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MHSA / MOA POST SEASON SELECTION PROCESS

One question that is always asked when post season play arrives is how officials are selected for playoffs, district, divisional and state tournaments and championships. I have asked Joanne Austin (soccer), Brian Michelotti (football) and Kip Ryan (basketball and volleyball) to explain once again the selection procedure for the particular sport they are responsible.

Basketball and Volleyball - The goal of the selection process for post season officials is to get the best available officials at all post season tournaments by using a selection process that was adopted by MOA officials, MOA Regional Directors and the MOA office a few years ago. This process requires the MOA office to use a combination of the following, which can be found on pages 123-124 of the current MHSAA Handbook: (1) coaches' input (ballots), (2) individual officials' pool ranking, and (3) MOA office input.

- (1) Coaches' input (ballots): Basketball and volleyball coaches are sent a ballot asking them to vote for the number of officials used at each post season tournament. These ballots are returned to the MOA office and the tournament votes each official receives are tabulated.
- (2) Individual official's pool ranking: Each pool is sent an officials' ranking form that requires pools to rank all master officials in their pool. It is very important for all pools to provide the MOA office with as much information about each official's abilities as possible so that when officials receive the same number of coaches' votes, the MOA office can use the pools' ranking form to determine the best available official for a tournament.
- (3) MOA office input: The MOA office uses the following information along with the pools' ranking information to help determine the best available official for a tournament when the officials have the same number of coaches' votes.
 - a. The MOA office's knowledge of the official's abilities/experience
 - b. Contact with pool personnel to talk about official's abilities/experience
 - c. For district and divisional tournaments, teams involved in the tournament (to get officials from different areas), travel distance and car pooling opportunities are considered.
 - d. Tournaments an official has done in the past years.

For basketball and volleyball, officials are prohibited from working more than two MHSAA tournaments below the state level each year, and basketball and volleyball officials can work only one state tournament each year.

Coaches' ballots are used as the first criterion for post season selection. If we need to break a tie for a tournament, official's pool ranking and MOA office input are the next criteria used. The selection process used to determine officials for post season tournaments is very efficient and works extremely well. We feel confident that by following the process, the very best available officials are selected to work our post season tournaments.

Football - The hiring of football officials for the post season playoffs is a collaborative effort between the MOA office and each of the eleven MOA regions. Coaches do not vote on these officials, but towards the end of the season, the MOA local pools verify availability and rank each official in their area. When the playoffs begin, the MOA office determines geographically which football officiating pool would be appropriate to cover each round of the playoffs. Then the MOA office receives recommendations from the MOA Regional Director or his designee about crew assignments for each game. After all of this input is gathered and evaluated, the MOA office assigns the most qualified officiating crews for all five of the levels of football games in Montana. This process has worked effectively in assigning well-qualified officiating crews for all classes for the past several years.

Soccer - For soccer officials, the process has fewer components. There is no coaches' ballot, but schools are asked for their feedback on the season. Officials must meet the minimum eligibility requirements, which include rating (master is preferred, but certified is allowed), rules clinic and concussion clinic attendance, working a minimum number of games, and local pool input. Playoff officials are assigned at the local level, while state championship and state tournament officials are secured by the MHSAA/MOA office.

Assignments for post season play will begin soon. If Kip, Jo or Brian contact you and have to leave a message because you are unavailable, please call them back as soon as possible. Calls that aren't returned promptly can bring the whole assignment process to a standstill.

Assigning officials for post season play is a very complex, time consuming process. The MHSAA/MOA staff does an outstanding job following the process for the particular sport they are assigned, fairly and with integrity. If you have any questions on the process of selecting officials or any questions specific to you regarding assignments please contact the appropriate staff member.

Have a great year and if we can be of any assistance please contact your MOA office.

Mark Beckman
MOA Commissioner
MHSAA Executive Director