

SOFTBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
September 10, 2019

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Erin Kirtley with the following members present: Gary Gorman, Belinda Nelson, Maddison LeClere, Jill Hulsing, Erin Bohlmann, Brian Erbe and Karl Wooldridge. Jean Berger and Jason Eslinger represented the State Office. Also attending was Craig Snider, IGHSAU Softball Regional Advisor, and Macy Johnson, IGHSAU Intern

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

Motion by Wooldridge to approve the September 11, 2018 minutes, second by Gorman and unanimously approved.

The 2019-20 NFHS rule changes were discussed, including Iowa's pitching adaptation. Currently, Iowa's adaptation requires the non-pivot foot to be in contact with the pitching plate prior to the start of the delivery. Committee concurs allowing the pitcher a step back prior to the delivery gives pitchers the best opportunity to develop and standardizes the rules at all levels. Committee agreed it is important for coaches to teach proper technique.

Committee discussed pitchers striding outside of marked chutes as it relates to the NFHS pitching rules. Coaches feel it would help players, coaches and umpires follow the rule if the pitching chutes were chalked prior to the start of the game.

Committee discussed the current NFHS ruling of a dead ball call when a live ball goes into the media box when it is unoccupied. Committee concurs if it is unoccupied it should not be a dead ball and favors keeping the Iowa adaptation for the media box.

Motion by Wooldridge to remove the current Iowa pitching adaptation and adopt the NFHS pitching rules, modify NFHS rule 1-1-7 regarding the media box and require chute markings. Second by Hulsing and unanimously approved by all members present.

Gorman expressed concern regarding a courtesy runner being charged with a game against her daily limit (3 games) when she courtesy runs only. Gorman feels a courtesy runner is often not allowed to participate in a lower level game due to the possibility of being a courtesy runner for the JV/varsity games. The player is unable to play defense or bat because of this, which does not help the player and often hurts their development. **Gorman motion to allow a courtesy runner who enters the game to serve as courtesy runner only, not be charged a game toward their daily game limitation. Bohlmann second and unanimously approved.**

Berger informed Committee sixth graders are now able to practice on the first day of softball practice and compete with the junior high team. This is allowed to help those teams with low numbers in junior high.

Umpires who wish to wear attire other than the official uniform due to a special event (patriotic, pink ribbon, heart awareness, etc.) was discussed. Committee feels the current procedure of allowing umpires to wear special uniform shirts by request of the school prior to the start of the game is permissible.

Question was raised regarding time limits during regular season in junior varsity competition. Some schools play JV first, followed by varsity, while other schools play vice versa. All concur JV games can be quite lengthy and a time limit should be established. Nelson suggested this be discussed with the opposing coach/umpires before the game. Snider suggested to follow the varsity rules of 10 after 5, 15

after 3. Berger will clarify this on the rules meeting and in a memorandum, including when to start a new inning.

Berger showed Committee comments from the questionnaires given to teams who participated in the state tournament. Many favorable comments were held with some suggestions on improvements.

Berger informed Committee the contract with the Rogers Sports Complex is up after 2020 and asked Committee for feedback on improvements that could be made for the playing fields. Diamond 2 netting and backstop are scheduled for updating next year, along with bullpens on both Diamond 1 and Diamond 2. Committee unanimously agree Fort Dodge has an outstanding facility and feels there is no other complex in Iowa whose facilities are better. Some suggested improvements: 1) improve practice fields; 2) drag/rake each practice field once a team is finished; 3) possibly replacing the crushed brick infield (Diamond 1 and Diamond 2) with a Shakopee or DuraEdge surface; 4) installing batting cages; 5) having netting/screens available on the practice fields; 6) improve team parking.

Committee discussed the state tournament format. Several options were discussed, including advancing only four teams to state (playing super-regionals), and playing a double elimination state tournament. Committee favors the current format.

Snider informed Committee all teams who played in the consolation bracket in Ft. Dodge were asked if they preferred to play consolation games or play a single elimination tournament. Ninety percent of the teams wanted to play their consolation game. Committee discussed time limits during the consolation games. **Erbe motion to keep the 75 minutes time limit in consolation bracket with the 3rd place consolation game played to seven innings. If a tie exists, the international tie-breaker shall be enforced. Motion second by Hulsing and unanimously approved.**

Question was raised on live streaming all consolation games. Eslinger informed Committee it is not possible on all of the fields at the Rogers Complex due to lack of internet service in some areas.

As next year's state tournament will be the 50th year for state softball in Fort Dodge, the IGHSAU is seeking ideas to commemorate this event. Berger asked Committee to solicit suggestions from other coaches and contact the IGHSAU with ideas.

Berger informed Committee there were several instances this past year where games were not ended correctly, whether they were suspended games or games ending in a tie. Committee discussed, and suggested the IGHSAU work on communicating this better with coaches and umpires regarding game ending procedures. Berger will reiterate this in a memorandum.

Berger informed Committee there were several double-header regional final games this past year, and asked for Committee's input on increasing the number of double-headers due to the lack of qualified umpires for regional finals. Some suggestions were; 1) not utilizing a 3-person umpire crew (not possible due to being familiar with the rotation during state tournament play); 2) Lining up Class 3A with Classes 4A and 5A during the regional final and playing double-headers. Committee discussed several options and favors changing the dates of the Class 3A regional games.

Berger shared with the Committee the adjusted start times for the 2020 state tournament championship games.

Berger informed Committee several coaches and players were ejected this year due to an illegal bat. Committee discussed where the responsibility falls on making sure players' bats are legal. Committee concurs often coaches don't know if a player gets a new bat, however some feel a coach should check each player's bats prior to each game as liability falls on the school and their legality is part of their

duties. Should the penalty be more severe if a player uses an illegal bat? Committee discussed, but feel stressing the importance to coaches might increase awareness. Berger will state clarification in next year's rules meeting and through memorandums.

Berger stated the IGHSAU's Board of Directors met recently and released the AdHoc findings. The recommendation of a "dead week" (week 4 of the Unified Calendar) was approved, along with a few sport seasons' adjustments. Berger stated one week of practice has been added to the start of the softball season (Week 44), due to coaches having to share their athletes with other springs sports. This commences with the 2020 season.

Further discussion ensued on the current unlimited pitching and catching regulations and the possible increase of contact for softball. Committee concurs it is important for pitchers to have time off as they are pitching during fall ball or are with their own pitching coach and usually start up again in December and January. Committee would support a revision of the unlimited contact rule for pitchers and catchers. The current contact allowed for hitting only in baseball is one example of possible increased contact for softball coaches. Committee feels a more flexible option allowing a certain amount of "skilled instruction" with a few team members at a time would be more beneficial. This will help coaches address the skills needed by team members and better prepare for the season. It also adds flexibility for softball to work around the schedules of the girls who are participating in a spring sport.

Next year's meeting will be September 15, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Committee extended its appreciation to Erin Kirtley, Brian Erbe, Gary Gorman, Jill Hulsing and Erin Bohlmann for their years of service to the Softball Advisory Committee.

There being no further business, meeting adjourned

Heidi Reed
Recorder