

MINUTES OF THE IHSA BASEBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 5, 2024

The IHSA Baseball Advisory Committee met on September 5, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Committee members present: Brian Bogda, Crystal Lake (South); Tony Millard, Oswego (East); Joe Nichols, Geneseo; Brock Niebuhr, Paxton (P.-Buckley-Loda); Jared Hoots, Mt. Sterling (Brown County); Caleb Houchins, Highland; Matt Reese, Official; and Sam Knox, IHSA.

Absent committee member: Sean McBride, Chicago (Brother Rice)

TERMS & CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. II. Dates & Sites

Recommendation: Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, conduct the entire State Series for all four classes simultaneously, playing games on the current 3A/4A dates and timeline (IHSA Weeks 47-49). Seek one of two options for the State Finals.

- 1) Find a host city with two stadiums that can host the semifinals and championship games at one stadium and the 3rd place games at a different stadium.
- 2) Continue to conduct the State Finals in two different cities and maintain the current State Finals game schedule on Friday and Saturday.

Rationale: Conducting a simultaneous State Series for all classes works in other team bracketed sports and will work for Baseball too. Concluding the season with all four championship games on the same day and potentially at the same stadium is an exciting possibility. Playing the State Series on the 3A/4A timeline means 1A and 2A teams will have an additional week in which to play regular season games.

2. VI. Tournament Structure & Time Schedules A. Time Schedule 3)

Recommendation: If the State Finals is in a city with two stadiums, use this schedule.

Thursday: 1A & 2A Semifinals (10:00, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00)

Friday: 3A & 4A Semifinals (10:00, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00)

1A & 2A 3rd place games at a different stadium (10:00 & 1:00)

Saturday: 1A-4A Championship games (10:00, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00)

3A & 4A 3rd place games at a different stadium (10:00 & 1:00)

Rationale: This schedule provides a two-day State Finals experience for all teams and allows the IHSA to feature all four State Championship games on the same day at the same stadium.

3. II. Dates & Sites

Recommendation: In the Regional, the higher-seeded team will host each game. If a team is not able to host a game, the schools must mutually agree to play at a neutral site or agree to play the game at the opponent's field.

Rationale: The committee feels the higher-seeded team has earned the opportunity to host a Regional game. Attendance should increase since one of the teams in each Regional game will be playing at home. Spring sports schedules are the most flexible schedules on the calendar. Schools

and parents are already familiar with handling frequent site changes throughout the season. They can manage the flexibility necessary to play Regional games at different locations, based on seeds.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

1. The committee discussed the 2023 advisory committee recommendations.
2. The committee discussed the successes of the 2024 rule change regarding the catcher using one-way communication from the dugout/bench.
3. The committee discussed NFHS rule changes for the 2025 season.
4. The committee discussed potential future rule changes regarding: delayed dead ball on a balk, player/DH, coaches using a phone for GameChanger in coach's box, pitcher using a glove that has some white or gray on it.
5. The committee discussed options to improve the pace of play, especially the time between innings.
6. The committee discussed the potential of using an orange safety base at 1st base and clarifying the running lane between home plate and 1st base. The committee also seeks clarity on the color of an index card in a pitcher's wristband.
7. The committee discussed pitch count reporting including ways to monitor and follow up with coaches who don't report in a timely manner.
8. The committee discussed time limits for non-Varsity games. The committee feels the current method of allowing a conference to set a 2-hour time limit for non-varsity games is effective.
9. The committee discussed the potential of implementing an RPI ranking and seeding process for the State Series instead of the current seeding process where coaches vote. If/when the IHSA staff cooperates with coaches to determine the details of an RPI ranking and seeding program, coaches on the committee are confident that Baseball is willing to pilot the program.
10. The committee discussed the option of Regional hosts being able to request a 3rd umpire.
11. The committee discussed potentially using a different umpire schedule at the State Finals to have the umpires officiate two games on a day as opposed to one game each day.
12. The committee discussed potentially writing a by-law proposal that would allow preseason workouts to give players an opportunity to build arm strength prior to the season.

The committee recognized outgoing members Joe Nichols, Geneseo; Brock Niebuhr, Paxton-Buckley-Loda; and Caleb Houchins, Highland.