



A Montana High School Association Publication
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EXECUTIVE CORNER

BITS AND PIECES

Fall activities are under way! This is the first year in my eleven years as the Executive Director that I haven't had to send the air quality memorandum. We are grateful for minimal forest fire activity this year. However we may still have warm enough temperatures for the next few weeks to have some lightning issues. I believe the information we sent out to schools during the first week of competition was helpful especially reinforcing the lightning policy and understanding the process where game officials, coaches and administration work together regarding suspending and resuming play. We continue to have some concern expressed, though, with the procedure. If you don't have the technology available such as weather bug, coach smart or a lightning meter, you must use the NFHS policy of waiting thirty minutes between visible strikes. If you have weather bug or coach smart, you have to check what sites those programs use for reporting from your area. For example, you may be in Dutton or Fairfield but the program uses the Great Falls Airport as the reporting station and in those cases you must revert back to NFHS policy. A lightning meter is the most accurate for being able to provide precise information to make your decisions. With that said, removing teams from the field seems to work well. However, many administrators expressed concerns about fans leaving the stadiums during these delays. It is imperative you announce that play has been suspended and the facility needs to be evacuated. Brian Michelotti emailed sample announcements to use recently. It is the administrations responsibility to make sure the players and students have been evacuated to safe areas, but if fans do not leave it becomes their own individual responsibility for ignoring the evacuation announcements after being notified by game administration of the risk.

In the September Quick Bits I like to reemphasize the importance of reviewing the eligibility of each of your student participants, whether transfer students, foreign exchange students or established students. The areas that have to be monitored closely for all students' eligibility are age, academics, and semesters. Remember that students who are academically ineligible are not eligible to compete at any level of play (sub varsity or varsity – they can practice if the school allows) for the entire semester. If they establish academic eligibility at the end of the semester they become eligible the Monday morning following the week the semester ends.

Transfer student issues continue to surface and the following are important points that must be reviewed before declaring a student varsity-eligible after a transfer (**There have been more attempts by parents the past few years to try to gain varsity eligibility for their son or daughter by establishing two residences**):

- 1) First, as stated above, they must be academically eligible, age eligible and semester eligible.
- 2) Transfer students have to be checked for residency – **A change of residence is the actual physical relocation by the parents or legal guardians (guardianship must be established one year before the transfer) of a student at a new residence and termination of all occupancy of a previous residence. The change in residence must be bona fide, include other minor siblings and involve transfer from one school district attendance area to another school district attendance area. For the purpose of eligibility, there can be only one residence. Mom or dad cannot establish a second residence (for whatever reason) for transfer eligibility. By MHSAA By-Laws it is the responsibility of the principal to verify and validate residency.**

- 3) Is it a parent-to-parent move? – A parent to parent move can only be from parent to parent, not parent-to-grandparent or parent-to-aunt/uncle or parent-to-legal guardian etc. Also it must be the first parent-to-parent move in the student's high school career for him/her to be varsity eligible.
- 4) A transfer can occur to a legal guardian but for the student to be varsity eligible that guardianship **must have been established one year before the transfer.**
- 5) Transfer – Return to Parent (new three years ago) - A student who has attended high school and resides in a district other than where the student's parent(s) resides, and who subsequently returns to live with the student's parents becomes immediately transfer eligible for varsity competition in the parent's district. This can be applied only one time during the student's career. The Return to Parent Form must be completed.
- 6) Foreign Exchange students (with a J-1 Visa and **now the F-1 is included**) are transfer students and must meet all eligibility requirements except that these students will be living with a host family in your attendance area. Foreign Exchange students cannot have graduated from a high school in their country and they must be placed through a CSJET approved program.
- 7) Also, the membership, by two-thirds majority vote at the 2008 Annual Meeting eliminated the transfer exception for court orders, ward of the court and ward of the state designations. Now, if a transfer student has been court ordered to a school's attendance area a hardship petition could be filed if the court order was a protection order and not because of criminal or bad behavior by the student in question.
- 8) Hardship Petitions – A request to waive the transfer rule can be filed for a student whose transfer was not a bona fide family move if the transfer was absolutely necessary, not athletically motivated and beyond the student's control (again no drug or alcohol use, criminal behavior or attempting to avoid a penalty).
- 9) Reminder – there is no provision for an emancipated 18 year old student to be varsity eligible –Transfer Rule Interpretation # 6 states - For the purpose of these rules a student cannot establish a residence apart from his/her parents. If he/she habitually makes his/her home with a relative and the student changes schools because the relative changes residence, the student will lose eligibility time in accordance with the transfer rule. A student, both of whose parents are deceased and who has no legal guardian, may change high schools without loss of eligibility time. However, a student may not change school systems within a city or school district.

If you have any eligibility questions/concerns please feel free to contact me.

And finally, as our student-activity participants and our coaches take part in thousands of contests this fall activity season, we appreciate your continued efforts to stress good sporting behaviors by coaches and players. Important behaviors to promote include good character, loyalty, class and respect. Mickey Mantle once said, "After I hit a home run I had a habit of running the bases with my head down. I figured the pitcher already felt bad enough without me showing him up rounding the bases." Knute Rockne said, "One man practicing good sportsmanship is far better than 50 others preaching it." It should be part of our mission to make sure our young players understand and put into practice these important life-long concepts. Please consider using the components of the MHSAA / U.S. Bank Sportsmanship Program to assist in promoting and rewarding good sporting behaviors for student athletes, coaches and fans.



On behalf of the MHSА Executive Board and MHSА Staff, we hope for continued good days for fall activities at your school.

Mark Beckman
Executive Director

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

2014-2015 DIRECTORY OF SCHOOLS

Please note: the 2014-2015 Directory of Schools will be sent to all MHSА member schools this month. Please review your school's entries and confirm their accuracy.

If you notice any errors, please contact the MHSА office. If some of your coaches have not yet been hired or if your administrative staff or coaching staff change, please call the MHSА office or e-mail receptionist@mhsa.org so we can update the Directory and our database.

TOURNAMENT MANAGERS' WORKSHOP

Anyone who will be managing a MHSА Basketball, Golf, Softball, Tennis, Track & Field, Volleyball or Wrestling Post-Season Event during the 2014-15 school year is, by MHSА Executive Board action, required to view the on-line Tournament Managers' Workshop for their activity once every five (5) years. The workshop focuses on pre-tournament preparation, on-site procedures during the event and MHSА guidelines and regulations.

The Volleyball and Fall Golf Tournament Managers' Workshops are now available for viewing. Go to www.mhsa.org; click on Tournament Managers' Workshop and read the instructions provided. Tournament Managers will be sent an e-mail reminder of this requirement.

If you have any questions or concerns about the workshop, please call Scott McDonald at the MHSА office or email him at smcdonald@mhsa.org.

MIAAA ATHLETIC DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Montana Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association would like to encourage educators around the state to nominate deserving individuals for the MIAAA Activities Director of the Year Award. One award is given to each classification, as well as an All-Class Activities Director of the Year Award.

Also, the MIAAA is sponsoring a Gold Pass Award of Merit for long time athletic directors or principals who have made significant contributions to Montana student activities. This is a very prestigious award that presents the recipient with a lifetime pass that is valid at any MHSА contest or tournament.

Application forms for these recognition opportunities are attached.

2014 STATE CROSS COUNTRY MEET IN HELENA

The 2014 State Cross Country Meet will be staged in Helena on October 25. The competition will take place at Bill Roberts Golf Course. Jim Opitz, Activities Director of Helena Public Schools, is the meet director. Information will be mailed shortly from his office with logistics concerning this meet. Mr. Opitz can be reached at 324-2108.

To view the 2014 MHSА State and NFHS Cross Country rules addressing uniform and sportsmanship items that all coaches and competitors will be expected to adhere to go to www.mhsa.org, click on "Cross Country" and then click on the "2014 State Cross Country Policies and Procedures and NFHS Rules" link.

The schedule for the 2014 State Cross Country meet is as follows:

Class AA Girls	11:00 am
Class A Girls	11:35 am
Class AA Boys	12:10 pm

Class A Boys	12:40 pm
Class B Girls	1:10 pm
Class C Girls	1:45 pm
Class B Boys	2:20 pm
Class C Boys	2:50 pm

Entries must be entered online using Direct Athletics by October 19 by 4:00 p.m.

MHSА HANDBOOK ON WEBSITE

The MHSА Handbook is available online. Visit our website at www.mhsa.org to view the Handbook in PDF format. We hope this will assist administrators, coaches, counselors, and fine arts directors in obtaining copies of MHSА information that is most useful to them. It's also a means of making information available to parents, especially the sections which include student eligibility and other participation information.

AWARDS REMINDER

TROPHIES AND AWARDS

Because of questions received in the MHSА office concerning conference trophies, the following information from the MHSА Handbook is offered:

1. Conference trophies are given in football (except for Class AA), Class A softball and Class A soccer (they are considered district or divisional trophies).

2. In other sports, if a conference would like to award a trophy (first place only) for its conference champion it must be ordered through the MHSА office and must be paid for by the conference. The MHSА office staff does not automatically order conference trophies because some conferences choose not to award them.

3. Trophies that are awarded by MHSА rule will be given to both schools if the activity is cooperatively sponsored, but the office will need to know which school was presented the trophy at the tournament. Also, if there is a co-op conference champion or a co-conference champion the conference still needs to order those trophies through MHSА and pay for both.

4. Individual miniature trophies for first, second and third place MHSА state championship events may be purchased from the Association's award provider.

Also, only one (1) trophy will be awarded at any MHSА meet or tournament when a maximum of five (5) teams are participating. However, the conference may elect to buy a second place trophy through MHSА if they so desire.

5. Divisions may purchase divisional medals beyond the first and second place medals provided by the MHSА in speech and drama, golf, tennis, track and field and wrestling. The medals must be ordered through the MHSА office ten (10) weeks before they will be needed.

FOOTBALL

2014 MHSА FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

We have had many questions from coaches and officials in the preseason concerned about the targeting rule this year. This year's NFHS Point of Emphasis focuses on risk minimization and discusses targeting, defenseless players, concussions and changing the mindset in football. We, (MHSА / Coaches/Officials), as major stakeholders in the game of high school football in our state must take these rule changes and points of emphasis very seriously. The MHSА will continue throughout the season to send information and resources to everyone. Coaches must teach their players safe tackling and blocking techniques. USA football and the NFL heads up tackling program is a great resource and we encourage coaches to become involved with this program. Officials must enforce the new targeting

and defenseless player rules that are new in the 2014 without hesitation.

Our game is under a significant amount of scrutiny across the country, and it is imperative that we continue to “change the mindset” of everyone involved with football. Below is the NFHS Point of Emphasis, which is also the MHSAA football point of emphasis for the 2014 season.

RISK MINIMIZATION

In an effort to minimize the risk of catastrophic head and neck injuries, the NFHS Football Rules Committee continues to urge KEEPING THE HEAD OUT OF FOOTBALL, specifically through the elimination of illegal contact to the helmet. This type of contact must continue to be discouraged in both practices and games. Coaches, game officials, administrators, players and parents involved in the game must reinforce the positive aspects of proper tackling and blocking in high school football. The committee believes emphasis of the four topics listed below can help minimize risk to all players.

TARGETING

While football rules have been in place to penalize fouls for illegal personal contact, the NFHS Football Rules Committee continues to place emphasis on the prohibition of illegal contact to the helmet of an opponent. This is the 26th time the committee has addressed helmet review or helmet contact since 1980. The definition of targeting and its related penalty were created to call special attention to certain wrongful actions.

Targeting is defined as: “an act of taking aim and initiating contact to an opponent above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulders.” The foul states: “no player or non-player shall target an opponent.”

In order to gauge the intent of the player, game officials must be diligent in observing the tackler/blocker in all related actions to the tackle/block. Targeting an opponent is unnecessary and the rule must be enforced to minimize the risk of injury in high school football.

DEFENSELESS PLAYER

With the importance placed on risk minimization and injuries to the head and neck area, it is imperative to implement rules that place restrictions on hits to players who are not in a position to defend themselves.

In order to properly implement such rules, a new definition for a “defenseless player” was added. The committee has defined a defenseless player “as a player who, because of his/her physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury.”

Game officials must diligently observe all action for contact against players who are deemed defenseless and penalize illegal personal contact. The game official must draw a distinction between contact necessary to make a legal block or tackle, and contact that targets defenseless players.

CONCUSSIONS

While there seems to have been an increase in the number of reported concussions over the past several years, we don’t believe that the actual incidence of concussions has increased. Rather, we believe this is a manifestation of heightened awareness about the injury and improvement in concussion recognition and diagnosis. We have seen a significant reduction in the number of athletes allowed to return to play or practice on the same day of the injury.

This is an indication of much-improved education about concussions, and appropriate health-care professionals, coaches, game officials and parents following the mantra of “when in doubt, sit them out.”

Concussions continue to account for the highest percentage of football-related injuries; therefore, proper concussion management at all levels is essential. Coaches and game officials need to continue to be educated on the appropriate steps for minimizing the risk to the participants.

The management of concussions has been and will continue to be a major focus by the NFHS and its member state associations. For the past four years, all NFHS rules books have contained the concussion

rule which requires any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion to be immediately removed from the contest and not return until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.

The NFHS SMAC also produced the “Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports” position statement, a shortened version of which has been published in all NFHS rules books since 2010-11. That same year, a six-page section on concussions was included in the fourth edition of the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook, which was distributed to high schools nationwide.

Coaches and game officials should utilize available professional development tools regarding the proper management of athletes suspected of having a concussion. The NFHS “Concussion in Sports - What You Need to Know” free online course continues to be an excellent resource for coaches, game officials, athletes, parents and other interested persons. This course is offered for free at www.nfhslearn.com.

With concussion protocols in NFHS playing rules and with concussion laws now in place in every state, high school athletes should not be exposed to repeated concussions.

CHANGING THE MINDSET

The emphasis on risk minimization, involving injuries to the head and neck, has not completely changed the mindset prevalent with some persons involved in interscholastic football. Some still consider it a “badge of honor” for a football player to get his/her “bell rung.” Given the information we now have regarding the potentially negative effects to the brain that just one concussion (and, certainly, any subsequent and/or progressive concussions) can produce, a player getting his “bell rung” must not be taken lightly.

The positive aspects of interscholastic participation in the sport of football are many. Inherently, these positive aspects have never required a football player to stick his/her “helmet- in-the-numbers!” It has never been acceptable to play with intent to “take out an opponent.” Therefore, this type of mindset must be addressed and removed from all phases of the game by players, coaches and game officials. All stakeholders must understand that the future of high school football will withstand the head being removed from the game and it will survive such a mindset change.

The NFHS Football Rules Committee has repeatedly emphasized the need to KEEP THE HEAD OUT OF FOOTBALL, and has continued this approach by defining TARGETING and DEFENSELESS PLAYER. Also encouraged is a change in the mindset that some people still have regarding “acceptance” of illegal helmet contact. Athletes, coaches and game officials must continue to be diligent and proactive in striving to minimize risk.

SPIRIT

SPIRIT COACHING REQUIREMENTS

There is much confusion over whether or not spirit (cheer and dance) coaches are required to take the MHSAA Coaches Education Program. Listed below are the only three mandatory requirements for spirit coaches to complete:

- MHSAA Spirit Rules Clinic.
- AACC Safety Certification on www.nfhslearn.com. This is completed only once every four years.
- MHSAA Concussion Course (available through nfhslearn.com).

If there are questions or concerns, please contact Janie Holmes at the MHSAA Office.

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS' PARTICIPATION LIMITS

Individual volleyball players shall be allowed to play in no more than two competition matches/levels (freshman, sophomore, junior varsity, varsity) in any school's dual match. Entering a contest for one live ball counts as participation in one match. The player limitation rule doesn't apply during invitational or dual tournament play. Montana volleyball teams will always follow the MHSА match limitation rule when playing in neighboring states.

SUB-VARSITY PLAYERS STARTING IN THE VARSITY MATCH

Also from the Volleyball Section of the 2014-15 MHSА Handbook the following is the rule which addresses sub-varsity players starting in a varsity contest: The Association prohibits students of member schools from entering a preliminary contest and then starting in the varsity contest the same day, except Class C when there are insufficient non-varsity players to play a junior varsity contest, schools may, by mutual consent of the coaches involved, play no more than two (2) varsity starters in the j.v. contest. This rule is an MHSА Rule and MOA Volleyball Officials are not required to enforce this rule. MOA Volleyball Officials will enforce NFHS Volleyball Rule (6-2-1) which states: a team shall consist of six players to begin the first set of the match. If a team has fewer than six players to begin the match, a forfeit shall be declared unless the MHSА has allowed a sub-varsity team to begin the match with 5 players. (See Rule 11-2-2 for time-outs.)

WARM-UPS DURING POST SEASON PLAY

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.

AVAILABILITY OF ELIGIBLE OFFICIALS FOR POST SEASON

For the 2014 Volleyball Season, Volleyball Official Pools may provide information regarding availability of eligible officials for post season assignment to a district or division representative for distribution to schools in those districts or divisions, when requested in writing. Individual officials shall not provide such information. The MOA Regional Directors are allowing pools to provide a list of officials and the dates those officials are available for post season assignment to a district or divisional representative to distribute to the schools in their respective districts or divisions allowing coaches to vote for officials who are available on each weekend of post season competition.

BASKETBALL

QUARTER ELIGIBILITY FOR ALL CLASSES

The Association prohibits all students of member schools from entering more than five (5) quarters of basketball in any one day [Class C-six (6) quarters]. Should a non-varsity contest be played using a variation in the length of quarters or the number of quarters played, one of the approved variations shown on the basketball page of the MHSА website must be used. The applicable game limit interpretations are also included on the website (www.mhsa.org).

COACHING BOX

For MHSА regular and post-season play, a twelve-foot coaching box will be used. The coaching box shall be outlined outside the side of the court on which the scorer's and timer's table and team benches are located. The area shall be bounded by a line 28 feet from the end line towards the half court line and a line no more than twelve feet from the 28-foot line back towards the end line and team bench. These lines shall be located off the court and be two (2) inches wide.

SCORER'S SHIRT

For MHSА regular and post-season play it is mandatory that the official scorer wear a black and white striped shirt and that his/her location be

clearly marked by an "X" twelve (12) inches long and two (2) inches wide that shall be placed on the floor out-of-bounds directly in front of the official scorer to help substitutes and officials with the proper location of the scorer.

MHSА BASKETBALL MERCY RULE

For the 2014-15 Basketball Season, the Basketball Mercy Rule will again be used by all MHSА member schools.

It will be used for all levels of play, (Varsity, JV, Sophomore and Frosh) in the second half only, once a team has a forty (40) point or better lead against their opponent, a running clock will ensue until the end of the game even if the difference in the score drops below the forty point margin. The only time the clock will stop will be between quarters, time outs, and when replacing an injured or disqualified player.

In the second half of a basketball game, the official scorer and timer will be responsible for running the clock continuously except for the following situations, once a team has a forty (40) point or better lead against their opponent.

1. Once the clock signals the end of a quarter or overtime period, the clock will be stopped until play is started for the next quarter or overtime period.
2. Once an official signals for a called time-out, the clock will be stopped until play is started following the time-out.
3. Once an official beckons or bench personnel come onto the floor to attend to an injured player, the clock will be stopped until play is started again.
4. Once an official informs the head coach that a player has been disqualified from further participation in the game, the clock will be stopped until play is started again.

The clock will be restarted when:

1. The ball touches or is touched by a player on the court.
2. If play is resumed by a throw-in, the clock shall be started when the ball touches, or is legally touched by, a player on the court after it is released by the thrower.

Game management must inform the official scorer and timer of this MHSА Basketball Mercy Rule and the provisions of the rule. If you have questions about the above issues, please call Scott McDonald in the MHSА Office.

AIM HIGHER

AIM HIGHER CONTINUES

We will continue the program this year, with workshops scheduled in four central areas. If we are able to add a corporate sponsor during this school year, additional workshops will be incorporated during the spring.

The AIM Higher Program will continue to include sessions on leadership, mentoring, team captain training, hazing awareness, drug prevention and sportsmanship. The AIM Higher schedule is included with this month's Quick Bits. The cost of the workshop will continue to be \$10 per participant, which has been the cost since 1992-93. Please consider registering your school for one of the scheduled dates as soon as possible for this worthwhile opportunity for your students.

ATTACHMENTS

[MIAAA Forms](#)

[2014-15 AIM Higher Schedule](#)

[General Instructions for Football Line to Gain Crews and Clock Operators](#)

[Football Pre-Game Information - 80 yards](#)

[Football Pre-Game Information - Regulation Field](#)

[Basketball Court Diagram](#)