



# GAME OFFICIALS' NEWSLETTER



Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association

Spring 2002

## National Federation Softball Rules Update

In September a mailing went to all enrolled Softball Officials indicating the methodology for a successful transition to National Federation Rules for the Spring of 2002. A committee of Softball Officials Leadership has been hard at work to implement a "Train the Trainer Model" for training softball officials during the transition. The following represents the expertise to insure the transition:

- Louis Pearlstein – Assigner of Officials, North Sectional Tournament
- Cindy DeCosta – Assigner of Officials, South Sectional Tournament
- William Messier – Assigner of Officials, Central Sectional Tournament
- Robert Veronesi – Assigner of Officials, West Sectional Tournament
- Gus Chester – ASA Umpire in Chief

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, twenty-three members of the softball leadership throughout the State participated in the "Train the Trainer" clinic conducted by ASA Deputy Umpire in Chief, Dennis Crowe, from Maine. In addition, a coaches' clinic was conducted later on the same day, providing an overview of NF Softball Rules to seventy-five MIAA softball coaches. We look forward to seeing that this initiative will lead to training sessions in the respective districts.



## EIGHTH ANNUAL SPORTSMANSHIP SUMMIT

The largest crowd we could remember attended the MIAA Eighth Annual Sportsmanship Summit on November 15th at the Radisson Hotel in Milford, MA. The 400+ in attendance focused on the "Massachusetts Alliance for the Promotion of Sportsmanship: A Team Approach to changing the Sports Culture in Massachusetts."

One of the highlights of the summit was the presentation of the three finalists in the Sportsmanship Essay competition from the more than seventy entries.



These were:

- First Place: Michelle Miller of Reading High School, introduced by Athletic Director Phil Vaccaro.
- Second Place: Amanda MacDonald of Notre Dame Academy, introduced by Athletic Director Donna Brickley.
- Third Place: Marc Levasseur of Holliston High School, introduced by Athletic Director Michael Sullivan.

The MIAA also presented its annual awards to District Sportsmanship winners. The districts athletic committees chose these schools for exemplifying outstanding sportsmanship.

John Coughlin presented these awards as the Sportsmanship Committee Chair to the following recipients:

- District A – Lowell High School
- District B – Woburn High & Revere High Schools
- District C – Falmouth High School
- District D – New Bedford High School
- District E – Notre Dame Academy, Worcester
- District F – Smith Academy
- District G – Mt. Greylock Regional High School
- District H – Mt. Saint Joseph Academy

## OBJECTIVE FOR OFFICIALS

If you are a relatively new official you probably would use some advice for fast improvement. That's why these suggestions made below are for those people who are trying for a "quick improvement." However, there are many other details that may determine whether a man or woman becomes a good official or just someone who will take an assignment to officiate. These are merely some values that you can use now.

The most important requirement is that you must gain some experience. You will have to work some competitions as a sub-varsity official, such as freshman or junior varsity competition. Work on your awareness of officiating techniques and mechanics. Somehow you have to get the feel of officiating, and the only way to do that is by officiating.

A sub-varsity official can develop and demonstrate a command of the skills and knowledge necessary to develop into a quality official as a result from contest experience. Continued education and evaluation will provide you the opportunity to advance and grow as an official.

During the contest, be in position. In your attitude toward players and coaches, be kind and polite, be firm, but not overbearing. Be courteous and never rude.

When you start out for an assignment, plan to be there early. The time preceding the competition can be used to confer with fellow officials. Talk over the general plan for administering penalties, positioning at key situations, and pre and post contest procedures. A good pre-contest conference is very necessary, and helpful.

Attend all rules interpretation meetings within your reach. They are arranged for the purpose of reviewing old rules, explaining new ones, and giving positive interpretations on the more tricky ones. These rule interpretations can be sponsored by a local officials' group. There may be one in your area or not far away. Local groups should sponsor a follow-up program of rules study and interpretations.

Always try to improve yourself. Officiating has no place for an official who doesn't want to improve. Improve or get out! It is correct and professional for officials to leave the contest area together, neither seeking, nor deliberately avoiding, coaches or fans. Make no statements and offer no comments to members of the media.

Notice there has not been one thought about study, but if you are going to be a successful official you must do all of this and then some. Your rule book study will assist you in grasping concepts of rules.

## Understanding The Rules

The single most effective way to avoid problems is to know the rules "forwards, backwards, and sideways" and understanding how to apply them. These are a few additional ways to eliminate potential problems:

1. Use common sense. Any number of situations occur during a contest where the officials must use common sense. Play it smart.
2. Review procedures with team captains and coaches. Be certain to ask them if they have any questions and answer them.
3. Maintain your poise and emotional control.
4. Support the decisions made by your fellow officials. The only thing worse than making a mistake is not correcting it if possible.
5. Inspect the playing surface and surroundings. Make adjustments and notify the coaches and players of them.
6. DON'T talk to the fans. This only encourages them to talk to you, and you may very well wish you had not encouraged them.
7. Be on time. The official who arrives late is probably not mentally prepared and has no doubt raised questions in the mind of the coaches about sincerity and dedication.
8. Establish a firm but polite relationship with coaches. Trying to be over friendly will get you in just as much trouble as being too gruff.
9. Never put down another official. They, just like you, will receive enough criticism without getting it from their colleagues.
10. Study the rules again. Knowing the rules and any and all changes to the rules is still one of the major commitments that you have to make.
11. **Please use the most updated forms for any coaches or student disqualification's. Submit the form(s) immediately after the contest to the contest site manager.**



## AN OFFICIAL APPEARANCE

An honest, self-evaluation is critical to the official's ability to be the best he or she can be and to retire from officiating in a timely and dignified manner. All of us are aware of excellent officials who have been able to maintain careers that continue to be high in caliber until the very end.

On the other hand there are individuals who continue to officiate well past their optimal level of performance. Barring this, your appearance can be taken as one of the best or worst indications of your commitment to the profession.

You must wear the prescribed uniform and be sure it is crisp and clean. The official must be ever eager for each new season and each new situation. Each crew member should wear the same color and style of pants, shirt, undershirt, and jacket. Be careful of sloppy things like exposed long-john tops under short sleeved shirts or bizarre belt buckles and ancient dirty caps.

Beyond those basics, consider the overall impression you create when entering the venue. Perception can be reality: If players and coaches think from the get-go that you can officiate, you will get the benefit of the doubt on close calls. Perception will begin being formed when you first appear on the scene. First impressions, therefore are vital...maybe fatal.

You must strive to remain physically fit. Develop a program for fitness, pre-season and in-season. Take pride in your physical appearance. Officials should polish their shoes before each contest. Groom yourself as though preparing for a job interview. Your credibility is on the line each time you step forward and you must reaffirm it all the time. Looking sharp can go a long way toward helping you be sharp.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### Game Officials' Committee Meeting

Thursday, March 28, 2002

1:00 P.M. at the MIAA Office

Followed by the Spring Game Officials' Pre-Season Meeting

With a Buffet at 5:30 P.M.

The meeting begins at 6:00 P.M.

The MIAA Game Officials' Committee meeting works from a prepared agenda and is open to any official. The Committee members always leave a place on the agenda for officials to speak or ask questions. This meeting is our third meeting of the year.

The game officials pre-season meeting is a much more relaxed version of the committee meeting. The previous two meetings of this body had an excess of twenty game officials attending. Here officials take much of the responsibility for the meeting and it's discussion. Game officials at these meetings do not hesitate to point out problems and suggest solutions. Generally there is some good "give and take."

Officials planning on attending this 3/28 evening meeting are asked to RSVP to Nancy Huntley at 508-541-9817, or email your intentions to [nhuntley@miaa.net](mailto:nhuntley@miaa.net) by 3/19.



### **BASEBALL BAT ADVISORY**

The MIAA Baseball Committee at their 2/11/02 meeting voted unanimously to place on the first meeting of the fall Baseball Committee agenda a motion to require that wooden bats be the only bat that may be used in the MIAA 2003 Baseball Tournament. The meeting is scheduled for 10/21/02, and the membership is invited to sign up to attend, or to provide a written statements to the Baseball Committee.

FYI – the MIAA Sports Medicine Committee has submitted a rule change proposal that effective 7/1/03 aluminum or graphite bats will not be allowed during regular season play.

### National Federation of State High Schools Sports Officials Conference 2002

This year's NFOA Sports Officials Conference is being expanded by combining the event sponsorship with the National Association of Sports Officials. The conference is being held in Albuquerque, June 22-24.

For more information contact Mary Struckhoff, Assistant Director NFHS at [mstruckhoff@nfhs.org](mailto:mstruckhoff@nfhs.org)

## SPORTS MEMBERSHIP

### HONOR ROLL OF MEMBER SCHOOLS

Contest Suspension statistics for the 2000-2001 academic year identified one hundred and forty schools as those without a single student or coach disqualification. We certainly want to extend our congratulations to the student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, and school administrators of these schools.

The number of schools on our honor roll list on our web site continues to grow. The number of coaches suspended from contests are dropping.

The MIAA is striving to have 100% of our member schools on our honor roll list.



### Boys' Lacrosse

The MIAA Board of Directors approved Boys' Lacrosse to be played under National Federation Rules.

The MIAA Boys' Lacrosse Committee voted on the following modification:

**Time Outs:** In a live ball situation, Time Outs may be called only by the team in possession of the ball while the ball is in the offensive half of the field.

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**JOANNE HELSTOWSKI  
IS THE DESIGNATED PERSON TO CONTACT FOR  
BOOKING TENNIS OFFICIALS.**

**SHE CAN BE REACHED AT:  
508-845-1887  
or by email at  
sammy82@aol.com**



## KEEP US UPDATED

Please notify the MIAA office of address changes or changes in officers on your respective Boards. Your assistance in this matter ensures the accuracy of our records. It only takes a minute, but it will allow you to receive information, as it becomes available.

If possible please include email addresses. Any questions, comments, concerns, or changes – please contact Nancy Huntley at 508-541-9817, or by email: [nhuntley@miaa.net](mailto:nhuntley@miaa.net)

## 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.

### **BASKETBALL & ICE HOCKEY COACHES, OFFICIALS, AND ASSIGNERS PRE-SEASON SUMMIT**

#### **MIAA Coaches & Officials as Partners *Teaching student-athletes* Respect & Sportsmanship**

The MIAA staff greeted more than 300 coaches & officials at the Wyndham Westboro on December 9, 2001. The focus of the day was to build a partnership between coaches & officials as important role models & teachers of our young student-athletes.

Concurrent sessions included panel discussions. Basketball coaches & officials discussed "Coaches & Officials Working Together: How can we make participation in high school basketball a positive learning experience for our student athletes?" Ice hockey coaches & officials discussed "The state of the game, where we have been & where we are going."

All officials were invited to participate in a panel discussion: "Going Beyond the Rules: The power & potential of the teacher/official." All coaches were invited to participate in "Building the Future Through Athletics."

Workshop evaluations from participants were outstanding. Many helpful suggestions were offered by participants to support and guide the expansion of this important MIAA initiative.



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