



GAME OFFICIALS NEWSLETTER



Published by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association

SPRING EDITION 2003-2004

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From the Assistant Director

Bill McGuirk-----

It is hard to believe that we are approaching our final sport season of the 2003-2004 school year. Another year's experience for our game officials I'm sure has resulted in new lessons learned and in considerable professional growth. From the perspective of your MIAA Liaison to the Game Officials Committee, the most important lesson learned has been the importance of two-way communication between the game official and the Association.

We have had an increased positive response to our pre-season evening dinner meetings. Game officials have also increased their communications with this office, expressing opinions on multiple issues and concerns such as CORI checks, game fees, mouthguard rule implementation guidelines, and commissioner and/or assignor responsibilities. This input has been very helpful and I hope will continue to grow.

In this issue you will find an important article on Game Officials: Accountability and Responsibility. This is an often-discussed issue, especially at our Coaches Sportsmanship Compliance sessions. Please also note the 2004-2005 officials fee schedule is now posted on our website (www.miaa.net) in both our Blue Book and our Game Officials Handbook links.

I thank you for your dedication to your officiating avocation and for the tremendous service you provide for schools and student athletes!

If you would like to communicate with us, please use the following means:

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EXPERIMENTAL BASEBALL RULE

The issue of excessive coach ejections was discussed and reviewed at the February 3, 2004 meeting of the Baseball Committee with the following recommendations being forwarded to the March meeting of the Board of Directors to be considered as experimental rule changes for the 2004 Baseball season.

1. Any coach ejected from an Interscholastic Baseball game will be suspended for 2 games.
2. A Strike Two Program will be implemented:
A baseball umpire at any time will voice "strike one" when a *warning* for inappropriate comment or actions is warranted and that "strike one" will be recorded in the scorebook. Upon the need for a "strike two" call, an ejection of the coach would occur.
Exception:
In the case of a flagrant unsportsmanlike infraction and/or physical assault an immediate ejection will occur.

In addition to the experimental rule sportsmanship workshops, clinics, and/or meetings will be scheduled with Baseball Coaches, Umpires and Athletic Directors for appropriate understanding of the need and application of these experimental rules.



GAME OFFICIALS: RESPONSIBILITY and ACCOUNTABILITY

The responsibilities are well documented. The “Big Five” can be found in your MIAA Game Officials Handbook and bear repeating:

1. An official must devote time, thought, and study of the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to render effective and creditable service in a fair and unbiased manner.
2. An official must work with fellow officials and the state association in a spirit of harmony and cooperation.
3. An official must resist every temptation and outside pressure to use one’s position as an official to benefit oneself. Under all circumstance, officials must avoid promoting the special interest of any person or group of persons other than the athletes we serve.
4. An official must uphold the honor and dignity of the avocation in all personal conduct and in relations with student athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public.
5. An official will be prepared both physically and mentally, dress according to expectations, and maintain an appearance that is befitting of the importance of the game.

Each of us may have a different answer as to which of the above responsibilities are the most difficult to meet. I approach the question from two different perspectives. From the perspective of my position as an active IAABO basketball game official, perhaps it is #4, especially on those nights when the level of fan “abuse” and unsolicited “advice” from coaches to “call ‘em both ways!” challenges our mandate to act professionally at all times. What we wouldn’t like to say in response! Unfortunately, it is a reality that a very small percentage of our officiating colleagues lower themselves to the level of the abusive fan or out-of-control coach, and react in an unprofessional manner, which only serves to exacerbate the situation and typically leads to a coach or

student athlete disqualification. It also provides the coach an “out” or perceived justification for his or her own unprofessional conduct.

From the perspective of an MIAA Assistant Director who monitors the sports of soccer, wrestling, and tennis, #2 looms as an important responsibility—and sometimes overlooked. The charge is for officials to be knowledgeable of our state association expectations and to work cooperatively with the MIAA, especially in the timely and accurate filing of forms such as the Student Contest Disqualification Form and/or Coach Contest Exclusion Form. A specific oversight which we see time and time again is the Student Contest Disqualification Form submitted by an official with either Rule 49.6 (“...physically assaults an official.”) or Rule 49.7 (“...willfully, flagrantly, or maliciously attempts to injure an opponent”) checked off. This automatically triggers a year suspension in all sports and a labor intensive appeal process---only to have an official tell us that they “mistakenly” checked that box and that the actual incident did not warrant that classification. It is the responsibility of a game official to be aware of all association policies related to contest disqualification.

These two perspectives lead to the bigger question heard time and time again, “who does the game official answer to?” If there is documented unprofessional conduct exhibited by a game official, who holds him/her accountable? Is it the Commissioner/Assignor? Is it the constitutionally established Ethics Committee of the local sport officials organization? Or is it the MIAA? It is a question that needs to be asked and addressed by all of the above constituent groups.

Hopefully it will be a question discussed among officials, and a question which will find its way on the agendas of state sport officials executive boards, as it has appeared on the agendas of the MIAA Game Officials and the Sportsmanship Committees. The solution will benefit both our game officials and the MIAA.

****ALERT****

STUDENT CONTEST DISQUALIFICATION FORM

All game disqualifications must be explained in writing immediately after the contest. The forms are to be provided to you by the host school site manager, and returned to that individual before you leave the site.

At the bottom of the form game officials have the option and responsibility to check either Rule 49.6 or Rule 49.7 ***ONLY IF THE INCIDENT IS AN INTENTIONAL, FLAGRANT, OR MALICIOUS INTENT TO INJURE AN OPPONENT OR THE GAME OFFICIAL.*** Checking either of these Rules automatically triggers a full calendar year suspension for that athlete in **ALL** sports, which is a penalty of obviously more magnitude than the customary one (or two in some sports) game suspension an athlete receives for being disqualified from the contest that you officiated.

2004-2005 GAME OFFICIALS FEES INCREASED

The Game Officials Committee recently recommended an increase in game officials' fees, which are now posted on the MIAA website (www.miaa.net) for the 2004-2005 school year. The committee recognized the tremendous contribution of game officials to interscholastic athletics, especially their willingness to work under a fee freeze during the 2003-2004 school year due to the severe financial constraints faced by school districts across the Commonwealth. (To access the 2004-2005 fees "click" on Game Officials Information, then on Game Officials Handbook)



SPORTSMANSHIP AWARDS

The MIAA Tournament Management Committee has approved an Annual Sportsmanship Award to be presented to one school in every sport at the MIAA State Championship.

We would like to encourage you to nominate a boys or a girls varsity team for consideration by that MIAA Sport Committee for recognition at the MIAA State Championship Contest. Nominated teams do not have to be tournament teams but should exemplify the tenets of good sportsmanship to the highest degree.

Please look on the MIAA Homepage: www.miaa.net – click on the "Tournament formats" link and click on the specific sport. The last page of the format is this form.

Please be sure to submit the completed form by the due date.

JUST A REMINDER

All game officials must be enrolled before the first competition of the spring season in order to be eligible to officiate MIAA spring tournament contests.

“LET’S MAKE A DEAL”---FOR TELEVISION ONLY!

Game officials are not, and should not strive to be the Monty Halls of interscholastic athletic contest arbiters. Unfortunately the reality is that during this current school year, “altering” or “adjusting” by game officials of MIAA Roster and Score Sheets (mandated for soccer and ice hockey) has taken place. The intent appears to have been to lessen the impact, in terms of game suspensions, on either or both the individual athlete or the team. Suffice it to say, this is NOT an acceptable practice. The game should be called as both the sport rules and the MIAA rules dictate. Leave “Let’s Make a Deal” for television re-runs. It has no place in game officiating.

GAME OFFICIALS PRE-SEASON DINNER MEETING

The spring sports game officials pre-season dinner meeting will be held at the MIAA office in Franklin, MA on Thursday, March 25, 2004 at 5:30 p.m. Spring Boards are asked to please have at least one representative at the pre-season meeting.

These meetings are arranged so that there is a free flow of ideas, suggestions, and discussion of problems. These meetings have proven to be mutually productive.

Please let us know you will be attending by March 17th.

Email: nhuntley@miaa.net or phone: 508-541-9817



Spring Sport Boards Enrollment

All spring board secretaries should have received a roster of the members enrolled from your board last year. Please make necessary corrections and return a/s/a/p. All spring officials must be enrolled before the first game of the season in order to officiate tournament games.

2004 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

- 1-3-4 Reminder that beginning January 1, 2004, the COR and compression for slow pitch softballs shall not exceed .44 and 375 lbs., respectively; and the compression for fast pitch softballs shall not exceed 375 lbs. All softballs shall be marked with COR and compression.
- 1-3-5 Effective January 1, 2004, the bat shall meet the ASA 2004 Bat Performance Standard.
- 3-1-5 (F.P.) Replaces the Designated Hitter (DH) Rule with the Designated Player/FLEX Rule. The main differences being: 1) The role of the DP (offensive player) is never terminated, it is possible for a team to go from 10 to nine players and back to 10 players any number of times during the game; and 2) The DP (offensive player) and the FLEX (defensive player for whom she is batting) can play defense at the same time.
- 2-4-3 **New:** Added a definition of a banned bat.
- 2-47-2 **New** Added a definition of "make a play" as it pertains to the Look-Back Rule. "Any action by the pitcher intended to cause a reaction from the runner(s)."

RULE CLARIFICATION:

NFHS Rules Book, page 33, 3-3-6g, first sentence should read, "Placing the FLEX into one of the first nine positions for someone other than the DP's position is considered an illegal substitution."

Additional rulings may be found on the NFHS website: www.nfhs.org

INTERPRETATION OF DP/FLEX RULE

The head coach has the following options:

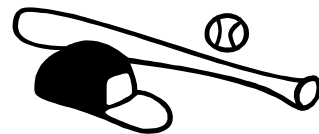
- Not to use the DP/FLEX at all
- Use it to the same extent the DH was used
- Use the DP/FLEX option to its fullest extent

The FLEX player (the defensive player for whom the DP is batting) is always listed in the No. 10 position in the line-up. This is the big difference from that of the previous DH rule.

Offensively, the DP may be replaced by a pinch-runner, pitch-hitter or the FLEX player. In all cases, the DP has left the game, with one re-entry permitted. When the FLEX player replaces the DP, the lineup consists of nine players instead of the original 10 players.

Defensively, the DP may replace the FLEX in the field. Again the lineup consists of nine players instead of the original 10 players. Also, the DP may play defense at any position, replacing another player other than the FLEX. In this case, the replaced player still bats and has not left the game. Note: the lineup still consists of 10 players.

The FLEX may not go into one of the first nine hitting positions for someone other than the DP. This would result in an illegal substitution.



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for casual clothes & shoes