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MEMO

RE: 2026-27 Football Bulletin

Hello coaches and officials:

The first allowed date of competition is upon us; this is poised to be a great football season in our state. I'm reaching out with a few subtle reminders and clarifications

CLARIFICATIONS AND REMINDERS:

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY:
Host facility personnel are the sole authority to make decisions regarding delays to start times and when to start a contest. Once the game officials assume authority for the contest under the prescribed playing rules for the sport, decisions regarding suspension, delays, resumption, or cancellation of play shall be made in consultation between the host school administration and the game officials. Every effort should be made to complete play on the originally scheduled tournament date. MHSAA policies apply regarding suspension of competition when thunder or lightning is present and tornado policies as stated in the *MHSAA Handbook*. However, MHSAA tournament weather delay timeframes (e.g. how long to wait) do NOT follow the regular season guidelines. For example, games may be delayed by more than 90 minutes in an MHSAA tournament scenario. Common sense and discussion with participating team administrators will dictate the maximum length of a delay.

I. On threatening days, game management should consult with contest officials about steps to be followed if conditions worsen.
II. When lightning has been observed or thunder is heard, the contest must be suspended. Officials and game management may consult weather applications to make suspension, resumption, and continuation decisions using the following policies:
    a. If lightning has not been observed and thunder has not been heard, the contest must be suspended if independently validated lightning-detection devices or mobile weather applications indicate a lightning strike within 10 miles of the event location.
    b. At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event before the full 30-minute suspension has expired. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a further threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.
    c. Severe weather with precipitation (rain or snow) may make the field unplayable.
III. When a contest is suspended, the home school administration shall attempt to arrange for the security of all participants.
    a. When a contest is suspended, the home school administration shall attempt to arrange for the security of all participants. Contestants and support personnel should be moved to appropriate indoor facilities.
    b. When the contest is suspended, contestants shall not return to the playing field until lightning has been absent from the local sky and thunder has not been heard for 30 minutes unless the resumption criteria in Item II-B above have been satisfied.
    c. Spectators shall be advised of the action being taken to seek shelter. (Some hosts may be able to offer shelter to spectators but are not required to do so.)
    d. The final decision shall consider liability and conditions of facilities as well as future schedules, the need to play the contest, and finally, the quality of all other options.

GUARDIAN CAPS:

- Legal for use under NFHS guidance.
- Officials will treat Guardian Caps the same as if the helmet came off during play.
- **Ball carriers:**
  - Cap falls off or is pulled off → Ball dead immediately, must sit out next down.
  - Cap falls off due to opponent foul (facemask/hands to face) → Ball dead, but player does **not** have to sit out.
- **Non-ball carriers:**
  - Cap falls off without a foul → Ball remains live, player must not continue during the down and must sit out next down.
  - Cap pulled off by opponent foul → Ball remains live, not required to sit out.
- ***Notice:*** *If pulled intentionally to force removal, a delay-of-game penalty may be assessed, and the player may remain in*.

DRONES:

- For the purposes of this policy, the word "drone" applies to all Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. The policy applies to all MHSAA tournament contests. Local laws and policies control all regular-season contests. Drones are prohibited for all indoor tournament contests in all sports. For outdoor sports, local, state, and federal laws govern the use of drones. Drones may never be flown over spectators, athletes, or the playing surface. All drones must stay outside of the "restraining line" or the normal footprint of the playing surface. This includes never flying over bleachers, the press box, or anywhere that spectators sit or gather for a contest. The operator of the drone must be registered with the FAA and comply with local, state, and federal laws when flying the drone. Additionally, drones may never be used to scout opponents' games or practices. Facilities reserve the right to restrict the use of drones on their property. An exception to this policy may be made in specific cases for MHSAA broadcast partners, provided the management of the tournament facility permits the use of drones.

UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT:

- **Knee Pads:** Must be worn over the knee, unaltered, ≥½ inch thick (or ⅜ inch if shock absorbing).
- **Pants:** Must fully cover knees, include thigh guards, knee pads, butt pads, including when knee braces are **Other Reminders:**
  - Mouthguards are required, but do not need to be attached to the facemask.
  - Visors must be 100% clear (no tinted exceptions).
  - Shaded eyewear(goggles) permitted under helmet.
  - Legal jersey number range is 0–99.
  - Jerseys may only include player name, mascot, or school name (no slogans/acronyms).
- **How this will be handled:**
  - Identify issues during pregame. (Notify HC during pregame coaches meeting)
  - Once the game starts: Game officials will call an official TO.
    - First Instance: Warning (send the player out).
    - Second Instance: 5-yard DOG penalty (send the player out).
    - All other Subsequent Instances: 15-yard, UNS penalty assessed to the HC (send the player out).
  - Note: A charged team TO cannot be used to allow a player to remain in the game.

GAME LIMITS: REMINDER

- MHSAA regulations prohibit students from participating on two football teams on the same day of competition. EXAMPLE: A student would not be able to play in the Freshman and Junior Varsity football games on the same day. Please reach out to the MHSAA office if you need any further information.

Q-COLLARS:

- Are permissible by NFHS and MHSAA Rules.

VISUAL 40/25 SECOND PLAY CLOCKS:

- If a school is using a visual play clock, **the school is responsible** for providing a play clock operator. Game officials are **NOT** allowed to operate the play clock while also officiating the football game. Asking game officials to operate the play clock during the game is a significant burden that diverts their attention from their regular officiating duties.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the health, safety, and positive experience of student-athletes across Michigan.

Sincerely,

Will McKoy, CAA
Assistant Director
Michigan High School Athletic Association