



THE OFFICIAL WORD

October 2024

A Publication of the Montana Officials' Association

One South Dakota Avenue, Helena, Montana 59601 Phone: (406) 442-6010 www.mhsa.org

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE

The 2024-25 school year is off to a great start and much of that is due to the commitment and support from our officials across the state. The postseason for fall is just around the corner, the fall regular season has gone well, and we hope for good weather for our fall postseason events.

Recruitment and Retention – This is one of the most important items that we can share with our officials. Attached you will find the toolkit for recruitment and retention strategies, developed from the feedback at the NFHS Officials Consortium in April, the subsequent sectional meetings, and the one-on-one follow-up meetings. This document contains the barriers to recruitment and retention of officials, as well as the strategies for improvement in each area.

We will share this information with our member schools as well so we can work collaboratively to build and maintain a healthy officials' pipeline across the country and at all levels of sport. Getting this information in the hands of Athletic Directors is especially critical, as many of the suggestions for improvement rest in the hands of the schools that host contests at their schools.

Rules Interpreters updated – We added rule interpreters for many of our sports. We put this change into place a few years back and now we have MOA rule interpreters in each of our MOA sports.

Here are our current MOA rules interpreters and MHSa staff Liaisons:

- Football – Travis Huntsinger – MOA Official from Bozeman and the MHSa Staff Liaison is Scott Wilson (swilson@mhsa.org)
- Volleyball –Norma Stene – MOA Official from Billings and the MHSa Staff Liaison is Kip Ryan (kryan@mhsa.org).

- Soccer – Scott Lockwood – MOA official from Helena and the MHSa Staff Liaison is Brian Michelotti (bmichelotti@mhsa.org).
- Basketball – Rob Tesch - MOA Official from Billings and the MHSa staff Liaison is Greta Buehler (gbuehler@mhsa.org)
- Wrestling – Joe Sol – MOA Official from Missoula and the MHSa staff Liaison is Scott Wilson (swilson@mhsa.org)
- Softball – Rock Rayl – MOA Official from Great Falls and MHSa staff Liaison is Amy Bartels (abartels@mhsa.org)
- Baseball – Craig Struble – MOA Official from Kalispell and the MHSa staff Liaison is Scott Wilson (swilson@mhsa.org)

We have had this process in place for several years and it has been an outstanding change. We are able to add great information to our memos and our rules interpreters have provided excellent leadership in their sports. The rules interpreters will serve a 4-year term with the option to renew at the end of that.

NFHS Network – Continuing in partnership, the MHSa and the NFHS Network are excited to build on the success of past high school postseason broadcasts. We have continued to add the NFHS Network viewing option to each official's membership. For a small fee that was included in registration this year, each official now has full access to watch all games broadcast on the NFHS Network. The NFHS Network will video stream live almost all MHSa regular season games (Varsity and JV), MHSa postseason games, and MHSa state championship games/meets in numerous sports throughout the entire year. The games will be available by subscription pay and can be accessed through www.mhsa.org.

Volleyball Ballots - The MHSa Executive Board passed a rule for postseason that if an MHSa school does not submit a postseason ballot, the school would be fined \$100. For

the 2024 volleyball season three schools did not return their ballots.

Great things happen when administrators, coaches and officials work together. Let's keep this going for the rest of the school year. We are looking forward to a great postseason. Give us a call if you have any questions.

Brian Michelotti, MOA Commissioner

MOVING?

Update your demographic information on your Dragonfly account at www.max.dragonflyathletics.com. Most of the problems experienced by officials not receiving MOA information including books, clinic information, etc. could be avoided by ensuring that your information is current. If your information changes close to the season, please email the MOA office at abartels@mhsa.org to ensure that your information is correct.

WINTER SPORTS EXAM DATES

Basketball and Wrestling- New Officials, Reinstating Officials, Apprentice, Certified and Master Exams
Opens November 1 – December 4, 2024

*Only Renewed Officials are required to test prior to the deadline.

Exams for all sports are administered exclusively online on your Dragonfly account. If you are registered to take the exam, watch for instructions to come prior to the testing.

NOTE: If you wish to take the upgrade exam you must notify the MHSa office, in writing, at least seven (7) days prior to the day the test opens. A request for an upgrade form is available on the MHSa website under the forms section of the MOA tab. Please contact Amy Bartels with those requests. Upon receipt of your upgrade request, your name will automatically be added to the test list if everything is in order. If there is a problem with your request, we will contact you via email. Please remember that upgrading will be denied for a one-year period for **failure to:** 1) complete the required number of study clubs; 2) view rules clinics prior to the published deadline; 3) pay annual MOA dues 4) complete yearly concussion training prior to the published deadline or 5) receive a favorable evaluation from your regional evaluation committee.

WINTER RULES CLINICS

The MHSa/MOA rules clinics are again being provided in an online format. A detailed information sheet explaining the procedure for accessing these clinics was sent with the winter sports mailing in mid-October. If you have any questions, please contact the MHSa office. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CLINICS MUST BE VIEWED BY **December 4th, 2024** TO SATISFY YOUR 2024-2025 RULES CLINIC REQUIREMENT. You must upload your

certificate of completion to your Dragonfly Account. Winter rules clinic will open on November 1st, 2024.

Failure to complete rules clinic(s) by the published deadline will result in a loss of rating and potentially render an official ineligible for postseason assignment.

CONCUSSION TRAINING

The online concussion course must be viewed **every year**, after June 1st, for an official to be eligible for the coming school year. **The deadline for viewing the course will coincide with the deadline for viewing the rules clinic for each sport, whether you will officiate by that date or not.** For officials who work more than one sport, you must complete the concussion course by the rule's clinic deadline for your first sport of the year. The concussion course must be completed only once per school year, but it must be completed before officiating any high school scrimmage or game. The penalty for not completing the concussion clinic by the deadline will be immediate suspension from the MOA until proof of concussion training is produced. Also, as with rules clinic deadlines, *if you fail to complete concussion training prior to the published deadline, you will incur a loss of rating and loss of eligibility for postseason assignment.* **An MOA official, by Montana state law, cannot work any scrimmage or contest until the concussion clinic has been viewed.**

REPORTING EJECTIONS

Officials **in all sports** must report, in writing, ejections of coaches, students **and, this year, spectators.** These reports must be submitted to the MOA office within **24** hours of the incident. If we do not receive the reports in the appropriate time frame, we cannot send the report to schools in a timely fashion. Reports that are delayed are in violation of MOA rules, so please submit them within 48 hours of the incident. They may be emailed to abartels@mhsa.org.

EJECTION PROCESS & PROCEDURE

Please remember it is important, in most situations, to talk briefly with the other official or with other members of the crew about ejecting a participant. Sometimes this allows time to reflect on the situation and gather other viewpoints, if appropriate. It is vital to get the correct number, and name, if possible, of the player and to record that number. After you eject a participant (coach or player), use the proper reporting process per your sport's rules and execute the ejection. Remember to inform the coach whether or not the ejection was for unsporting conduct. Make sure you understand who can remain on the premises and those who cannot. If a spectator must be ejected from the premises, the official must first contact the contest

administrator and **the administrator** must remove the spectator from the premises. Use law enforcement if appropriate and available.

It is never acceptable for the contest official, after a contest is finished, to review a tape or film of a game or get together postgame and change or overrule an ejection after it is issued. Sport-specific and MHSA rules do not allow ejections to be overturned by game officials. It is also wise not to discuss your ejection with school personnel, parents or the media. Simply use the proper procedure in reporting and enforcing the ejection, report the ejection to the MHSA within 24 hours and direct any questions to the MHSA or your local regional director after the incident. Refrain from commentary on the MHSA ejection rule and how it applies to students or coaches or adding your opinion regarding the conduct that was displayed. We need only the simple facts of the ejection and a brief explanation of the incident.

VOLLEYBALL INFORMATION AND RULES CLARIFICATIONS

Jewelry:

Just a reminder, the wearing of jewelry in warm-ups as well as during competition is prohibited. Earbuds fall into the jewelry rule, athletes should not wear these during warmups. If a referee observes a player in warm-ups wearing jewelry, the head coach of that player shall be notified and have her withdrawn from participating until the jewelry is removed. It is preferred the contact be only with the head coach. There is no further action necessary unless the player does not remove the jewelry and is charged with unsporting conduct with a card issued at the start of the set.

Jewelry: Equipment and Accessories 4-1-7, 4-1 Pen. 1

(All jewelry shall be removed, except small, secured jewelry (stud or post). No jewelry shall be permitted below the chin. String bracelets, commemorative bracelets and body jewelry are considered jewelry and are not permitted. Taping over jewelry is not permitted.

Players are now permitted to wear small, secured stud or post jewelry above the chin. The rule change maintains consistency with current trends of other NFHS and volleyball rules codes. Hoop-style jewelry and any jewelry worn below the chin are illegal. Please reference the pictures below to determine if a piece of jewelry is legal or illegal.

Beads and charms on shoelaces

Beads are considered jewelry unless they are in hair. Case Book play 4.1.7 SITUATION A references a player wearing metal charms on their shoelaces and the official rules - jewelry and illegal.

There is a trend for what they call permanent jewelry, this is considered illegal also.

Permanent Jewelry is illegal if it does not follow the jewelry rule (please have your players remove jewelry before match)

The only allowable jewelry is small studs above the chin or jewelry worn for religious/medical reasons, taped and covered. (4-1-7) Unless the permanent jewelry meets these requirements to be legal, then they are not allowed during competition.

Players shall not wear body paint or glitter on their hair, face, uniform or body.

FOOTBALL INFORMATION

Football Play-Offs Start November 1st - 2nd

Starting this postseason, the MHSA office will hire 5 officials for 6-player football postseason games. This new rule is required for quarterfinal, semifinal and championship games, and will be used in the first round games if officials are available.

Process for Hiring Postseason Officials in Football

One question that is always asked when postseason play arrives is how officials are selected for the playoffs and state championship games. Here is how the selection process works for football:

The hiring of football officials for the pos season playoffs is a collaborative effort between the MOA office and each of the eleven MOA regions. Coaches do not vote on these officials, but towards the end of the season, the MOA local pools verify availability and rank each official in their area. When the playoffs begin, the MOA office determines geographically which football officiating pool would be appropriate to cover each round of the playoffs. Then the MOA office receives recommendations from the MOA Regional Director or his designee about crew assignments for each game. After all of this input is gathered and evaluated, the MOA office assigns the most qualified and available officiating crews for all five of the levels of football games in Montana. This process has worked effectively in assigning well-qualified officiating crews for all classes for the past several years.

SOCCER SEASON CONCLUDES IN NOVEMBER

This year's state soccer finals for Classes AA and A will start this month.

Class A Playoff Structure

- October 14-19– First Round
- October 25-26 – Semi Final Round
- November 1-2 Championship Games

Class AA Playoff Structure

- October 22 – First Round
- October 22 – Quarter Final Round
- October 25 – Semi Final Round
- October 29 – Championship Games

Playoff officials are assigned by the MHSА office with input from the local pool leaders using a list of available officials.

Winter Sports Study Club Information

Reminder that all MOA officials are required to attend a minimum number of study clubs. Check with your pool leaders on any specific requirements per your pool. Study club attendance is required to maintain your MOA rating and will result in a loss of rating if the minimum is not met. All officials that have not met the study club attendance will not be allowed to upgrade the following year.

Basketball Study Clubs

Four basketball study club videos will be provided this year. The viewing of these videos is mandatory for all MOA officials.

MOA information may be viewed on the MOA section of the MHSА website at www.mhsa.org.

Basketball

- [2024-25 NFHS Basketball Rules Changes](#) can be accessed at the link above. Of note, rules 9-10-1a and 4-10 allow state associations to adopt a modification to the closely guarded rule if they have adopted the 35-second shot clock. This allows players to dribble the ball for more than five seconds while closely guarded and maintain that a player may not hold the ball for five or more seconds. The MHSА has adopted this modification for the upcoming season.
- [2024-25 NFHS Basketball Points of Emphasis](#) can be accessed at the link above.
- Other basketball-related information can be found on the basketball page of the MHSА website.

Wrestling

- Boys' and Girls' Wrestling will have 14 weight classes starting in 2024-25.
- Beginning with the 2024-25 season, high school wrestlers will be inbounds with only one point of contact of either wrestler inside or on the boundary line.
- Beginning this season, wrestlers will be awarded three match points instead of two when securing a takedown.
- Change to Rule 5-11-3 is as follows: Two points will be awarded when near-fall criteria are held for two seconds, three points for three seconds, four points for four seconds and five points if the

defensive wrestler is injured, indicates an injury or bleeding occurs after the four-point near-fall has been earned.

- A committee of 6 wrestling officials, 2 regional directors, MOA Coordinator Amy Bartels and MHSА Wrestling Liason Scott Wilson have been meeting to review the postseason hiring process for wrestling officials. A recommendation for change will be presented to the MOA Regional Directors at their December meeting.

FALL RULES CLINIC SUMMARY

The attendance for football, soccer and volleyball rules clinics was as follows:

FOOTBALL:	
Officials	401
Coaches/Administrators	803
SOCCKER:	
Officials	163
Coaches/Administrators	166
VOLLEYBALL:	
Total	
Officials	336
Coaches/Administrators	496

OFFICIALS WINTER MAILING

All Winter sports materials were mailed to registered/paid officials mid-October. Materials and emails will be sent to new officials as registration is completed.

Attached

[NFHS Official's Toolkit for Recruitment and Retention of Officials](#)