

MHSA PRESIDENT'S WELCOME



On behalf of the MHSA Executive Board and the Montana High School Association, I would like to welcome each of you back to school for the 2015-2016 school year. I would also like to welcome Kip Ryan to the MHSA. He brings a wealth of experience and professionalism to an already exceptional MHSA staff.

I am very proud and also humbled

to represent all of you as your Big shoes to fill await me, but I am excited about the challenge that it brings and the rapidly approaching activity season.

The MHSA was initially established in 1921, with a full time office staff approved in 1952 and incorporation established in 1967. As we start the ninety-fourth activity calendar, I cannot help but wonder: what was the driving force of starting the Association? What issues did Owen Loftsgaarden, Leonard Wollan, and Rex Dalley face as they incorporated the Montana High School Association? Then, I think about the issues that we face today: enrollment decline that has forced over 175 co-ops across the state, concussions, club sports, specialization of sports etc. We as an association have an honorable responsibility as the leaders of Montana's student/athletes. With the outstanding leadership the MHSA staff brings and the level of professionalism of the school administrators around the state, I am confident that we will have a very successful activity year.

I will leave you with a refresher of the MHSA mission statement, "The mission of the MHSA is to assure that the membership is provided with leadership and support in advancing equitable MHSA interscholastic activities for the growth and educational experience for students." I wish you all the best in the upcoming school year.

Good luck to all of you and please do not hesitate to call the MHSA staff or any of our executive board members if you have any questions or concerns.

*Mike Cutler, MHSA President
Superintendent, Philipsburg Public Schools*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The question I ask every August as I write this column is "Where did the summer go?" In fact, this year during the MCA clinic, I heard more comments than ever on how fast the summer went. As I get older time really is flying by. Author Phillip Yaffe wrote an article "Why Does Time Go Faster as We Get Older?" His conclusion was it is because of two things in our lives, anticipation and retrospection. First, we have a sense of anticipation for events that are important to us that seem so far off, and then once achieved we realize how quickly those events recede into the past. He may have figured it out. Well, we are all back to work after experiencing some important anticipated events this summer which have now receded into our past especially as we get older. Hopefully we are somewhat renewed and refreshed for the coming school year. I enjoyed anticipating my next golf game each weekend

this summer but quickly realized my anticipation would have to be more specific, following Ben Hogan's advice, "The most important golf shot in golf is the next one" and I truly had to hope most of my rounds receded into my past memory quite quickly!

I hope you are as excited as I am for the anticipated start of another fall season. As a new fall sports activity season begins I want to remind you once again of the two requirements which have been in place for a couple of years regarding mandates for coaches, parents, student athletes, officials and schools in general. The requirements are the concussion law enacted in the 2013-14 school year and the switch from the MHSA Coaches Education Program to the NFHS Coaches Education Program. I have sent information regarding these changes multiple times over the past two years and also recently emailed my Executive Director's Update to every administrator, attaching this information once again to that email. If you have any questions on the concussion requirements please contact me or Brian Michelotti. Questions on the Coaches' Education Program can be directed to Joanne Austin.

In regard to the concussion in sports issue, we are excited member schools overwhelming supported the mandate to provide concussion insurance for every high school student-athlete and cheerleader while participating in practice or competition in sports sanctioned by the MHSA during the 2015-2016 school year. **If a high school athlete or cheerleader is treated for a concussion that occurred during practice or competition please contact me or Brian Michelotti, and representatives of the HeadStrong program will make the appropriate contacts to initiate the claim on behalf of the student.**

A few other areas that we can use your help with as we begin another school year include:

- The recruiting and retention of sports officials. Without men and women willing to officiate high school sports, those sports could not come to pass for the thousands of high school players, coaches and spectators. I am pleased to report that the Respect Officials Initiative (**"Without Officials, It's Just Recess"**) has been successful to date. Any assistance you can offer to help recruit new members (including high school students to join as associate members; associate members can work junior high and sub-varsity games and the dues are one-half of regular member dues) is greatly appreciated.
- Adult Fan Behavior at MHSA Regular Season and Post Season Events – Our student athletes and student cheering sections have not been a major problem in regard to fan behavior. Unruly adult fans have been a problem in many areas. Continued sharing of acceptable behavior expectations and administering consequences for unacceptable behavior are important. Our new "Conduct Counts" posters are a great resource for this. Also, for post season events our Executive Board approved allowing for additional security to be hired with the cost covered from gate receipts as long as the security is certified or is actual law enforcement.
- Continue to encourage our high school students to resist specializing in sports and share the benefits of participating in multiple sports and activities during their high school years. Bill Speltz, of the Missoulian wrote an outstanding article on this topic about pro golfer phenom Jordan Speith. If you have time, Google his article – it is a great read!

I also want to welcome our new Assistant Director Kip Ryan to the MHSA. Kip was at Big Timber for thirty years and served in various

capacities over those years including principal, activities director, teacher and coach. He has been on staff for over a month and is doing an outstanding job. Kip will be responsible for the sports of cross country, volleyball, basketball and track and field. Please welcome Kip if you have the chance.

The latest edition of the Executive Director's Update was emailed to all school contacts, activity directors, principals, and superintendents recently with, hopefully, a variety of useful information for Activity Administrators. Included in the Update is information on the online rules clinic format, coaches education, concussion law implementation, MOA items, and information regarding other changes that have been enacted by the Executive Board or by the membership for this coming year. I can never stress enough the importance of closely checking the eligibility of all student activity participants. It would be devastating to an individual participant and to the team he/she participates on if that student was declared ineligible and the team had to forfeit games because of eligibility rules violations. The Executive Director Update includes the "Quick Checks" for sports eligibility (located in the Fundamentals of Athletic Regulations) and for non-sport activities. Please take time to review this information if you haven't already done so, or if you didn't receive the email please contact the office.

The MHSAs staff is eager to assist you with any activity related items and issues. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any comments, concerns and/or questions. Have a great 2015-2016 school year!

Mark Beckman, Executive Director

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRACTICE REQUIREMENT REMINDER

This is a reminder that the initial required amount of practices (twelve (12) for football, ten (10) for basketball, tennis, soccer, cross country, track and field, softball, volleyball, wrestling, and swimming and three (3) for golf) for each individual must be completed as a comprehensive, regularly scheduled team practice with the full coaching staff present.

MHSA HANDBOOK TO BE PUBLISHED

The MHSAs Handbook will be printed soon and mailed to each member school in September. One copy will be sent to each school contact and one copy will be sent to each city superintendent. Additional copies are available through the MHSAs office for \$10 each. The Handbook is also posted on the MHSAs website (www.mhsa.org) where all coaches and staff can access the information.

2015-2016 DIRECTORY INFORMATION REQUESTED

The 2015-2016 Roster of School Personnel forms were sent to each school electronically in the first week of August. Electronic submission is preferred, but you may submit the form by fax or by mail. If you have not already done so, please return this form to the MHSAs office as soon as possible. **The directory cannot be printed until information is received from ALL MHSAs member schools.**

JOSTEN'S CALENDARS HAVE BEEN MAILED

Once again, the Josten's Company is providing the MHSAs Activity Calendars, which were sent to each member school under separate cover in early August. We ask that you express appreciation to Josten's representatives when you have the opportunity.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FORM IS ENCLOSED

The MHSAs pre-participation physical examination form is enclosed. This form was updated several years ago to include questions concerning the cardiac history and cardiac health of the student (question 6-15). The MHSAs Medical Advisory Committee strongly recommends that if any of those questions are answered affirmatively that a student be referred to the appropriate medical professional for further screening.

This is a reminder to all member schools that physical exams are mandated for all students who are going to participate in MHSAs sanctioned sports. These exams must be completed before they practice and must have been performed after May 1, 2015. Examinations must be certified by a licensed medical professional acting within the scope and limitations of his/her practice for the current 2015-2016 school year and the schools must use the MHSAs standardized pre-participation exam form.

The MHSAs is committed to the safety and health of our student activity participants and believe this form will facilitate that objective. In addition to the copy of the form enclosed, you may access this form any time at mhsa.org. Please feel free to copy the form and distribute it appropriately. Please contact the MHSAs office if you should have any questions, or direct any questions from physicians. According to HIPPA, schools should note that these physical forms must be kept in confidential private files.

PROCEDURE FOR ACTIVITY NEWS/QUICK BITS MAILINGS

One copy of *Activity News* plus enclosures and all pertinent rules books will be sent via US Postal Service to each school contact, and one copy plus enclosures will be sent to each superintendent who is **not** listed as the school contact.

Quick Bits is generally a smaller publication that is sent via e-mail. The same individuals who receive the *Activity News* will be sent the electronic version of *Quick Bits*.

All of these publications, including most enclosures, will be posted at www.mhsa.org.

RULES CLINICS MANDATORY FOR ALL COACHES

The MHSAs/MOA rules clinics are presented in an online format for coaches and officials. **All coaches, including the head coach and all assistant coaches and all school-approved volunteer coaches, are required to view the sport-specific rules clinic(s).** An information sheet explaining the procedure on accessing these clinics was linked to the Executive Director's Update emailed to schools recently. The information sheet is also available on our website, www.mhsa.org, under the clinics tab and is enclosed with this mailing. If you have any questions, please contact the MHSAs office.

RECORDS OF TRANSFER MANDATORY

Any student who transfers to your school and desires to participate in athletics at any level of competition has to be reported to the MHSAs office on a Record of Transfer Form. This form and other related forms are available on our website.

The Record of Transfer form is required in reporting transfer students and certifying in writing to the MHSAs office that the transfer student meets the MHSAs eligibility requirements stated in Article II of the Association By-Laws. These forms **must be filed before** the student participates on **any** high school athletic team in any (sub varsity or varsity) Association contest. The forms can be emailed (if signed) or faxed without hard copies having to be mailed. If you have any questions regarding transfer students please contact Mark Beckman.

Please review the more detailed information regarding eligibility in the recently emailed Executive Director's Update.

AWARENESS EVENTS

The MHSAs office will permit a school to modify certain uniform/apparel from the NFHS Rules and/or school colors for one (1) week during the regular season to be designated for charitable awareness events, such as Breast Cancer Awareness week. This interpretation will be applied to all sports. **The school must request permission from the MHSAs to conduct these events.** Should you have questions, please contact the MHSAs staff liaison for the particular sport.

COACHES' EDUCATION

COACHES' EDUCATION UPDATE

Please refer to the enclosed information regarding the MHSAs Coaches' Education requirements, including instructions on concussion awareness. Once the concussion course is viewed, the requirement is met for the particular school year. However, users may review the course again at any time, but after 90 days users are required to "order" the course again in order to access the content.

If you have any questions about the Coaches' Education program, please contact Jo Austin at the MHSAs office.

EXECUTIVE BOARD ITEMS

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

The next regular meeting of the MHSA Executive Board will be held in Helena beginning on Monday, September 14, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. in the MHSA office. The Board meeting will continue Tuesday, September 15, if business has not been completed.

If any member school administrator wishes to have an item placed on the agenda for the Board to consider at this meeting, he/she must furnish the same to the Association office **ten (10) days** prior to the meeting. If any member school wishes to meet with the Executive Board concerning any items, request for appointment must be made in advance.

Major agenda items for Executive Board Meeting:

1. Review and approve Auditor's report.
2. Hear spring activity reports.
3. Review spring activity financial reports.

MEETING DATES SET FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD

The MHSA Executive Board has established dates for their regular meetings for the coming school year. While the Board is required by MHSA By-Laws to hold a minimum of four (4) meetings, they can also hold special meetings in person, or the Board can conduct business by conference phone calls.

2015-16 Board Meeting Dates & Sites

September 14-15, 2015	-----	Helena
November 23-24, 2015	-----	Helena
January 16 & 18, 2015	-----	Billings
April 11-12, 2016	-----	Helena

ANNUAL MEETING IN BILLINGS

The next MHSA Annual Meeting will be held in Billings on January 18, 2016. The Billings Hotel and Convention Center is the host facility. Reservations may be made by calling 800-537-7286 and asking for group code "MHSA-16."

CROSS COUNTRY

FIRST DAY OF CROSS COUNTRY PRACTICE AND MEETS

For the 2015-16 school year, the starting date for cross country practice will be Friday, August 14th and the first date for cross country competition will be Friday, August 28th. No individual shall participate in any Association cross country meet until he/she has a minimum of ten (10) days of cross country practice of at least one practice session per day on ten (10) different days (no practice is permitted on Sunday), prior to the date of the first allowable cross country meet.

NUMBER OF MEETS

No student shall participate in more than ten (10) meets excluding Association sponsored meets. No cross country athlete may participate in an out-of-state invitation only meet unless approved by the MHSA Executive Director. Any out-of-state participation approved under these criteria will count toward the ten-meet limit for the particular athlete.

POST SEASON COMPETITION

For an athlete to be eligible to compete in post-season competition he/she must compete in at least two (2) Association sanctioned meets, which can be varsity or sub varsity meets, during the regular cross country season. Only a medical waiver from a certified physician stating that an athlete has sustained an injury preventing him/her from competing until that time will be accepted as a condition to be exempt from the rule. The high school for which the student will participate must file a request with the MHSA Executive Director for consideration of a waiver of this rule.

QUALIFYING TIME

As recommended by the MHSA Athletic Committee and approved by the MHSA Executive Board, for the State Cross Country Meet: athletes must meet a qualifying time in at least one regular season cross country meet prior to participation in the 2015 State Cross Country Meet. The qualifying times are as follows:

- Boys – 30.00 minutes or faster
- Girls – 35.00 minutes or faster

Athletes who do not meet the required performance time at least once during regular season competition will not qualify for participation at the State Cross Country Meet and cannot be entered as a team member or alternate.

Coaches will be required to submit a form stating the qualifying time of each athlete entered in the Meet when they pick up their Coach's Packet in Great Falls.

STATE MEET TO BE HELD IN GREAT FALLS

The 2015 State Cross Country Meet will be staged in Great Falls on October 24. The competition will take place at the Eagle Falls Golf Course. Each member school's boys' and/or girls' team(s) may enter seven (7) athletes and two (2) alternates. To view the current MHSA State and NFHS Cross Country Rules addressing uniform and sportsmanship items that all coaches and competitors will be expected to adhere to during the regular cross country season and at the State Cross Country Meet, go to www.mhsa.org; navigate to the cross country page and click on the 2015 State Cross Country Policies and Procedures and NFHS Rules.

STATE CROSS COUNTRY FEES

Each school participating in the 2015 State Cross Country Meet shall share proportionally the cost of running the Meet by paying a \$7.00 fee for each athlete that actually participates in the State Meet (alternates are not considered participants). Example for Team A: 7 boy participants and 7 girl participants = 14 total participants X \$7.00 for each participant = \$98.00 will be the fee Team A must pay to participate. Coaches will be required to pay the total fee at the time they pick up their State Meet Coach's Packet. Checks should be made payable to Great Falls Public Schools.

Please share this information with your cross country coaches and if you have any questions or concerns please call Kip Ryan at 442-6010 or email him at kryan@mhsa.org.

VOLLEYBALL

FIRST DAY OF VOLLEYBALL PRACTICE AND CONTESTS

The starting date for volleyball practice will be Friday, August 14th and the first date for volleyball competition will be Friday, August 28th. No individual shall play in any Association volleyball contest until she has a minimum of ten (10) days of volleyball practice of at least one practice session per day on ten (10) different days (no practice is permitted on Sunday), prior to the date of the first allowable match.

VOLLEYBALL TO BE USED FOR THE 2015 SEASON

For all 2015 MHSA volleyball post season play, the **Baden Lexum Comp VX450c-210 red/white/navy blue microfiber composite volleyball** will be used. For regular season play, a solid white volleyball may be used. **If a colored volleyball is used for regular season play, it can only be a red/white/navy blue colored volleyball.** For both post and regular season play, any volleyball used for all levels of play shall include the NFHS authenticating mark.

VOLLEYBALL MATCH LIMIT

Eighteen (18) volleyball matches will be the maximum limit for schools in Classes A, B and C with no more than three (3) 3-out-of-5 matches [or five (5) 2-out-of-three matches in dual tournament format only] on any one date excluding Association sponsored tournaments, and twenty (20) volleyball matches will be the maximum limit for schools in Class AA with no more than three (3) 3-out-of-5 matches [or five (5) 2-out-of-three matches in dual tournament format only] on any one date excluding Association sponsored tournaments. These match limits apply for each squad: varsity, junior varsity, sophomore, freshman.

VOLLEYBALL PARTICIPATION

- Individual volleyball players shall be allowed to play in no more than two matches/levels of competition (freshman, sophomore, junior varsity, varsity) in any school's dual match. Entering a contest for one live ball counts as participation in one match. As per MHSA By Laws, Section 2 General Penalties, the contest in which a participant exceeds the limitation will be followed. The player limitation rule doesn't apply during invitational or dual tournaments. Montana volleyball teams will always follow the MHSA match limitation rule when playing in neighboring states.

- For post season volleyball play, volleyball teams will not be allowed on the playing floor until 30 minutes before the start time of the match.
- The volleyball prematch conference (with the head coaches and captains) and coin toss will occur when the twenty (20) minute warm-up countdown reaches minute sixteen (16).

FOOTBALL

MAJOR FOOTBALL REVISIONS FOR 2015

There are several major changes to MHSА rules that will go into effect for the MHSА football season, including new rules on several major rules changes from the NFHS and other important MHSА football safety issues. Please review the enclosed football information and distribute it to all affected personnel. Please feel free to contact Brian Michelotti if you have questions on the enclosed football materials.

MOA

THE HIRING OF OFFICIALS

ATTENTION: All administrators and coaches — please make sure all officials whom you hire for varsity contests are members in good standing with the Montana Officials' Association. Per MHSА/MOA rules, schools must go through the local official's pool when hiring officials unless the official is not in a pool (an approved non-pool affiliated official). To be a member in good standing, officials must have passed the qualifying exam for the respective sport or pay to take the exam that will be given at the start of the season. We had a few non-MOA's work varsity contests in the past few years which is a serious violation of MHSА/MOA rules and schools will be penalized accordingly for any violations.

In compliance with the Dylan Steigers' Protection of Youth Athletes Act, any sports official working an athletic contest in your district must have completed concussion education. This includes all varsity contests (for which MOA officials must be used) and any other contests, including sub-varsity, middle school, and elementary. The local district is responsible for ensuring that officials who are working all athletic contests have completed concussion education.

Also, please remember to be on hand to greet officials, assist the crew at half-time and to insure that security and locker rooms etc. are provided for them from the time they arrive until the time they leave the premises.

SPIRIT

SPIRIT REMINDERS

National Federation Spirit Rules Books and a copy of the Spirit Section of the MHSА Handbook have been sent under separate cover to cheer coaches and to dance coaches. Please note that National Federation Spirit Rules and rules found in the MHSА Handbook's Spirit Section are to be followed during all spirit related activities. Violations of the rules are subject to penalties as found in the By-Laws under General Penalties.

If your school will field cheerleaders only during the **winter season**, or if your school will not be fielding a cheer team **at all** during this school year, please advise Janie Holmes @ jholmes@mhsa.org.

Also, remember all cheer and dance coaches must complete or be current with the AACCA Safety Certification course if their squad does any stunting. The AACCA Safety Certification is offered online through the National Federation's web site and directions to access that course were included in the rules book mailing.

As noted in the August Executive Director's Update, concussion management is a primary area of emphasis for schools. Each coach (spirit and dance) must also take the online NFHS Concussion Course, for your use in adhering to MHSА rules as well as Montana's concussion legislation. Directions to access that course were included in the rules book mailing.

FINE ARTS

MUSIC COMMITTEE FALL MEETING

The MHSА Music Committee will meet in September. Anyone wishing to have items put on the agenda or meet with the committee should contact Jo Austin at 406-442-6010 or jpaustrin@mhsa.org.

FORENSICS & DRAMA BOOKLET UNDER PRODUCTION

The Speech & Drama booklets will be sent to schools in September. Each coach will receive a copy.

Also, administrators are asked to encourage their speech & drama coaches to utilize the information on the MHSА website. All ballots and the tentative schedule are currently posted. Whenever possible our mailings will be sent to coaches electronically.

SOCGER

SOCGER MATERIALS SENT SEPARATELY

Coaches will be receiving a separate envelope with soccer rules books and pre-season guides. Please ensure that the materials are received.

ENCLOSURES

[2015-2016 Events Calendar](#)

[2016-2017 Events Calendar](#)

[2015-2016 Ready Reference Activity Dates](#)

[2015-2016 National Testing Dates](#)

2015-2016 Football Rules Book (1)

[2015-16 NFHS Football Rule Changes](#)

NFHS Football Rules Poster

[NFHS Football Changes and Information](#)

[NFHS Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention Statement](#)

2015 Volleyball Rules Book (1)

[2015-16 NFHS Volleyball Rule Revisions](#)

NFHS Volleyball Rules Poster

[Volleyball Scoring Information](#)

[Athletic Pre-Participation Physical Exam Form](#)

[Coaches' Education Handout](#)

[Online Rules Clinic Instructions](#)

Staff Members

Mark Beckman, Executive Director
 Joanne Austin, Associate Director
 Brian Michelotti, Assistant Director
 Kip Ryan, Assistant Director
 Janie Holmes, Business Office Manager
 Theresa Stanisich, MOA Coordinator



Executive Board Members

Mike Cutler, Superintendent, Philipsburg Public Schools
 (President)
 Peter Fusaro, Principal, Flathead High School (Kalispell)
 (Vice President)
 Dennis Murphy, Activities Director, Havre High School
 Mark Ator, Activities Director, Colstrip High School
 Drew Blewett, Governor's Appointee, Great Falls
 Lance Voegel, MTSBA Appointee, Belgrade
 Don Wetzel, Jr., State Superintendent's Appointee, Helena