



THE OFFICIAL WORD

August 2023

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MOA Commissioner - Brian Michelotti

We are very excited about the new school year! I am starting my second year as the MOA Commissioner and MHSAs Executive Director and am truly fortunate to be able to lead our outstanding organization.

The greatest resource in the MHSAs / MOA is our people. We are comprised of our staff, administrators, coaches, participants and officials. The MHSAs / MOA staff includes six individuals (seven if you include me). Since April, we have made many adjustments in our office. Each staff member participated in high school sports and/or activities and understands the values, commitment, and benefits of being a team player. Here is a breakdown of our staff and the major responsibilities of each person:

- Brian Michelotti – MHSAs Executive Director and MOA Commissioner – budget/finances, legal issues, eligibility, foreign exchange, hardships, soccer, and golf liaison.
- Kip Ryan – Senior Associate Director – volleyball, swimming, cross-country, track & field, Sports Advisory Rules Review Committee, athletes' Hall of Fame, awards and MHSAs publications (Activity News).
- Scott Wilson – Associate Director – football, wrestling, baseball, AIM Higher, NFHS Network, Coaches Education reporting, NFHS participation survey.
- Amy Bartels – Assistant Director – softball, spirit, speech & drama, music, gender equity officer, MOA oversight and Regional Directors, Student Advisory Committee, MOA Hall of Fame, Social Media coordinator.
- Greta Buehler – Assistant Director – basketball, tennis, sports medicine and cooperative sponsorships,
- Jenise Cockhill Business Manager, accounts payable/accounts receivable, membership dues / catastrophic insurance, Executive Board meeting secretary and Executive Director assistant
- Ryan Richards - MHSAs / MOA Sports Properties - Corporate Sponsors

As we begin a new year of high school sports and activities across the state of Montana, we want to create an open culture with the following commitments:

If you ever have any questions or concerns, please contact any one of us. We are here to assist, and we will be a resource that will allow you to grow student activity participation in your community.

As I mentioned above, the MHSAs/MOA is made up of YOU—the administrators, coaches, officials, and participants across the state. We have outstanding people in our membership, and we encourage everyone to step forward and take an active role in your MHSAs / MOA. We can accomplish incredible things when we come together.

Have a great school year. We look forward to hearing from you!

Brian Michelotti

2023-24 Sports Updates

New Rules/Regulations

Football

Modified 5-person mechanics, umpire in the offensive backfield.

This season, football pools across the state have been given the option to try a modified 5-person mechanic by moving the umpire to the offensive backfield. This is not mandatory, and the decision to use the modified 5-person mechanic or the regular 5-person mechanic is up to the local pool. The local pool must decide which mechanic will be used for the entire regular season and the postseason. Local pools will not be allowed to switch mechanics from game to game. Moving the umpire to the offensive backfield is only allowed in 5-person crews. The MHSAs has developed a modified 5-person mechanic manual. All pools choosing to use the modified mechanic must follow the guidelines in the manual. Currently the Billings, Helena and Butte pools will be utilizing the modified 5-person mechanics.

Clarified That Towels Do Not Have To Be The Same Solid Color For Each Player [1- 5-3a(5)a 4, 5 (NEW)] — Player towels may contain one manufacturer's logo and/or one school logo neither exceeding 2¼ square inches. Towels must be a solid color but now do not have to be the same solid color for each player. Towels may not be ball- or penalty-flag colored.

Clarified When a Player Is Inbounds After Being Out of Bounds [2-29-1] — This change clarifies when a player is inbounds after being out of bounds. There is no change to any foul or subsequent penalty provisions, or any rules related to illegal participation or the provisions regarding eligibility to catch a pass.

Added A List of Criteria to Help Identify Players Who Should Be Defined as Defenseless Receivers [2-32-16d (NEW), 9-4-3g] — This change adds to the list of criteria to help identify players who should be defined as defenseless receivers related to application of unnecessary or excessive contact. This clarification should help game officials and coaches by defining allowable contact against defenseless receivers.

Intentional Grounding Exception Changed [7-5-2d EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW), TABLE 7-5-2 d EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW), TABLE 7-5 (1)d EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW)] — This change permits the exception for intentional grounding to the first and only player to possess the ball after the snap ends. This rule only applies to 11-player and 8-player football.

Removed "Intentional" From Pass Interference in TABLE 7-5 [TABLE 7-5 2c (DELETED), 7-5 PENALTY] — By removing "intentional" from pass interference, this change puts the rule in line with how it is already enforced which is a 15-yard penalty.

Changes In Basic Spot Penalty Enforcement [10-4, TABLE 10-4 (NEW), 10-6 (DELETED)] — This change restructures and clarifies the amendments to Rule 10 to eliminate the excessive penalty enforcements for offensive fouls that occur behind the line of scrimmage. This revision stipulates the basic spot for enforcement of fouls behind the line of scrimmage is the previous spot rather than the spot of the foul unless otherwise specified by rule. Current penalties for illegal kicking, batting and participation fouls, and provisions for offensive fouls occurring in the end zone that may result in a safety remain intact.

Clarification On The Ball Being Handed Forward On A Running Play [Six-Player – Rule 7g (NEW)] — The change allows the ball to be handed forward on a running play, including to the guards/ends, while prohibiting handing the ball to the snapper provided both players are behind the neutral zone.

Volleyball

2-1-9 (NEW), 12-2-5: Creates a coaching zone defined by the libero replacement zone extending beyond the end line and sideline extended.
Rationale: Defines and clarifies the area in which coaches may stand.

4-1-7: Allows small, secured stud or post jewelry to be worn above the chin.
Rationale: Maintains consistency with current trends of other NFHS and volleyball rules codes.

4-2-4b: Eliminates the use of uniform numbers with a leading zero (01, 02, 03, etc.) beginning in 2028.
Rationale: Clarifies legal numbers and eliminates confusion when signaling while aligning with other rules codes.

10-2-1: Allows requests for substitution by the head coach to be signaled or verbalized.
Rationale: Creates consistency by allowing either a verbal or non-verbal signal for substitution.

12-2-6: Establishes that one assistant coach may stand within the coaching zone to provide instruction during dead-ball situations only.
Rationale: Allows an assistant coach to stand and coach during dead-ball situations in addition to the head coach. The assistant coach that stands may change throughout the match, but only one can stand at a time.

2023-24 Volleyball Editorial Changes

2-1-1, 2-1-3, 2-1-4, 2-1-5, 2-1-6, 10-2-1

2023-24 Volleyball Points of Emphasis

- 1- Using the Lineup Card Effectively
- 2- Coaches Zone Privileges

Soccer

3-3-2b (2,3) (NEW): Permits the referee to stop the clock to review game situations at any time without negatively

impacting a player's ability to remain in the game. **Rationale:** This rule change affords the ability for the referee to stop the clock and review situations without negatively affecting a player's ability to remain in the game. However, once the referee beckons a medical professional or coach onto the field to further assess, the player must leave the field of play.

3-3-7: Clarifies where a player should re-enter the game to avoid confusion.

Rationale: This rule change clarifies that a player should re-enter the game from the official area at midfield. This avoids potential confusion as to who is or is not in the game.

3-4-1e (NEW): Clarifies players should exit the field on the bench side unless unable to do so due to injury.

Rationale: To assist the officials in the managing of substitutions, players should exit the field from the bench side when the substitute(s) are beckoned on by the referee unless the player(s) is unable to do so because of an injury. This avoids unnecessary interaction with opposing teams and fans and minimizes the potential for unsporting behavior.

4-2-11 (NEW): Defines how wearable technology devices may be worn. -

Rationale: Sets a national standard for wearable technology. This change clarifies that these devices may be worn as a part of the shoe and/or under the uniform but not worn on the arm. Coaches and players are still not permitted to utilize technology to communicate during the game.

Rule 4 Reorganization: Adjusts the structure of the uniform rule to offer clarity.

Rationale: The reorganization of the uniform rule breaks up the rule into bite-size pieces that are easier for coaches and officials to apply.

1-1-5 (NEW): Defines deliberately playing the ball to clarify the existing rules.

Rationale: Defines the criteria for deliberately playing the ball when determining an offside infraction.

12-1-1 through 3 (NEW), 18-1-1: Clarifies various foul categories and defines the seven direct free kick fouls /to provide consistency.

Rationale: The new article in Rule 12 and added definitions to Rule 18 define the seven direct free kick fouls and provide consistency for officials interpreting misconduct.

12-3-2, 3 (NEW): Clarifies that neither accidental nor deliberate hand/arm contact can result in a goal.

Rationale: The new articles eliminate the necessity for the referee to determine if the hand/arm contact was accidental or deliberate. Now, neither accidental nor deliberate contact with the hand/arm result in a goal for greater consistency and ease of interpretation.

12-8-5 (NEW): Offers clarity regarding goalkeeper handling not permitted outside and inside the penalty area.

Rationale: Adding language and direction for officials regarding goalkeeper handling outside the penalty area and inside the penalty area when they are not permitted to handle the ball.

12-9-4(NEW),12-8-1f(14, 15), 12-8-2d 3,4): Defines considerations of denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO).

Rationale: This rule defines the considerations of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to provide additional consistency and clarity for referees.

Concussion Training Requirements:

In respect to officials, the MHS/MOA requires each official to take the NFHS Concussion in Sports course each year. That course must be taken after June 1st for the subsequent school year and must be completed before officiating scrimmages or contests. Officials, whether MOA or non-MOA, must complete the training before officiating sub varsity games and/or elementary/junior high contests and the school district must verify those officials have completed training. Also, the pool will need to check that all officials have completed the concussion course before assigning those officials to any MHS contest or to any school district contest at any level. Officials will be immediately suspended from the MOA until the concussion course is completed.

Air Quality

With fall sports practices and golf meets underway and competition ready to begin in football, volleyball, soccer and cross country, there are a few areas throughout our state that are experiencing poor air quality because of smoke from wildfires in Montana and surrounding states. As we proceed through the beginning of the fall season, there may be more areas affected by smoke from wildfires.

It is important to note that for the 2023-24 school year, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have revised their Outdoor Activity & Air Quality Guidelines for Schools. In the past, the DEQ used a factor called NowCast 2.5 PM Concentration and this year has switched to a national standard referred to as Air Quality Index (AQI). Here are the differences in the scales:

Category	Color	Old Monitoring System NowCast 2.5pm	New Monitoring System AQI
Good	Green	0 – 12	0 – 50
Moderate	Yellow	12 – 35	51 – 100
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Orange	35 – 55	101 – 150
Unhealthy	Red	55 – 150	151 – 200
Very Unhealthy / Hazardous	Purple	150 +	201+

As you see, the scales have changed, but the format of the chart remained the same. For more information, visit Montana’s DEQ website at www.deq.mt.gov or <http://todaysair.mtdeq.us>.

Email or Mailing Address Change

As a reminder, if you change your email address or your physical mailing address it must be updated in a timely manner to ensure that you receive all emails pertaining to MOA officials management, pool communication, NFHS rules books and NFHS Network. In some cases an extra fee is incurred to email or mail you MOA materials, you will be responsible for that extra fee. All information must be updated in your Dragonfly account.

** Fees will vary depending on the current mailing and the cost of the current materials.

Pool Leaders and Pool Administration: Updating your address and email in Dragonfly does not update this information in the MOA Pool contact sheet. Please contact Amy if you have changed either of these to ensure that you receive all emails and mailings as necessary without delay.

Dues Memo

Click the link for all MOA Registration Information
[MOA Registration Information](#)

Late Payment

July 1, 2023, or after see the following regarding late payment information:

- Renewed officials will receive a \$25 late fee and will be required to retest with the score equivalent to the officials rating.
- All requirements must be completed to officiate as a MOA.
- Late pay officials at any level will not be allowed to upgrade in any sport for the 2023-24 year.
- Only MOA officials in good standing may officiate at the varsity level.
- Renewed officials must complete all requirements by the published deadlines.
- New officials or eligible reinstating officials do not have requirement deadlines but are required to follow MOA rules and regulations when officiating at all levels.

Master Officials - Postseason Information

- If a master official pays dues late, they must pay the late fee of \$25 and test at the equivalent test score to be eligible. Tests must be completed prior to the published deadline.
- Late Requirement(s) – Master Official
 - A master official that does not complete the requirement(s) by the published deadline will be ineligible for any postseason.
 - A master official may reinstate to be eligible for postseason by paying a fee of \$25 per late requirement and completing the requirement(s) per MOA rules and regulations.
- All fees must be paid on Dragonfly no later than 7 days following fee notification from the MOA office.
- All requirements must be completed, uploaded, and approved on Dragonfly prior to participating in any varsity contest.
- No official may participate in any contest at any level without the NFHS Concussion in Sport.

Reciprocity

Members of the MOA can join as members of the official's association in the bordering states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and/or Idaho by paying dues of \$20.00 per sport to the particular state organization(s). The fee in the past was \$10 per sport. All bordering states have adjusted to this \$20.00 fee.

Pool information

All officials must be a part of one pool for each sport. This must be updated in your Dragonfly account. If you are not a part of a pool your pool leader/assignors will not be able to assign you in Dragonfly. Many schools are requiring that all officials be added to Dragonfly for payment or contest management.

My Money Account: Dragonfly

If a school pays through Dragonfly, you will need to set up your My Money account to access your contest fees. See the following link for help setting up your My Money account.

Here is a video link for further assistance:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoHP6YHC9Hs>

The MOA Office cannot access any information on your My Money account. For all questions contact Dragonfly support at 1-877-246-1818 or you may communicate with their support via your Dragonfly account through the Dragonfly Chat option.

2023 - 24 Exam Dates

Listed below you will find the dates that have been finalized for the MOA qualifying exams this year. **All exams are now administered exclusively online via the Dragonfly Website within your account.**

August 1st - August 23rd, 2023

- **All Exams** - Football, Soccer and Volleyball

November 1st - November 30th, 2023

- **All Exams** Basketball and Wrestling

March 1st - March 22nd, 2024

- **All Exams** Softball

Updated Minimum scores for passing the exam are as follows:

Master – 80%; Certified – 70%; Apprentice – 60%

Those officials wishing to take the exam in order to upgrade their rating must send the Request to Upgrade Form to upgrade a minimum of **seven** days prior to the opening date of the exam. The upgrade form is available on the MHS website under MOA/Forms. Assuming you meet all other requirements, your name will be added to the list to take the exam. You will not be contacted by this office unless there is a problem with your request. If you are denied an upgrade an email will be sent to the individual official.

2023-2024 Clinics

To access the MHS Clinics, go to the MHS website at www.mhsa.org and click on the link to the NFHS Learn for clinic access. Remember that you will not be charged for the NFHS Concussion in Sport of the MHS Rules Clinics, but you must order the course via NFHS Learn. All certificates must be uploaded or transferred to your Dragonfly account. To transfer make sure you use your email that is used to log into your NFHS Learn account.

MOA Handbook

We no longer produce a hard copy of the MOA Handbook, but you can view it on the MHS Website under MOA/Handbook. We will also make available on that webpage a printer friendly copy for your convenience at www.mhsa.org.

Electronic Books

The NFHS Electronic books have been sent out to all participating and paid fall officials. All books available will be accessed through the NFHS AllAccess application on either your electronic device or on the website. Instructions were sent out to all registered and paid officials and will continue to be sent out within 48 hours of paid dues.

An email for electronic books will come from one of these two emails from the NFHS:

noreply@nfhs.org or memberships@nfhs.org

Make sure to check your spam or junk folder and save all email addresses from the NFHS so you do not miss out on any emails. A second book will not be sent out due to insufficient email addresses. A fee will be charged to order an additional book.

NFHS Network

NFHS Network codes and instructions for accessing your network subscriptions began being sent out via email starting on **Thursday, July 27, 2023**, from Dana Pappas at the NFHS. The email will come from dpappas@nfhs.org. Check your junk or spam folder for an email from her with your access code. You will only receive a code once you have paid your MOA dues on Dragonfly. Make sure your email address is current on Dragonfly. The email from Dana will go to the email you have on your Dragonfly account.

Dana Pappas is sending emails with a code and instructions every Friday after July 27th throughout the 2023 - 2024 as officials continue to register.

If you are currently paying for a subscription to the NFHS Network, you must cancel the subscription. NFHS will not refund you if you do not cancel your current subscription.

Make sure that you check your spam or junk folder and save all email addresses from the NFHS so you do not miss out on any emails.

MOA - Officials Apparel

Please click the following link for all new MOA apparel selections.

<https://purchaseofficials.com/collections/montana>

For all MOA questions, please call Amy Bartels at the MHS/MOA office at 406-442-6010 or email at abartels@mhsa.org.