"HITTING THE MARK"
Mark Beckman, MOA Commissioner

The question I ask every August as I write this column is “Where did the summer go?” That question is harder to answer as I get older and, at least it seems, time is really flying by. However, as time flies by I take some comfort in a quote from Charles Richards, “Don’t be fooled by the calendar. There are only as many days in the year as you make use of. One man gets only a week’s value out of a year, while another man gets a full year’s value out of a week.” Hopefully you were able to get away and enjoy some summer vacation time and experience “full value” from your time off. And, I hope you are ready to begin officiating again and to experience a “full value” 2017-2018 season! The one thing I believe we all have in common (MHSA staff, administrators, coaches, student athletes and officials) is the enthusiasm for the start of the next sports season. Bo Bennett stated, “Enthusiasm is not the same as just being excited. One gets excited about going on a roller coaster. One becomes enthusiastic about creating and building a roller coaster.” Even though officiating can be like a roller coaster ride sometimes with all the ups and downs, officials really don’t get excited about the ride, officials become enthusiastic about each and every game officiated during another school year, ensuring fair and consistent positive experiences for our student activity participants.

I hope you share with me that high level of enthusiasm for the anticipated start of another fall season. As a new fall sports activity season begins I want to remind you once again of the requirements in regard to concussion education for officials. Those requirements are mandated by law and MHSA/MOA policy. We sent this information to you multiple times last year and the information is once again attached to this email. If you have any questions on the concussion law requirements please contact me, Theresa Stanisich or Brian Michelotti.

Below are two of the important issues I have asked for help with from our school administrators in my August Activity News article last past few years and, of course, appreciate your help and cooperation with our administrators regarding these issues:

- The recruiting and retention of sports officials. Without men and women willing to officiate high school sports, those sports could not come to pass for the thousands of high school players, coaches and spectators. I am pleased to report that the Respect Officials Initiative (“Without Officials, It’s Just Recess”) has been successful to date. Any assistance you can offer to help recruit new members (including high school students to join as associate members; associate members can work junior high and sub-varsity games and the dues are one-half of regular member dues) is greatly appreciated.

- Adult Fan Behavior at MHSA Regular Season and Post Season Events – Our student athletes and student cheering sections have not been a major problem in regard to fan behavior. Unruly adult fans have been a problem in many areas. Continued sharing of acceptable behavior expectations and administering consequences for unacceptable behavior is important. Our new “Conduct Counts” posters are a great resource for this. Also, for post season events our Executive Board approved allowing for additional security to be hired and the cost covered from gate receipts as long as the security is certified or is actual law enforcement.

Cultural Diversity Training

Effective in 2011-12, the MHSA Executive Board approved Cultural Diversity Training for an onsite administrator and/or athletic activities director from each member school, all MHSA sanctioned sports head coaches and all MOA officials. Even though this was a one-time requirement, the MHSA/MOA encourages officials to view the clinic especially new officials that have not viewed this information. The clinic can be accessed at www.mhsa.org under the clinics link. The purpose of the training is to help administrators, coaches and officials enhance their knowledge and self-awareness of diversity issues in MHSA-sanctioned athletics and activities to prevent cultural miscommunications, disconnects or conflicts.

New Additions – MOA Handbook

I have shared with you in previous correspondence some of the changes the MOA Regional Directors and MHSA Executive Board approved for this coming year. I would like to remind you of a couple of those changes:

1) The MHSA Executive Board approved the recommendation from the MOA Board to provide a lifetime pass to MHSA events for MOA retired members with 40 years or more of service to the MOA.
2) Football officials may wear either the one-inch striped shirt or the two-inch striped shirt as long as the entire crew wears matching shirts.

3) The MOA Board clarified that all officials uniform shirts must be tucked in.

4) Also, please review the requirements for all sports in regard to wearing warm-up jackets.

MOA Officials “Hub"

From all reports, the MOA Officials Hub has been a great resource for our officials. I hope even more of you will take advantage of this great resource and use the Hub. The Hub provides access to all things “official” and is easy to access. Please contact Theresa with any questions regarding the Central Hub.

MOA Fees - All regular season invitational tournament fees and post season fees are listed in the MOA Handbook and also on-line via the MOA Central Hub. The mileage fee has decreased from .54 to .535. (This is the IRS mileage rate). Please examine your check to make sure you are receiving the proper pay.

MOA Hall of Fame - If you would like to nominate a deserving candidate please see the section in the MOA Handbook referencing the nomination criteria, due date etc.

Sport Specific Information - Once again for this fall sports season I would like to ask Jo, Brian and the new guy Kip to share a few important thoughts with you concerning some points of emphasis in soccer, football and volleyball – please see each article attached.

Lastly, below are a few words from George Maruska, your Region 10 Director:

Now that the heat of summer is moving toward August, many of us are reminded that in just a few short weeks, the Fall Sports season will be upon us. Let me be the first to welcome all high school Fall officials back to what will hopefully be an incredibly competitive one for both student athletes and the hard-working officials that make these sports both fair and competitive, but also safe. Unfortunately, after the June Regional Director’s meeting, there is a great concern about the ever-dwindling numbers of officials we are experiencing both statewide and nationwide. Also, local official’s pool numbers are not only getting smaller and smaller, but older and grayer. The Regional Directors had a long and very frank conversation in June about this ever-growing problem and what we and the MOA offices can do to alleviate it. Regrettably, there is no “magic wand” that we can wave to make things all better. Overall interest in officiating is deteriorating amongst younger people for a variety of reasons. We discussed those reasons and what can we, as officials and our association do to not only recruit new officials; but also retain them. We were unable to come up with a “for sure” solution, however a number of ideas and suggestions were made. If any officials reading this column have some ideas or suggestions please feel free to share them with your pool leader, your Regional Director, or contact the Montana High School Association. Trust me on this one, we are all ears for ideas!!!

A solution many pools have come up with is sharing duties with other, nearby pools. It is not uncommon on any given weekend that is “just too busy” for the local pool to handle; will they ask another pool in the area to help out. However, please be aware that there are a number of steps that must be taken before any “referee sharing” can be done. Remember the Montana Officials Association (MOA) Handbook is clear that it is official misconduct when an official(s) is discovered “Working as a member of more than one pool per sport, ..., or individually contracting contest assignments while being a member of a pool.” Please keep in mind that not only can misconduct be charged against the offending official, but so too can charges be made against the pool leaders and assigners for infractions that are detrimental to the MOA. To alleviate any problems, the best practice if a local pool needs the services of an official(s) from another pool is for the pool leaders to contact each other and make the appropriate arrangements, also be sure to inform your Regional Director so that person is aware of what is being done. Keep in mind that the host school must pay driver mileage to both the local official (if working) and the guest official(s) from their hometown or pool location; whichever is closest to the game site.

On a lighter note, but no less appropriate, was a discussion the Regional Directors had about the behavior of fans, coaches, and student athletes at many of the contests this year. It was shocking that the number of total ejections of the 2016-2017 high school sports season was 96; an increase of twenty-four from last year. That does not include the number of fans that were “asked to leave.” This got me thinking about an essay that one of my high school sophomore English students wrote a few years ago. I had assigned an Inquiry and Exploration Essay in which the students were to find a newspaper article that interested them and then conduct some research on the topic of the article. This essay was written by a Sophomore student, who plays basketball for the Winnett/Grass Range girls’ basketball team. I was very much impressed with not only her analysis of the article, but her take on the role of officials in sports. Many times we as adults talk about these things to deaf ears, but to get a student’s perspective on the same subject matter is rather interesting.
**Newspaper Essay**  
**By:** Kendra Murnion

Why is it important to listen to the rules of a game? Bozeman’s Bobcat women’s basketball team point guard, Lindsay Stockton, learned this lesson when she committed a technical foul during one of their games. The only question left is what is the lesson that Stockton learned in the end?

Stockton is said to be a tremendous leader and very important to the Bobcat team, although she did not act like a leader should when she committed the technical foul. During one of the Bobcat’s home games, Stockton had stolen the ball but was then fouled. She was knocked down to the floor fairly hard. It wasn’t that she was knocked down that was bad it was what she did afterward. Stockton jumped up to her feet and shoved the girl that fouled her after the referee had blown the whistle. She could have instead just accepted that she was fouled and continued to play the game. When she decided to take her anger out on the girl that fouled her is where she went wrong. That is the reason she got the well-deserved technical foul. The important part though is that Stockton learned her lesson.

After the game, Stockton said that she was not proud of what she did and right after she did it she knew she was in trouble. When she committed the foul the Bobcat coach immediately took Stockton out of the game, and the first thing she told her coach was that she was sorry. The lesson that Stockton had learned from all of this is that when you get fouled hard, or something happens that you don’t like, you need to keep your emotions. She knows now to just keep her emotions to herself rather than possibly hurt someone else because she was mad. After the game she said that her actions are not something that she is proud of and that she did indeed learn her lesson. She also said that if the Bobcats would have ended up losing that game she would have felt very guilty for doing that to her team. What Stockton did though doesn’t also have that same outcome in other situations.

It is situations like what Stockton did that we have technical fouls in basketball and why it is important to follow those rules. Even though no one got hurt in that situation there are situations that people do get hurt. If we didn’t have technical fouls that simple push could have escalated into a fight. There are also consequences that come with breaking a rule of the game. In Stockton’s case it could have cost the Bobcats an important win. Also with the technical fouls it helps to insure that no one gets seriously hurt, and if someone does get hurt the person who committed the foul hopefully learned their lesson. This is why it is important to have these kinds of rules in a game where people can easily get mad. If what Stockton did ended in a fight; someone could have gotten severely hurt because of it.

Now try to imagine a game where no one listened to the rules and there was no one to enforce those rules. We would have a lot more injuries in the games that we play if that was the case. Even though Stockton broke one of the rules, there was a referee there to ensure that it didn’t go any farther. There are people, though, that don’t like the rules of the game so that is why we have referees to make these people follow the rules. Also when they don’t listen to the rules, the referees give them consequences for their actions. Thus, by committing the technical foul, Stockton had to face the consequences of her actions. What she could have done instead is follow the rules of the game and then she would have never had to worry about the consequences. Although not everyone will follow the rules without breaking them, but trying to follow them will help the game be a lot safer to play.

So the next time you are playing a game you should ask yourself why is it important to follow the rules of the game? Stockton learned for herself why it is important to follow the rules but that is not the only reason. In the end she learned that it is better to keep your emotions and follow the rules. By following the rules people have a less likely chance of getting hurt while playing.


Kendra will be a Senior this coming school year, and plans to participate in as many high school sports as our school offers. I found it amazing the insight she had about sportsmanship and the role we, as officials, play in maintaining a positive and safe athletic environment for these student athletes to compete. Many times, we don’t get the gratitude we so richly deserve for taking time out of our lives to make the experiences of student athletes that much better. Maybe it takes a sophomore girl to write an essay that shows just how much appreciated we really are. Best of luck to all officials this 2017-2018 athletic season, and know that you are greatly appreciated for the good you do in student-athletes’ lives.

George Maruska

**HALL OF FAME**

The MOA Hall of Fame now includes 159 members. If you would like to nominate a deserving candidate please see the section in the MOA Handbook referencing the nomination criteria, due date etc. As was reported in the June Official Word this year’s inductees into the MOA Hall of Fame are Larry Holman of Helena, Marvin Qualley of Brockton and Steve Weston of Hamilton.
EXAM DATES SET
Listed below you will find the dates that have been finalized for the MOA qualifying exams this year. All exams are now administered exclusively online via the MOA Central Hub.

- Football, Soccer and Volleyball
  Aug 14-Sep 5, 2017 – Apprentice Exam
  Aug 14-21, 2017 – Certified and Master Exams

- Basketball and Wrestling
  Nov 27-Dec 18, 2017 – Apprentice Exam
  Nov 27-Dec 4, 2017 – Certified and Master Exams

- Softball
  Mar 12-26, 2018 – Apprentice Exam
  Mar 19-26, 2018 – Certified and Master Exams

Exams for all sports will be administered exclusively online. If you will be taking the online exam, detailed instructions have been emailed to the email address you provided on your registration form. If you have not received those instructions, or have any questions regarding the online testing process, please call Theresa Stanisich at 406-442-6010.

NOTE: If you wish to take the upgrade exam on one of the above dates you must notify the MHSA office, in writing, at least seven (7) days prior to the test date. A request for upgrade form is available on the Central Hub or we will be happy to fax or email the form to you. Please contact Theresa with those requests. Upon receipt of your request, your name will automatically be added to the test list if everything is in order. If a problem occurs we will contact you. Please remember that upgrading will be denied for a one-year period for failure to: 1) complete the required number of study clubs; 2) view rules and concussion clinics; 3) pay annual MOA dues by June 1st; or 4) receive a favorable evaluation from your regional evaluation committee.

JUNE MOA DIRECTOR MEETING

The MOA Regional Directors met in Helena on Sunday, June 4, 2017, and Monday, June 5, 2017, for their summer meeting to address issues and concerns for the MOA. Items discussed and actions taken by the Directors include:

MOA proposals approved at the June meeting:
- Approved to submit a proposal to the MHSA Board, at the January MHSA Annual Meeting, an increase to the sub-varsity fees for all sports.
- Approved to submit a proposal to the MHSA Board to change the coaching box to 28 feet.

- Approved for football, effective for 2017-18, in addition to the 1-inch stripe shirts, the 2-inch stripe shirt as an option, as long as the entire crew wears matching shirts.
- Approved for basketball, as a one year trial, to amend post season assignment limits as follows: The limit is still a total of three assignments. If an official receives a state assignment, he/she is still limited to two (2) additional assignments at the district and/or divisional level. If an official does not receive a state assignment, he/she can be assigned a total of three (3) tournaments at the district and/or divisional level.
- Clarified for softball, XXVII-Regular Season Fee/Expenses, Letter E, second paragraph to read: If different officials . . . work one quarter (or its equivalent, ie., 2 full innings in softball) or more . . .

STUDY CLUB DEADLINES

All study club attendance information must be in the hands of the Directors by the respective dates shown below:
- Football, Soccer and Volleyball – December 1
- Basketball and Wrestling – April 1
- Softball – June 1

Please use the study club attendance form provided by this office. If you are not in possession of this form please contact Theresa and she will be happy to send you one via fax, email, or through the mail. You can also download this form from the MOA Central Hub which can be accessed by clicking the “Officials/MOA” tab on the MHSA homepage at www.mhsa.org. These forms are to be sent to your Regional Director for his/her signature. It is his/her responsibility to forward them on to us. Please do not send them directly to the MOA office. We recommend that each pool coordinator retain a copy for his/her records, to be used as a backup if necessary.

These forms are important for many reasons, not the least of which is the impact on each official’s rating. Pool heads should list each official as favorable/unfavorable for upgrade regardless of their current rating or number of years of service. Hopefully, this will help to erase some of the confusion when ratings letters are mailed each year.

MOVING?
You say you’ve moved? Well LET US KNOW! You can notify us of address changes by calling Theresa at 442-6010, emailing the information to tstanisich@mhsa.org or mailing a change of address card to the MHSA office. There is also a change of address form on the MOA Central Hub. Just fill it out and fax (442-8250), mail or scan and email it to us. Updating your information in Arbiter does NOT update our MOA database – please be certain to forward any changes to the MOA office.
Most of the problems experienced by officials not receiving MOA information including dues forms, books, clinic info etc., could be avoided by ensuring that your address information is current.

Please Note: Due to USPS changes in bulk mailing requirements, items undeliverable due to addresses that are incorrect, incomplete or have lapsed forwarding orders are now returned to us. These returns are subject to a weighted fee – the difference between the bulk rate and a first class rate. If a mailing has been returned to us because an official has failed to supply us with a current/correct address, officials will be required to pay the additional postage, which will include the return fee and the fee to resend the mailing.

OFFICIAL REPORT FORM

Enclosed with this publication you will find a form entitled “Official Report of Unusual Situations.” This form is to be used to report the behavior of a coach or member(s) of the coaching staff, to report a problem with a school’s facility, to report a crowd control problem or any unusual circumstance experienced while you are officiating. It is to be used to report a positive situation as well as a negative problem. These forms are available from your Regional Director, the MOA office or downloadable on the forms page of the MOA Central Hub.

NOTE: Coach/player ejections must be reported in writing to the MHSA office within 48 hours of the incident. This form should be used to report ejections, but if forms are not available a letter will suffice – mail, fax, or email. It is very important for ejections to be reported promptly.

There is a separate form designed exclusively for soccer, but soccer officials may use either form, provided that all relevant information is included.

OFFICIATING RESOURCES FROM NFHS

MOA members are aware of the NFHSLearn.com website through their use of the Concussion in Sports course, but the NFHS also provides a variety of officiating resources through the same site. By selecting the filter for OFFICIALS on the Courses tab (shown), members of the MOA can view all NFHS recommended courses for officials, many of which are free. The courses include Interscholastic Officiating, which is a core course, and the following sport-specific courses: Officiating Basketball, Officiating Football, Officiating Soccer, Officiating Volleyball and Umpiring Softball.

UNIVERSAL ATHLETIC – MOA OFFICIAL SUPPLIER OF OFFICIATING APPAREL

The Montana Officials Association (MOA) has entered into an agreement with Universal Athletic, a Montana based sporting good dealer, to be the official supplier of officiating apparel and accessories for MOA members. Universal Athletic has been the long time t-shirt concession vendor for Montana High School Association state tournaments. The MHSA/MOA is pleased to expand this relationship to benefit our officials in regard to apparel and accessories purchases.

Universal Athletic will stock product locally and will also offer a wide variety of officials merchandise on a custom website at www.universalathletic.com/moa. Universal Athletic’s goal is to provide high-quality products and service to allow the officials to look consistently professional, feel more comfortable, and have a reliable product they can depend on for multiple seasons.

The MOA encourages officials to use this site because a percentage of sales will be returned to the MOA. Those monies will be used strictly for MOA purposes including recruiting and retention of officials, the Respect Officials Campaign and other appropriate MOA initiatives. Officials can still purchase items from their dealer of choice however please check out the site and consider using the MOA official supplier.

INFORMATION ON RECIPROCITY

Once again there will be a reciprocity agreement for the four contiguous states. Membership in the MOA allows you to officiate in Idaho for a $5 per sport membership fee, in North Dakota, South Dakota or Wyoming for a $10 per sport membership fee. For those who wish to take advantage of the reciprocity agreement here is the contact information:

- Brynn Knudson, Administrative Assistant, Idaho, 8011 Ustick Rd, Boise, ID 83704 knudsonb@idhsaa.org
- Patty Bass, Activities Secretary, North Dakota, PO Box 817, Valley City, ND 58072 patty.bass@ndhsaa.org
- Marsha Karst, Administrative Assistant, South Dakota, 804 North Euclid, Suite 102, PO Box 1217, Pierre, SD 57501 marsha.karst@sdhsaa.com
- Lana Glantz, WHSAA Secretary, Wyoming, 731 E. 2nd Street, Casper, WY 82601 blantz@whsaa.org
Enclosures:
Rules Clinic Instruction Sheet
Concussion Compliance Information and Instructions
Officials Report of Unusual Situations
Pre Season Information for Football, Soccer & Volleyball