and losses, and it feels the 40-minute minimum game time for MPR inclusion is adequate.

With only one season in the book, the committee will again look at data and feedback next year – after two more soccer seasons, and two basketball seasons, have been completed – before determining if any changes should be recommended.

SOCCER TOURNAMENT

With the wet and sloppy fall weather, grass fields struggled to handle MHSAA tournament games. The MHSAA aims to put most Regional and Semifinal games on artificial turf fields, but it is not a requirement for the tournament. Turf fields are much more common around the state than they were 10 years ago (although more prevalent in some areas than others), and many players have more experience playing on turf than in years past. MHSAA staff will continue to give preference to turf fields, and when a grass field is selected the host should have a turf backup plan.

The Girls Soccer Finals at MSU have always received rave reviews, both as a top-notch college facility and playing surface, and because all games are played at one site. The Boys Soccer Finals have traditionally been played at high school locations, with two games on each side of the state. The high school AD hosts have provided incredible experiences for competing teams, fans and officials, but the coaches association would like to see a more elevated stage for the championship games. Many college teams are still in season during the MHSAA Finals, so the best facilities may not be available. Moving the games to a more central location with a schedule determined before the season would help teams plan for the Finals. Options for the Finals schedule format should also be considered: two days at one location, two games at two locations, and even four games in one day at a single location.

HANDBOOK

College ID camps were discussed at length last year, concluding with a recommendation to the Representative Council. The Council did not approve the change, instead choosing to look at this topic for more sports than just soccer. Unsure of the status of this issue, the committee wished to bring the same recommendation back to the table in 2020.

The issue: currently, while in season, students can go to college identification (ID) camps as long as they do not participate in scrimmages or games (Limited Team Membership rule). ID camps are used by college soccer coaches to invite students to campus and watch them train and play in a competitive environment. Many ID camps, however, are held in the spring during the high school girls season. As such, girls are affected more than boys. In addition, individual sport athletes are already afforded two outside events during the season – the committee discussed offering the same kind of allowance to soccer players.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED

- The “early” start for the 2020 fall season was reviewed. Coaches would like to see this schedule continue in all years, not just “shortened” years (which will next happen in 2024).
- An option for allowing students to play on both varsity and subvarsity teams in one day (x number of halves per day) is intriguing. For some, it would have saved the JV season (instead, everyone was placed on the varsity roster). Others worry about over-exertion if too many halves are allowed.
- For Limited Team Membership and out-of-season coaching purposes, the sport of futsal should be considered the same as soccer and indoor soccer. Teams are not playing futsal outside the season to become better futsal players; they play to become better soccer players. The committee does not see any reason for change to the regulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Amend the Limited Team Membership rule for soccer to allow students to compete in scrimmages at a maximum of two college ID camps (including visits and play dates) during the season. (10-0)