

MINUTES OF THE IHSA BASEBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

August 31, 2023

The IHSA Baseball Advisory Committee met on August 31, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

Committee members present: Sean McBride, Chicago (Brother Rice); Glen Wilson, Huntley; Joe Nichols, Geneseo; Brock Niebuhr, Paxton (P.-Buckley-Loda); Jared Hoots, Mt. Sterling (Brown County); Chris Becker, Highland; Ryan Verver, Official; and Sam Knox, IHSA.

Absent committee member: Marcus Rodgers, Flossmoor (Homewood-F.)

TERMS & CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Item VI. Tournament Structure and Time Schedules A. Time Schedule 2)

Recommendation: Starting times for all games will be announced by the local manager, but in the Regional ~~and Sectional~~ Tournaments, games should not be played during school hours.

Rationale: The primary goal with this proposal is to create a more competitive pitching matchup in the Super Sectional.

The committee feels both Sectional semifinal games should be played on the same day. If the host school has lights on its field, that already happens. However, not all Sectional hosts have lights. This proposal opens hosting opportunities to more fields that don't have lights.

Removing "and Sectional" from this part of the Terms and Conditions will allow Sectional hosts without lights to play semifinal games at 2:00 and 4:30 on the same day.

Currently, if Sectional A doesn't have lights, it must play one semifinal on Wednesday and one on Thursday. If the team that wins Thursday also wins the Sectional championship on Saturday, its starting pitcher who threw on Thursday likely isn't allowed to pitch in the Super Sectional on Monday because of the pitch count policy. If Sectional B has lights and plays both semifinals on Wednesday, the team that wins the Sectional championship on Saturday will likely throw its pitcher from Wednesday in the Super Sectional on Monday. Two different playing schedules in two different Sectionals that lead into the same Super Sectional often means that one team is using its #3 or #4 pitcher while its opponent is able to use its #1 or #2 pitcher based on who threw in the Sectional championship game.

By the time we play Sectional games, a large majority of schools are already out for the summer, so this proposal has very minimal academic impact. Additionally, not every Sectional team would need to miss school. The proposal applies only to Sectional sites that don't have lights and would affect very few teams.

Some IHSA sports have postseason events where every school in the tournament is required to miss a major portion of a school day.

2. Item VI. Tournament Structure and Time Schedules A. Time Schedule 3)

Recommendation: State Finals game times will be 10:00, 1:00, 4:00, and 7:00 on Friday and Saturday.

Rationale: In recent years, State Finals games have lasted an average of longer than two hours. By the time the next teams play catch, the stadium crew prepares the field, teams take infield/outfield pregame warmups, and we introduce starting lineups, the second, third, and fourth games of the day are starting much later than the currently-scheduled times. Scheduling games three hours apart is a more reasonable and realistic schedule.

3. Item IX. Tournament Policies B. Players in Team Uniform C. Players Bench

Recommendation: A maximum of ~~thirty (30)~~ thirty-five (35) individuals officially connected with the school shall be permitted to occupy the players' bench.

Rationale: This proposal is similar to what we currently do in basketball and volleyball. This allows a team to potentially expand upon the current limit of 27 players in uniform while still maintaining a maximum number of people on the bench.

Teams with larger rosters will be able to retain players in the postseason who have been a part of the Varsity team all season. Since the pitch count rules started seven years ago, some teams have players on their roster who are pitchers-only, which creates a larger roster during the regular season and postseason. That's a good thing for participation since more students are on the team, and more students get playing time.

4. Item XI. Officials E. State Final Assignments

Recommendation: Assign eight umpires to the State Finals instead of the current twelve. Each umpire will officiate four total games during the weekend (two games each day) as a part of a four-person crew instead of the current two total games (one each day) as a part of a three-person crew. Each umpire will be paid a flat fee of \$578 plus up to two nights lodging at a hotel designated by the IHSA Administrator.

Rationale: Assigning four umpires to each game at the State Finals will provide the best experience for our teams. From the umpires' perspective, umpiring in a 4-person crew is much simpler than umpiring in a 3-person crew because base coverage, field coverage, and rotations are more efficient. Assigning eight total umpires will ensure that each umpire has a game behind the plate. State Finals umpires are already our elite umpires who will be able to grasp the concepts and rotations of a 4-person crew with minimal education and training.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION / STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTION:

Recommendation: Implement a pace-of-play rule that allows the defensive team a maximum of one players-only conference per inning that includes the pitcher and at least one teammate at or near the pitcher's mound.

Rationale: Frequent player conferences at or near the pitcher's mound slow down the game. Implementing a rule that allows one defensive player conference at the mound while retaining current NFHS rules that allow coaches to conference with the defense will ensure games flow at a better pace.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

1. The committee discussed the 2022 advisory committee recommendations.
2. The committee discussed NFHS rule changes for the 2024 season.
3. The committee discussed other options to improve the pace of play.
4. The committee discussed pitch count reporting including ways to monitor and follow up with coaches who don't report in a timely manner.
5. The committee discussed a proposal to require host schools to display a visible pitch count.
6. The committee discussed the potential of virtual coaches meetings prior to postseason seeding.

7. The committee discussed playing Regional tournaments where the higher seed hosts each game.
8. The committee discussed potential changes to the IHSA state series format and the possibility of playing all four classes simultaneously throughout the state series.

The committee recognized outgoing members Glen Wilson, Huntley and Ryan Verver, Official.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.