

SOFTBALL
Coaches Advisory Committee Meeting
September 16, 2009

MINUTES

This summary represents the recommendations of the Committee and is not to be construed as a change of existing rules or regulations. Final action on all items will be taken by the Board of Control at their October meeting.

Committee Members: Kevin Schreiner (Aquinas), Steve Krupke (Brodhead), Andy Niedzwiecki (Fall Creek), John Ruffolo (Kenosha Bradford), Richard Frost (Neenah), and Brad Ceranski (Thorp). Marcy Thurwachter attended the meeting representing the WIAA. The meeting was chaired by Richard Frost and the minutes were recorded by Marcy Thurwachter.

Kevin Schreiner (Aquinas), Andy Niedzwiecki (Fall Creek) and John Ruffolo (Kenosha Bradford) received a certificate of appreciation for their three years of service on the committee and Steve Krupke (Brodhead) and Brad Ceranski (Thorp) received a WIAA pin as recognition of their first year of service on this committee.

I. SEASON REGULATIONS

A. Minutes

Last year's minutes and action taken by the Board of Control were reviewed.

It was recommended to accept the minutes. Passed unanimously.

B. Season Regulations

The 2009 WIAA Spring Edition of Season Regulations, pages 27-29 were reviewed.

1. International Tie-Breaker

Marcy reported that although the committee had not taken action in the past regarding the adoption of the International Tie-Breaker, she received several requests last season to use this format. John Ruffolo felt that this would be beneficial when hosting multi-team tournaments. Discussion amongst the committee centered on allowing conferences to make decisions based on what works best for them.

It was recommended that the International Tie-Breaker may be used for all non-WIAA tournament games. Conferences may determine use of the tie-breaker and should have this stated in their by-laws. Use must be determined prior to the start of the contest. Passed unanimously.

International Tie-Breaker: If a game is tied after seven innings the game will continue using the International Tie Breaker. Each team starts the inning with the player who completed the last official at bat as a base runner on second base. Each team has the opportunity to bat each inning.

2. 43' Pitching Distance

Rich Frost presented the WFSCA survey conducted this summer which indicated that the responding coaches favored adopting the 43' pitching distance this spring. John Ruffolo commented that he wasn't surprised because the change has been discussed for several years. ASA has some levels already pitching at 43'. Steve Krupke, a pitcher himself, worked with pitchers of different ages this summer and felt that they adapted to the additional 3' quickly. Kevin Schreiner was opposed to the change for next season, feeling that the athletes would benefit by having all of next summer to practice at 43'. Andy Niedzwiecki felt that because most of the coaches were aware the distance was going to change there wasn't much opposition.

It was recommended to adopt the NFHS 43' pitching distance for the 2010 spring season.
Passed 5-1.

C. Review of 2009

Marcy reviewed several situations that occurred last season involving illegal pitching. She thanked Rich Frost for writing a brief note to coaches on ethical behavior, their responsibilities in coaching, and methods to successfully work with umpires on the issue of illegal pitching. Brad Ceranski agreed that illegal pitching can result in real sportsmanship issues. John Ruffolo expressed frustration with umpires either unwilling to make calls or unknowledgeable. Andy Niedzwiecki felt that umpires should suggest corrections prior to the start of the game and address protocol during the pregame coaches meeting. Marcy explained a possible plan to run an umpires clinic in conjunction with the WFSCA clinic. She met with Dan Baumgart and Mike Brewer in late August.

D. 2010 Calendar

Rich Frost requested that the WIAA review the placement of the basketball tournaments for 2012. He has received considerable negative feedback due to the mid-June State Tournament date. John Ruffolo commented that it appeared that basketball had not left any options for softball. Brad Ceranski and Andy Niedzwiecki both felt that the small schools were really impacted by the overlap between basketball and softball.

Andy Niedzwiecki asked if basketball passed the five division proposal would softball also have five divisions? Marcy explained that if the proposal passed it would be piloted in basketball for two years before any other sports would be involved. It is also possible that because softball has less teams than basketball, a fifth division would not be appropriate.

E. On Deck Circles

Rich Frost recommended that Wisconsin request to experiment with having on-deck batters stand behind the batter instead of in front of their own dugouts for safety purposes. Marcy shared an email from Mary Struckoff, NFHS liaison, indicating that it was unlikely the NFHS would approve the request. The committee felt strongly that this proposal was in the best interest of the players. It was recommended that Wisconsin experiment with placing the on-deck batter behind the batter. Passed unanimously.

II. TOURNAMENT PROCEDURES

A. Tournament Regulations

The 2009 WIAA Spring Edition of Season Regulations, pages 30-34 were reviewed.

B. Three-Person Umpire Crews

It was recommended that the WIAA continue to assign three umpires for the sectional championship.
Passed unanimously.

C. Splitting Division 1

Marcy asked the committee to formally endorse the splitting of Division 1, Sectional 1 into two regions due to travel concerns. It was recommended that Division 1, Sectional 1 be split into two regionals. Passed unanimously.

D. Coin Flip or Higher Seed

Steve Krupke suggested that teams be given the option of being the home or visiting team when they are the higher seed. Rich Frost added that in Division 1 since the entire sectional is seeded the higher seed should host all games except the championship. It was recommended that the highest seeded team in all regional games may choose to be the home or visiting team on the scoreboard. Passed unanimously.

It was recommended that the highest seeded team in all Division 1 sectional games may choose to be the home or visiting team on the scoreboard. Passed unanimously.

E. Sectional Format

Rich Frost received emails from Green Bay area coaches questioning what would happen if the two hosts of the semi-final games met? Marcy explained there are potential problems with semi-final sites in Division 1 when the sites don't match with travel for the teams. Sectional 3 is a good example. Waunakee and Holmen are currently the semi-final sites, but its possible that both schools could still be in the tournament, but based on the bracket assignments scheduled to play at each other's field. This would create unnecessary travel expenses. John Ruffolo felt that even the championship game should go to the higher seed.

It was recommended Division 1 Sectional Semi-Final games be hosted by the higher seeded team, effective 2010 season. Passed unanimously.

The committee also discussed the possibility of the higher seed hosting the championship game in Division 1, but took no action.

F. Goodman Diamond

Nothing reported.

G. Items from Committee

1. Reseeding State Tournament

John Ruffolo presented a plan to seed the teams that qualify for the State Tournament. The head coaches of each team would conference call and hold a seed meeting similar to the regional seed meetings. Rich Frost commented that other sports didn't seed at State. Steve Krupke felt that with only four teams in Divisions 2, 3, and 4 it wouldn't really be necessary. Andy Niedzwiecki commented that getting to State is what is most important. Marcy commented that it would be difficult to find common opponents in Divisions 2, 3, and 4 to make comparisons and that no one in Division 1 would want to be labeled the 7th or 8th seed before play even begins.

John Ruffolo moved to accept the proposal, but it did not reach a vote as there was no second to the motion.

2. Warm-up at State Meet

John Ruffolo relayed a discussion with Tom Dohner (SPASH) in which it was recommended that teams be allowed more than six minutes of warm-up on Goodman Diamond. Both Brad Ceranski and Kevin Schreiner have had teams qualify recently and they agreed more time is necessary to adjust to the infield. It was recommended that each team be given 10 minutes of warm-up time prior to their scheduled State Tournament game at Goodman Diamond. Passed unanimously.

Brad asked about the possibility of the WIAA coordinating practices for State teams at local diamonds. Marcy responded that this had not been an issue in the past.

III. SOFTBALL RULES

A. 2010 NFHS Major Softball Rules Changes

Rich Frost reviewed the changes for the 2010 season.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Miscellaneous

John Ruffolo requested the WIAA change its prohibition, which currently would not allow players to work with their coach to instruct middle level players out of season during the school year. Marcy explained that this is a constitutional item which would require a vote by the membership to be changed.

Marcy shared an inquiry from an individual concerned with the number of innings/days a pitcher is allowed to throw. Andy Niedzwiecki felt that if the mechanics are good there wouldn't be a risk to the shoulder or arm. The committee agreed to ask that this topic be added to the WIAA Sports Medicine Committee's December meeting agenda. There is also a nationwide study being conducted to collect data on this issue.

B. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.