

SOFTBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 11, 2018

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Erin Kirtley with the following members present: Gary Gorman, Merle Jones, Jill Hulsing, Erin Bohlmann, Brian Erbe and Karl Wooldridge. Jean Berger and Jason Eslinger represented the State Office. Also attending was Cathy Creighton, IGHS AU Coordinator of Umpires.

Committee members were introduced and a review of advisory purpose was given.

Motion by Wooldridge to approve the September 5, 2017 minutes, second by Hulsing and unanimously approved.

Berger informed Committee a questionnaire was sent to athletic directors, coaches and players who participated in the state softball tournament asking for feedback of their state experience. The results of that questionnaire were discussed with Committee, which showed many favorable compliments on the tournament experience. It was suggested the practice fields be scheduled for teams in order of play. A few negative comments were expressed regarding the new consolation format.

Berger described the new consolation format and explained the intent was to allow those who play for third and fourth place to stay and watch their class's championship games after their game. This would also allow more all-tournament team members to be present. Erbe expressed his team and parents preferred the new format and that they appreciated watching the championship game after their game. Gorman stated as a spectator he loved watching both the consolation and championship games on the same day. Berger expressed school administrators approved of the new format. From an officiating standpoint Creighton stated umpires also favored the new format. Erbe stated he liked the higher seeded team being the home team with no coin toss, as he prefers knowing ahead of time if his team is home or visitor and the coin toss often interfered with his pre-game practice. **Wooldridge motion to retain the current ruling regarding the higher seeded team as the home team and occupy the third base dugout with no coin flip. Erbe second, unanimously approved.**

Creighton informed Committee the umpires evaluation forms from coaches helped her and other evaluators gather information needed for improvements (rule knowledge, communication, professionalism, etc.) for all umpires. Creighton stated it is most helpful when coaches actually write comments as they use these comments for training purposes. Hulsing stated it was difficult for her to accurately mark the categories as she felt they were not precise in what it was asking. Hulsing suggested to add a category on accuracy of the strike zone and accuracy of calls on the bases or for home plate umpire and base umpire. Discussion was held on the difficulties some umpires had signing the book, whether it was tracking down an official or reading the signature. A "crew card" was suggested, where the names of the crew were on a business card and issued to coaches and the announcer. It was also suggested umpires use address labels to put on the scoresheets. Berger stated the IGHS AU will work on all of the above suggestions, including Quikstat categories, umpires signing the book and the crew card idea.

Creighton informed Committee how umpires were chosen to work post-season play: last year's recommendations, current ratings and experience working a regional final game. There were several new officials at this year's state tournament. Creighton stated umpires for the state tournament were

chosen with representation from each area of the state. Erbe thought the three-person crews at the state tournament were fantastic and felt putting two veteran umpires with a newer umpire worked well.

Creighton stated the overall number of officials is declining and she is working on increasing that number by offering more clinics on both week days and weekends next year. Due to the low number of umpires that meet post-season criteria, Berger asked for feedback from Committee regarding the usage of officials during the post-season. The IGHSAU can schedule double-headers with three-person crews or go back to a two-person officiating crew during regional finals and semi-finals. Coaches favored remaining at host sites based on regular season results.

The 2019 NFHS Softball Rules Changes were presented. The Committee discussed the new changes:

Committee discussed the rule regarding media in live-ball territory. Some were confused regarding the actual playing area and the markings for the media box. Committee realizes it is important to promote and encourage media, but the ruling regarding the media area needs to be clarified. Berger will research this.

The permanently fastened knob on the bat was briefly discussed. Berger will check into what models have an adjustable knob.

Committee discussed at length the intentional walk and after discussion feels if a batter is to be intentionally walked, four pitches should be thrown. **Motion by Hulsing if intentionally walking a batter, the batter must be pitched to. Second by Erbe and passed 6-0 with Jones abstaining.**

Discussed umpires calling an illegal pitch and the penalty of an illegal pitch. The IGHSAU will continue working on recognizing an illegal pitch and umpires making the call.

Committee discussed the proper process of pitchers taking signals off the pitching rubber. Currently a pitcher can take or simulate taking a signal from the catcher. Many pitchers are taking their hands apart, thus producing a quick-pitch. Ideally, Committee would recommend the pitcher **MUST** take the signal from the catcher. This would alleviate the pitcher stepping on the rubber with their hands together, taking signals, then separating her hands, resulting in an illegal pitch. The goal is to consistently call illegal pitches with less umpire discretion. Committee agrees this usually occurs at the lower level. Committee asked if the IGHSAU could educate or clarify this with both coaches and umpires in clinics and rules meetings.

Erbe asked what the proper process is for umpires who wish to wear attire other than the official uniform if a special event is being held (pink out, salute to veterans, etc). Berger informed Committee permission to wear attire other than the official uniform must be sent to the IGHSAU prior to the game being held.

Currently, IGHSAU policy prohibits schools with softball facilities with turf infields from hosting post-season play. Committee feels several schools are building new facilities with possible turf infields. If the IGHSAU allowed these facilities to host post-season tournaments, coaches expressed concern that the host team would have an unfair advantage since they would have played on this type of surface all year long. Bohlmann asked if there could be some provision that if a team were to play there, they could have the option of practicing before the regional games. Berger will research this.

Time limits on regular season tournaments were discussed. Committee agrees many tournaments are not consistent with the time allotted for games. Berger will remind coaches of the proper time limit of 90 minutes in the pre-season memo and in the rules meeting.

Berger informed Committee there have been incidents of inappropriate attire and bus/car window painting from a couple of schools participating at the state softball tournament. School administrators will be asked to be diligent on policing their school as this is a reflection on their community.

Berger showed Committee participation numbers in all sports which showed a decrease in participation numbers in softball. Berger feels this decrease could be due to schools moving into shared programs.

Berger presented recommendations from the IGHSAU staff regarding the AdHoc Committee priorities. Berger indicated; 1) an implementation of state-mandated break in the calendar would probably occur; 2) the structure of post-season schedule (format/schedule/length) could be revised; 3) possibly moving a sport(s) from spring to fall; and 4) the length of a season and/or number of contests allowed. Berger presented a study showing the overlap of participants in each girls sport. The analysis shows seven years, so Committee members could see if an overlap is increasing, decreasing or remaining constant. Hopefully next year information on classification can be added.

Berger informed Committee the IGHSAU has purchased concussion insurance, which will be a secondary insurance. This is for every girls sport sanctioned by the IGHSAU, including cheerleaders who cheer for girls sports.

General discussion was held regarding the effects on high school teams and summer club teams. Within discussion was coaching contact prior to the season and NCAA recruiting rules.

Committee wishes to express thanks to Jones for his years of service on the Advisory Committee as his term has expired.

Berger informed Committee Brian Erbe will be the recipient of the Golden Plaque of Distinction Award at next year's girls' state softball tournament. Committee extended their congratulations to Erbe.

Next year's meeting will be September 10, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

There being no further business, **motion to adjourn by Gorman, Jones second and unanimously approved.**

Heidi Reed
Recorder