

JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES #1

Virtual Zoom meeting, October 13, 2021, 9:30 a.m.

Members:

Justin Ansel, Comstock
Karyn Furlong, Gull Lake
Don Gustafson, St. Ignace
Jason Kemler, Brethren
Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids

Carlos McGee, Midland
Avis Najor, Bloomfield Hills
Shane Riley, Blanchard
Dave Smith, Gaylord
Adam Stefanski, Boyne City
Robert Wright, Sand Creek

MHSAA Staff

Cody Inglis

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School Committee met to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

The committee began by reviewing responsibilities and purpose including a thorough review of the JH/MS committee meeting minutes from February, 2021. Staff updated the committee on the responsibilities, purpose and topics on the agenda.

MHSAA JH/MS Cross Country Regionals

The committee was updated on the JH/MS Regional Cross Country meets that are being held around the state in the Fall of 2021. Information shared on the meets included sites, dates and protocols used by site hosts and schools. Committee members shared positive sentiments and strong support from about the JH/MS Cross Country races and believe that getting this concept started will be a key area of growth for JH/MS athletics. The committee was reminded of the philosophy behind the JH/MS Regional XC events. It is to provide an experience for kids to compete so that the inevitable transition to the high school athletics world may be a little easier on all. This philosophy has guided the setup of these events and through this first year many lessons will be learned, future plans adjusted and we will be flexible going forward.

Some specific JH/MS Cross Country Regional race details follow:

- MHSAA JH/MS Regional races can be hosted anytime during the month of October at the eight preselected sites. This determination was made by the host school.
- There is no cost and no entry fee for participation in the JH/MS Regional race.
- The eight preselected Cross Country Regional races are one per zone (see map). Any member JH/MS schools in that defined geographic area would be eligible to compete at the host site for their zone.
- The Regional races will be done by gender in each zone. There will be two regional races of 2 miles at each site – one girls race and one boys race. If race sizes get too large, a host school can separate into two sections of races per gender to better accommodate racers.
- A school can determine who will compete for that school. A school can enter no runners, one runner or as many runners as they have on their team dependent upon the size of their school.
- Athletic.net will be used as the registration platform for the JH/MS Cross Country Regional for schools, teams and individuals. Those Regional races have been created in Athletic.net and are listed on that site for entry.
- The MHSAA JH/MS Regional race will NOT be counted against the schools' MHSAA contest limit in JH/MS Cross Country.
- MHSAA trophies and medals will be awarded in each gender. The top 20 in each gender will receive medals while the top two teams will also receive MHSAA team trophies.
- MHSAA host schools will hire at least one MHSAA registered XC official to start and officiate the Regional.
- The MHSAA will provide bib numbers for each JH/MS XC Regional race and participant.
- The admission policy will be either \$6.00 per person or \$10 per carload. Digital Ticketing can be used via GoFan.

The committee also discussed the challenges associated with the MHSAA JH/MS Cross Country Regionals in its' first year. These included a late introduction and start because of COVID, zone travel issues, race deadlines, number of racers and races at each site, small schools vs. big schools and the date of races. The committee brainstormed ideas and offered feedback on how to solve some of the issues that have been raised. A survey will be developed to share with schools and coaches for their feedback which may result in adjustments to future JH/MS Cross Country events. Discussion will continue at the February JH/MS committee meeting as to the recommended changes.

MHSAA postseason competition in other sports

The committee transitioned into discussion about other MHSAA sports and if there is desire to pursue events in other sports. The committee was updated on some sport coaches' associations in Michigan such as the ski coaches association, who is conducting their own JH/MS statewide event to attract student-athletes to their sport. The committee wished for this issue to be discussed at the sport committee level where each sport committee, its' coaches association representative and others will determine if there is both desire and a plan in place to have MHSAA JH/MS postseason tournaments in that sport. Details in any plan will be critical to new sports being added to the mix of the planning and implementation. This includes dates, qualification criteria, venues, format and other related logistics.

MHSAA JH/MS participation

Discussion centered on the pandemic's impact on JH/MS participation across the state. Like many things, it was dependent on school geography and size. Some committee members reported sharp rises in participation coming back into JH/MS sports both at their school and in their general area. Committee members who reported this rise attributed this to a sense of getting back to "normal" or getting out of the house and back to school involvement that many students lacked for well over a year. Other committee members reported a decline in participation at the school-based sport JH/MS level in their area and at their school. While too early to determine the cause of this decline in the local area, some assumptions included the non-school sports did not "shut down" during the pandemic while many JH/MS athletics did "pause". Parents looked for other avenues of participation during the pandemic and non-school athletics were ready, willing and able to accept athletes and the accompanying finances for participation in those programs. Discussion included schools showing interest in partnering with the non-school athletic programs to ensure that students were involved in something and locally how this strategy could pay benefits for both school and non-school JH/MS aged athletic participation. This partnership included ensuring that schools are communicating with non-school sports programs about scheduling and the relatively new MHSAA limited team membership rules that allow students to compete in up to two non-school events during the same sport and same JH/MS season.

General JH/MS discussion

Further discussion on JH/MS topics included the 5th quarter rule for JH/MS. There was strong sentiment on the committee to NOT have this rule apply to 6th-8th grade competition as it would not encourage involvement by all at this level but participation by few elite and early developed athletes instead of involving more kids in programs and working on the skills needed for future participation.

The committee discussed MHSAA rules meeting requirements for JH/MS coaches and if JH/MS coaches should be required to have CPR training like their HS coaching counterparts. Discussion will also focus on the continued challenges of keeping kids engaged from the JH/MS athletic level to the HS athletic level. This transition period is a challenging one for many including students at many schools who determine other pathways and lose out on opportunities to participate at the HS level.

Next JH/MS Committee meeting will be February 16, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

