

**MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCE CALL OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
OF THE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION  
JUNE 20, 2024  
(via Zoom)**

**ATTENDANCE**

John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge  
Krystal Zentner, Bridger  
Aric Harris, Whitefish  
Dan Mills, Bozeman  
Kara Triplett, Richey  
Jimmy Patelis, Billings  
Joe McElroy, Missoula  
Brian Michelotti, Helena  
Scott Wilson, Helena  
Kip Ryan, Helena  
Greta Buehler, Helena  
Amy Bartels, Helena  
Jenise Cockhill, Helena

Observers:

Sid DeBarathy, Butte  
Ryan Stosich, Butte  
Shane Jorgensen, Butte

Delegations:

*Brenner Flaten, Glasgow*  
*Travis Blome, Hamilton*  
*Mike Henneberg, Great Falls*  
*Jesse Allen, St. Regis*  
*Pete Joseph, Corvallis*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Board President, Mr. Fitzgerald, called the meeting to order at 8:04 am. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Fitzgerald recited the Open Meeting Law to those in attendance. No one addressed the board.

**CLASS AA REQUESTED CHANGES**

Mr. Henneberg presented the Class AA requested changes for 2024-25.

- a. Golf - Host schools for Divisional or State events will be responsible for securing enough markers for the event. All participating schools will be responsible for securing one back-up marker for the event to be used if needed.
- b. Swimming - Assurance of 48 swimmers for each event at state. This means that if A/B does not fill a heat for an event additional AA swimmers will be allowed to fill lanes, and vice versa. This will have minimal change to the entry process.
- c. Track - Request that all FAT meets be viewed as a qualifying event for state meet competitions at AA level.

- d. Track- Request that MHSA allow for the addition of an additional relay event be allowed as an exhibition event at any track meet upon request and MHSA approval. The recommendation was for a 200,200,400,800 medley.
- e. Track- Request to run the 3200 for all classes on Thursday of the state meet.
- f. Track- Adjustments to the qualifying standards be included in the AA handbook using the recommendations that came to us from the track coaches.
- g. Softball - Adjust the softball regular season maximum games to a total of 20. This will be achieved by playing 14 conference games, 2 games in the crossover event, and 4 non-conference games.
- h. Tennis - For all postseason events, no match will begin later than 10:00 PM. Additionally, if conditions will not allow for the completion of a minimum of 40 matches on the opening day, the event will become a 3-day event.
- i. Wrestling- Change the number of boys' state scorers from 13 to 14 in the post season.
- j. Proposal to advance all team sports to state level postseason in a similar manner. This would eliminate divisional tournaments for volleyball and basketball as well as reduce the number of softball teams advancing to the state tournament from 12 to 8. Teams finishing first and second in their respective conference will advance to the state event. Teams finishing seventh or eighth in their conference would have their seasons end. Play in games would take place involving all teams, finishing third, fourth, fifth, and sixth in their respective conferences after regular season play. All team sports will have play in games for the final two conference entries to state events as well as eight total AA teams advancing to state level play.
  - The current models for soccer and football used for the last several years would stay in place.
  - For basketball and volleyball, the third-place team will host the sixth-place team from in their conference in a play-in game. The fourth-place team would host the fifth-place team in a play-in game. The winners of each of these play-in games will advance to the state event with the highest remaining team from play-in games going to state as the third seed from the conference, and the final remaining seed advancing to state as the fourth-place team from that conference. This will mimic the current model used for soccer.
  - For softball, again the third-place team from each conference would host the sixth-place team, and the fourth-place team would host the fifth-place team. These contests would be the best of three series, played on a single day. The highest seed remaining from the play in games will advance to state as the third-place entry with the final remaining team advancing to state as the fourth-place team for that conference.

Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve items a, b, d, f, h, i, j, to deny g and table e to be sent to the Track & Field Committee to review potential schedules. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Patelis made a motion to amend item c to include all classes and then approve it. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **FINAL ACTION ON TWO-WEEK NOTICE ITEMS**

Mr. Michelotti explained that no comments regarding the two-week action items from the April Executive Board Meeting have been received. A motion was made by Mr. Patelis, and seconded by Mr. Harris, to approve final action on the following items from the April Board meeting:

#### Baseball

Approval of a new policy for baseball play-in contests and game ending procedures.

### Basketball

Approval of a new policy for assigning offsite game locations for Saturday morning games at state basketball tournaments. The gym assignments for Saturday morning contests will not be determined until after the Friday semifinal games are completed. The following factors would be used to determine which games are played at the main tournament site and which games are played at the secondary site: 1) A team will not play in their home gym. 2) Different gender teams from the same school should not play at separate locations. 3) Gym capacity could be considered for crowd size.

### Football

Approval of a 4-year rotation for 8-Player football playoff brackets with the new 4-Division format. Approval of a two-year timeline for football reclassification for the 2025 and 2026 seasons. Approval of a change to the process for awarding football conference trophies. In the future, conference presidents can request that trophies for football divisional winners be sent earlier so the trophy can be presented immediately after the final regular season contest.

### Softball

Approval of re-alignment of Manhattan High School to the East for B/C Softball.

### Track and Field

Approval to allow schools to conduct non-high school track & field meets at the same time as high school district track & field meets. The high school and non-high school events must be conducted separately. This is being allowed to provide adequate rest time between races and to utilize the same workers. This change is effective for the 2023-24 MHSA Track & Field season.

### Wrestling

Approval for the State Wrestling Tournament to be scheduled as a 3-day tournament beginning in the 2024-25 school year. Approval of changes to the wrestling weight classes; the boys and the girls' divisions will go to 14 weight classes.

### Cooperative Sponsorships

Approval of the following changes to the cooperative sponsorship (co-op) language.

- Removal of the 3-year contract; the co-op shall be **continuous** unless an application for dissolution is submitted to the MHSA. However, the MHSA may terminate said agreement based upon valid reason as determined by the MHSA to become effective at the conclusion of a school year. An Application for Dissolution is required from only one member school of the cooperative. **Existing co-ops are grandfathered and do not need to be renewed this year.**
- Schools in each co-op are allowed to have an official name recognized by the MHSA that is different from the combination of school names (Ex: Saco-Whitewater-Hinsdale could officially be called North Country in the MHSA Handbook and on tournament brackets).
- February 1st is the application deadline for new co-ops and for the dissolution of existing co-ops (for all sports except football).
- Football co-ops will be reviewed on the same cycle as football reclassification (2-year cycle). Enrollment and participation data may be requested by the MHSA office to determine if a cooperative sponsorship will be dissolved or reclassified.

### Coaching Requirements

Approval of new AED and CPR requirements for coaches. The MHSA requires completion of the NFHS Learn CPR & AED Training course prior to contact with student-athletes. Certification is good for a one-year period. The following courses/certifications can be substituted for the NFHS Learn CPR & AED course **(for two years)**:

- American Heart Association
  - Basic Life Support (BLS) CPR & AED Training
  - Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS)

- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) for Experienced Providers
- Heartsaver CPR/AED
- American Red Cross
  - In-person class and skills check OR online class and in-person skills check
  - Advanced Life Support (ALS)
  - Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)

#### Security Policy

Approval of a change in security policy at all postseason events to utilize safety measures such as metal detectors and/or bag check procedures when available at the site.

#### Open Gym Policy

Approval of a change to the MHS A Open Gym policy. One on one instruction will be allowed in open gyms if it is separate from the group activity.

#### Montana Officials Association

Approval of a 6-year MHS A / MOA regular season and postseason fee plans. Approval of a change for officials' mileage; when an official is assigned a contest in the pool site city, but lives outside that city, they shall get paid round-trip mileage and per diem from their home zip code to the pool city or zip code. Approval of Regular Season per diem rate increase from \$0.12 per mile to \$.16 per mile, and a postseason per diem rate increase of \$5.00.

### **CLASS A REQUESTED CHANGES**

Mr. Blome presented the requests for the 2024-25 year.

- a. Football- Request that in the MHS A Handbook, flip the playoff bracket so West will be the #1 seed. For the first round of the playoffs, the teams will not crossover. Also, that all Class A Football Playoffs and the State Championship will be played on Saturday unless another time is mutually agreed upon by the two schools involved. First-round playoff games will be played on Friday (as long as the first round is not a crossover) The remaining games will be played on Saturday unless mutually agreed upon by the two schools involved.
- b. Golf (Coaching) and Cross Country (minimum times) were covered in the MHS A proposals.
- c. Soccer- An increase in roster size from 20 to 22. Also, a request that the championship series will consist of nine (9) teams, three (3) teams from the Southern division and Northern division, and three (3) teams from Eastern division, unless the criteria from #2 below is in effect. (bracket should reflect the 2021 bracket, east to the top and east has play-in)
  1. The higher seed will host each playoff game. If like seeds play each other, the bracket determines the host site.
  2. If the two (2) seed has beaten the three (3) seed twice during regular season conference play, then there is no play-in game.
- d. Softball - Request to discontinue the divisional softball tournament. They will use play-in games to get 6 qualifiers to state.
- e. Speech and Debate – Addition of new events, Program Oral Interpretation of Literature - solo and Program Oral Interpretation to Class A and B/C Postseason.
- f. Tennis-
  - i. Raising the fee from \$15 to \$20 per participant for the State Tennis tournament.
  - ii. Also requested conference re-alignment.
- g. Track & Field-
  - i. Class A will allow each division to set their own divisional qualifications.
  - ii. Move the 3200 to Thursday.
- h. Volleyball - Increasing the postseason roster from 12 to 14.

- i. Wrestling- Moving State Wrestling in 2026 to 2/19-2/21 and changing boys' divisional qualifiers from 17 to 18.
- j. Conference/Division Re-alignment for 24-25 season in soccer and tennis.

Mr. Patelis motioned to approve Class A requested changes a, c, d, e, f.i, g.i, h, j and to table items b, f.ii, g.ii and i. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion carried.

### **CLASS B REQUESTED CHANGES**

Mr. Flaten presented the Class B requests from the classification meeting.

- a. Qualifying rotation for Volleyball and Basketball beginning with the 2025-2026 Seasons:
  - i. 2025-26 - 4 South - 2 North - 2 West
  - ii. 2026-27 - 3 South - 3 North - 2 West
  - iii. 2027-28 - 3 South - 3 North - 2 West
- b. Wrestling - Each School will be able to wrestle and score up to 17 wrestlers per school at Divisional and State Tournaments (max 2 per weight class).
- c. Tennis- Change from 32 doubles girls' teams to 24 doubles girls' teams that qualify for the State B/C Tournament. The singles girls (32), doubles boys (16), and singles boys (16) state qualifiers will remain the same.
- d. Track - Allow all athletes who meet the state qualifying measurements to be allowed to enter the state meet even if there are more than five contestants from the same school. Individual athlete event caps would still apply.
- e. Track- For the High Jump and Pole Vault, gather qualified heights from divisional results and make starting heights in High Jump and Pole Vault one height lower than the lowest height qualified.
- f. Golf - The top 25 individuals, for both boys and girls from the West, North, and South Divisional advance to the State B Meet. No auto team-qualifying for the state B tournament. If a team qualifies four individuals from their school, they may bring their fifth golfer as an alternate to the state tournament.
- g. Cross Country - Changing the State Cross Country qualifying times to 27:00 for girls and 22:00 for boys.
- h. Cross Country- For the Divisional Cross-Country Meet, the divisions will mirror golf divisions with the top 15 places receiving All-Conference Honors and top 3 teams receiving team trophies for both boys and girls.
- i. Cross Country - Top 25 places at the North, West, and South Divisional Meet, both boys and girls will qualify for the State Meet, or a runner can auto qualify for the State Meet with qualifying time throughout the season.

Mr. Patelis motioned to approve Class B requested changes a, b, c, and f; deny item e and table items d, g, h and i. Ms. Triplett seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

### **CLASS C REQUESTED CHANGES**

Ms. Triplett presented the Class C requests from the classification meeting.

- a. Wrestling - Eliminate the combined B/C trophy and award Class C team trophies at the Divisional level that match the team trophies at the state level. To qualify, a team member must win a match.
- b. Basketball - at the state tournament, move the start time of Saturday's game to move the starting times to Consolation (4:00 & 5:30) and Championship (7:00 & 8:30). This will go into effect for the 2024-2025 season.

- c. Golf - Move golf back one week to the same week as other spring state events.

Mr. Patelis motioned to approve Class C requested changes a, b and c. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion carried.

### **MHSA PROPOSALS**

The following proposals were suggested by the Association for the 2024-25 year.

- a. Cross Country- consider a new minimum state meet times; for boys: 22 minutes and girls: 27 minutes.
- b. State Volleyball- have the tournament on Wednesday through Friday when Montana State Football has a home game in Bozeman.
- c. Wrestling- for the option for Metra to bid state the following week
- d. Wrestling - If 14 weight classes are approved, A and B/C discuss allowing one more entry in the divisional boys' tournament.
- e. Basketball - remove signs for any spectator seating at only state events.
- f. Basketball - remove Master Basketball Scheduling requirement.
- g. Golf- allow coaching on the green.
- h. Track & Field- move the 3200 to Thursday of State.
- i. Track & Field - impound implements after being weighed in.
- j. Track & Field- have a coaches' box on the infield at the discretion of the facility.
- k. Track & Field- implement a \$100 fine for late entries at State Track, as well as State Cross Country.
- l. Tennis- language change to reflect that players advancing via forfeit, disqualification or default in the postseason on the winner's side of the bracket will receive 2 advancement points.
- m. Allowable Items- MHSA will try to send out more communication during the regular season clarifying what items are allowed to be used by fans, hopefully creating continuity leading into the post season.
- n. Ejections Policies – the MHSA would review video to see if players left the bench area during an altercation. An administrator or coach must report to MHSA for investigation.
- o. Ejection Policies- the MHSA will have authority to implement further sanctions to students or coaches if ejection occurs after a game or if deemed egregious.
- p. Speech, Drama, Debate-Class A, B/C only
  - i. Divisional fees increase of an additional \$20.00. At Divisional meets, an entry fee of up to \$5.00 for each participant in the competitive events in Speech and Drama may be charged by the host school. The host school shall be allowed to assess a drop fine of \$5.00 for each contestant dropped by a registered school the day before or the day of the Divisional tournament. An additional \$20.00 school registration fee at the divisional tournament may be charged.
  - ii. New events added to postseason - Program Oral Interpretation of Literature– Solo and Program Oral Interpretation.

Ms. Triplett made a motion to approve items all the above items except for item h, which will be tabled for further review and to deny items a, f, g and i.

## **BASKETBALL**

Ms. Buehler explained the rationale for removing the 5-second closely guarded while dribbling rule. Mr. Patelis made a motion to adopt this rule, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **SOFTBALL**

Ms. Bartels requested that the 15-run mercy rule after 2.5 innings be put into place for postseason play. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve adding the 15-run rule to post season contests, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

## **CLASS C WESTERN DIVISIONAL BASKETBALL AND VOLLEYBALL**

Mr. Michelotti introduced Mr. Allen, and the Executive Board introduced themselves to the delegation. Mr. Allen explained that they are looking for equitable representation in the division. He is requesting Boys' and girls' basketball have a play-in game where the 4 seed from the 12C plays against the 5 seed from the 13C on Monday following the district tournament. The site(s) of these play-in games will be determined by the division. Volleyball would send 5 teams from the 13C and 3 teams from the 12C to the divisional tournament.

Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve these changes to divisional basketball and volleyball as proposed. Ms. Triplett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **MHSA HANDBOOK CLARIFICATIONS AND ADDITIONS OR DEFINITIONS**

Mr. Michelotti explained this will be tabled until we can further study the by-laws.

## **STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Ms. Bartels explained there is a large group coming in. They are mostly young so will be available for an extended time.

## **2023-24 BUDGET CLOSEOUT**

Budget Items:

- 1) Year End Purchases – heating system, port replicators, mail machine and copier.
- 2) Reserve amounts – an estimated \$350,000 will be divided among the following accounts: legal, technology and building reserves. The focus will be on technology for the upcoming year.

Mr. Patelis motioned to approve the end-of-year purchases and reserve allocations. Mr. Harris seconded the motion. The motion carried.

## **STATE TOURNAMENT BIDS**

Mr. Wilson stated that there is a bid for the 2025-26 Class B State Golf to be at Lake Hills Golf Club in Billings. There is also a bid for 2024-25 Class AA State Tennis to be held at Bozeman and Gallatin High Schools. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve both bids. Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **MHSA STAFF RESPONSIBILITY UPDATES**

Mr. Michelotti updated the Board on staff responsibility changes being that Mr. Ryan has transitioned the responsibility of hotel reservations to Ms. Cockhill. Handbook updates have transitioned from Mr. Wilson to Ms. Buehler and social media posts and updates have moved from Ms. Bartels to Ryan Richards with PlayFly, Inc.

### **MUSIC FESTIVAL CALENDAR CHANGE**

Ms. Bartels explained that District 8 has requested to change the dates to Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve this schedule change. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **MHSA HANDBOOK LANGUAGE FOR RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Mr. Wilson explained the reasoning for addition of language in Section (20), page 25 to read:

The school administrator is responsible for reporting the school participation numbers for all sports and activities annually. Participation numbers will be reported on the OPI website per MCA 20-7-104.

He also explained the addition to Section (34), Item D.2, page 29 to read:

Schools are required to have an administrative representative at all MHSA baseball, basketball, Softball and volleyball state events. The representative must be available to assist with crowd control for their team.

Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the additions to the Rules and Regulation portion of the MHSA Handbook, Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **EIGHTH GRADE PARTICIPATION IN DRAMA, SPEECH AND DEBATE**

Mr. Michelotti requested eighth grade participation in Drama as well as Speech & Debate to be put in place for the 2024-25 school year to be consistent with other Fine Arts competitions. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve eighth grade participation for Drama and Speech & Debate for the 2024-25 year. Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

Mr. Michelotti explained the issue of moving the State AA Softball tournament and discussed a suggestion from Tim McMahon to set up emergency fund for the MHSA to cover the costs associated with moving an entire tournament site. Mr. Patelis made a motion to deny the emergency fund to be set up. Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Michelotti explained that there are qualifying standards from each class for Track & Field that have been received by the MHSA office. Mr. Patelis made a motion to approve the new qualifying standards, Mr. Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **CHARTER SCHOOL IN CORVALLIS**

Mr. Michelotti introduced Mr. Joseph to the Executive Board. Mr. Joseph presented the ideology and mission behind RISE Charter School. There are two curriculums in the school: Distance Learning Academy and Pathway Learning academy. The currently have an enrollment of 220 students. Mr. Joseph stated that the students in his school that are out of district should be allowed to be eligible to compete at Corvallis High School. Mr. Michelotti suggested that Mr. Joseph work to bring information to the Executive Board regarding each student to create a plan to move forward.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Patelis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mills seconded, and the motion carried. Mr. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 11:07 am.