

## **MHSAA BASEBALL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

East Lansing, January 15, 2021

### **Members Present:**

Jeremy Beal, Hudson  
Jim Conway, Mt. Pleasant  
Rick Dorn, West Bloomfield  
Steve Lockwood, Sault Ste. Marie  
Nate Maury, Grayling  
Billy Mitchell, Rudyard  
Steve Newkirk, Clare  
Rick Noorman, Grand Rapids  
Anthony Perino, Escanaba  
Julie Riggs, Manistee  
Brian Samulski, Northville  
Juan Sanchez, Detroit

Matt Sheick, Pellston  
Jason Smith, Saranac  
Greg Sombati, Allen Park  
Todd Szalka, Trenton  
Don Watchowski, Royal Oak

### **Others Present:**

Jesse Brinks, MATS

### **Staff Present:**

Brent Rice (Recorder)

The 2020-21 MHSAA Baseball Committee met to review topics involving MHSAA Baseball. Agenda items were compiled from correspondence, staff, committee members and the baseball coaches association. After introductions were completed, the committee reviewed the terms of appointment to the Baseball Committee, the charge and mission of the group relative to the decision-making process and the minutes from the previous meeting.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Pitch Count Discussion and Game Changer:** The committee discussed the utilization of the GameChanger platform for recording, tracking and reporting pitch counts. This program was scheduled for implementation last season but was delayed due to the cancellation of the season. MHSAA staff explained that GameChanger is providing each high school head coach a complimentary Plus account should they choose to input pitch counts using this option. Some concerns arose in the high baseball coaches community as to the information that opponents would have access to using the platform. It was explained by MHSAA staff that coaches may restrict access to only the box scores, which would provide opposing coaches all the pitch count information they will need. Coaches will still be permitted the use of hard copy recording forms as well. Further pitch count instructions will be made available to schools and coaches before the start of the season.

PitchKount, another supplementary software program, was briefly discussed. MHSAA staff was contacted regarding its use by member schools during the season. It is the committee's understanding that this product streamlines information for coaches and provides automated notifications as to when players are eligible to pitch. Committee member Todd Szalka will be in discussion with other state's associations coaches to investigate its functionality and will report back to the committee with his findings.

**District Assignments:** Committee members were provided this year's list of District assignments. They were also provided information from staff as to the method for creating District boundaries and the criteria used by the Site Selection Committee for determining District (and Regional Semifinal) hosts.

The committee discussed and provided staff feedback as to consideration for separating baseball and softball into two Site Selection Committees (currently are joint committees). Good points were made on both sides of the discussion. This topic will be included on the agendas of other impacted committees for their discussion and input.

**Heath and Safety:** The committee was provided COVID-19 statistics from Iowa high school baseball, which were able to complete the 2019-20 season. MHSAA staff also provided known testing rates and transmission numbers for fall MHSAA sports.

The committee discussed the increase of access to wearable technology, including the consideration for use during games. Concerns addressed primarily surrounded privacy and the competitive imbalance this might create between school districts due to costs. It was the sentiment of the committee that wearable technology continue to be permitted during practice and training, but that it should remain restricted from use in games.

**Increasing Participation:**

A robust discussion was had by the committee on the topic of participation in baseball – particularly in lower socioeconomic communities. Concerns regarding the continued decline in participation amongst minority student athletes was also discussed at length. Baseball (softball was also included in the discussion) are seen as becoming more negatively impacted by specialization and lack of opportunities at the middle school level.

Several ideas were presented by committee member as possible solutions to these issues. Increasing development opportunities at the middle school level and finding ways to increase contact between coaches and these younger students were mentioned as essential. MHSAA staff also provided information regarding communications with Major League Baseball and the Urban Youth Academy on redirecting funding and resources to the schools for equipment and field maintenance in underrepresented areas of the state for both baseball and softball. Staff will provide committee members updates for these ongoing discussions.

**Umpire Numbers Concerns:**

MHSAA staff expressed continued concerns regarding dwindling MHSAA umpire registrations. Baseball and softball, particularly, for a number of reasons discussed with the committee, are losing game officials at greater rates than other sports. Possible solutions discussed were increasing game fees, leagues and conferences providing assistance to new umpires for equipment and uniforms and rearranging schedules to reduce the number of double-headers played so early in the day.

**Rules and Regulations Discussion:**

Due to the cancellation of last season, there are no significant changes to the baseball rules or regulations for the upcoming season. MHSAA staff provided committee members with an update on the Representative Council adoptions from last year's recommendations. Those included a name change and change in the presentation of trophies for the Quarterfinal level of the tournament, alternating annually the day that odd- and even-numbered Divisions play their Semifinal games and the addition of the Suspended Game Policy.

**Recommendations to the Representative Council:**

The committee did not submit any proposals to the Representative Council this year.