



THE OFFICIAL WORD

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A Publication of the Montana Officials' Association

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EXAM DATES SET

Exams for basketball and wrestling will be administered on December 3, 2007. Please remember that your request for upgrade form must be in the MOA office by November 14, 2007 to be considered. This form is available on our website (www.mhsa.org), or can be faxed or emailed at your request. As a reminder, you must also test as a penalty of paying late dues, if you wish to reinstate, or if you wish to become a new official.

WINTER RULES CLINICS ONLINE

The MHSA/MOA rules clinics are again being provided in an online format. A detailed information sheet explaining the procedure for accessing these clinics is included with this newsletter. If you have any questions, please contact the MHSA office. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CLINICS MUST BE VIEWED BY NOVEMBER 30TH IN ORDER TO SATISFY YOUR 2007-08 RULES CLINIC REQUIREMENT.** *We strongly suggest you print the verification page and keep a copy as proof of your clinic attendance.*

REPORTING EJECTIONS

Officials in all sports must report ejections of coaches or students in writing to the MOA office within 48 hours of the incident. We thank those officials who have carried out their responsibilities thus far. If we do not receive the reports in the appropriate time frame, it becomes difficult to send the report to schools in a timely fashion. Note that reports which are continuously delayed are in violation of MOA rules, so please submit them within 48 hours. They can be faxed to 406-442-8250 or emailed to bmichelotti@mhsa.org.

EJECTION PROCESS & PROCEDURE

As is mentioned in rules' clinics, and because of some situations that occurred during fall sports this season, it is important, in most situations, to talk briefly about ejecting a participant with the other official or with other members of the crew. Sometimes this allows time to reflect on the situation and gather other viewpoints if appropriate. It is vital to get the correct number, and name if possible, of the player, and to record that number.

After you eject a participant (coach or player) use the proper reporting process per your sport's rules and execute the ejection. Remember to inform the coach whether or not the ejection was for unsporting conduct. Make sure you understand who can stay at the premises and those who cannot. If a spectator must be ejected from the premises, the official must first contact the contest administrator and **the administrator** must remove the spectator from the premises. Use law enforcement if appropriate and available.

It is never acceptable for the contest official, after a contest is finished, to review a tape or film of a game or get together post game and change or overrule an ejection after it is issued. The specific sport rules don't allow this and MHSA policy does not allow officials to do this. It is also wise not to discuss your ejection with school personnel, parents or the media. Simply use the proper procedure in reporting and enforcing the ejection, report the ejection to the MHSA within 48 hours and direct any questions to the MHSA or your local regional director after the incident. Refrain from commentary on the MHSA ejection rule and how it applies to students or coaches or adding your opinion regarding the conduct that was displayed. We need only the simple facts of the ejection and a brief explanation of the incident.

FOOTBALL RUNNING CLOCK RULES

In the past, we have heard many complaints from officials around the State of Montana on how the running clock, also known as the mercy rule, was different for each classification. This made the administration of this rule very difficult and even veteran officials were unsure how and when to start and stop the clock. Because of this, the MHSA/MOA has made a standard point rule (mercy rule) that is consistent for Class A, B, and C (six and eight player) football. As you know, Class AA does not have a point rule. The MHSA Executive Board has clarified one more situation where the clock will continue to run. When a first down is declared, the clock will not be stopped to move the chains. The rule reads like this:

In the second half of any Class A, Class B or Class C (8-player and 6-player) football game, any time the score differential reaches 35 points or more, the clock will not be stopped when:

- The ball goes out-of-bounds.

- A forward pass is incomplete.
- A score occurs (unless it reduces the point spread to less than 35 points).
- A fair catch is made or awarded.
- A touchback occurs
- **A first down is declared**

If the score differential falls below 35 points, normal timing procedures will be utilized. The clock will continue to be stopped on all other situations as specified by National Federation rule 3.4.4.

FORWARD HANDLING AND OTHER SIX-PLAYER SITUATIONS

It has recently come to our attention that there are two situations that some officials may be enforcing incorrectly in Montana. Tom Oberweiser, a veteran football official from the Billings pool has brought these situations to our attention, and has put together some great explanations of the correct ruling in these circumstances. Please review the following information and case plays submitted by Tom and if you have any questions, please give Brian Michelotti a call at the MHSA office.

First Situation: Quarterback takes a direct snap from the snapper and hands the ball forward to the left guard who, at the snap, was lined up adjacent to the snapper on the end of the line. At the time of the forward handing the left guard is not one-yard in the backfield and did not turn and face his goal line before taking the forward handoff.

Ruling: Illegal forward handing. Five yard penalty – Basic Spot enforcement, plus loss of down.

** In six-player football there is a specific rule dealing with this particular situation.

Rule 7: Ball may be handed in any direction during a kickoff down and during a scrimmage down AFTER a direct handoff, clear pass, a legal forward pass or kick has been made.

Some confusion has arisen because of the normal rule regarding forward handing which allows a player to take a forward handoff if he was lined up on the end of the line at the snap and the handing is in the backfield. However the handing is a foul if it is to a lineman adjacent to the snapper unless it is in conformance with the rule cited below:

Rule 7-3 Art. 2... No player may hand the ball forward except during a scrimmage down before a change of possession, provided both players are in or behind the neutral zone and it is to:

- a. A lineman who has clearly faced his goal line by

moving both feet in a half-turn and is at least 1 yard behind his line when he receives the ball.

- b. To a back or a teammate who, at the snap, was on an end of his line and was not the snapper nor adjacent to the snapper.

Since there is a specific rule in six-player football regarding forward handing, the rule presumably takes precedence. In addition, the requirements of 7-3-2 b are not being met in the situation above. The word “and” in section “b” requires that the player receiving a forward handoff be a back or on the end of the line at the snap, AND not the snapper nor adjacent to the snapper.

Second Situation: In six-player football it is a foul if the ball is advanced beyond the line of scrimmage before a clear pass or handoff has occurred. Some pools are killing the play when this happens instead of enforcing it as a live ball foul. This is a live ball foul and the defense has the option of declining the penalty.

Situation: A) On 4th down, QB A12 muffs the snap and picks up the ball and runs four yards beyond the line of scrimmage but does not make the line to gain, or B) fumbles the ball and team B recovers..

Ruling: In either case, Team B will decline the penalty and will take over possession.

Thanks Tom, for your great work in bringing this to our attention. Once again, if you have any questions about these two situations, or any other football related questions, please call Brian at the MHSA office.

FALL RULES CLINIC SUMMARY

The attendance for football, soccer and wrestling rules clinics was as follows:

<u>FOOTBALL:</u>	
Total	491
Registered Officials	266
Prospective Officials	17
Coaches	190
Administrators	18

<u>VOLLEYBALL</u>	
Total	539
Registered Officials	285
Prospective Officials	26
Coaches	222
Administrators	6

SOCCKER:

Total	183
Registered Officials	111
Prospective Officials	16
Coaches	56

AIM HIGHER – BUY POWERADE AND COKE

Coca-Cola Bottling companies in Montana help fund the MHSAA AIM Higher program that provides workshops regarding sportsmanship, prevention of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among students, leadership mentoring and hazing awareness. Thus, we encourage you to buy Coke products and especially POWERADE because the program receives a rebate on every case of Powerade sold in our state. This rebate goes to fund the program. Many thanks to Coke and Powerade.

VOLLEYBALL SITUATIONS

Situation 1: After the whistle/signal to serve, Team A's RB drops the ball in an attempt to get a re-serve. As soon as the whistle sounds and the official signals re-serve, the libero replaces a back-row player. The official should (a) allow the replacement or (b) whistle and signal unnecessary delay (c) whistle and signal illegal alignment. RULING: (a) and (b) Incorrect procedure (c) correct procedure. COMMENT: The libero may not replace a back-row player during a re-serve. (8-1-5)

Situation 2: The libero serves the first point, the coach replaces the libero with the player the libero replaced, to serve. Ruling: Legal. Comment: A replacement may be made for the right back position during the term of service.

Situation 3: Team R's No. 8 replaces the libero. After the contact of the serve, the referee spots a ball from another court on the floor and whistles for a replay. The libero then replaces No. 3. RULING: Legal. COMMENT: Even though no points were scored, the ball was served and a rally has taken place. Replacements are allowed. (8-1-5)

Situation 4: Player #8 for Team S is rotating to the right back to serve. The coach for Team S requests a substitution, #10 for #8. Player #10 serves, and Team S loses the rally. The libero for Team S then replaces player #10 and plays the back-row positions. When the libero rotates to the front row, (a) player #8 replaces the libero; (b) player #10 replaces the libero; (c) player #10 replaces the libero, moves to the substitution zone while player #8 leaves the bench area, enters the substitution zone and substitutes for player #10. RULING: (a) Incorrect procedure; (b) and (c) correct procedures. COMMENT: The libero must be replaced by the player whom the libero

originally replaced. (10-4-1b) If an incorrect player replaces the libero, delay of game is assessed if the error is discovered by the officials before the next whistle/signal for serve. If the incorrect player is on the court when the whistle/signal for serve occurs, illegal alignment results.

Situation 5: The Team S libero is on the bench and has not served in this game. Before the referee whistles/signals for serve and while player #5 is in the service area, the coach instructs the libero to serve for #5. The libero and #5 exchange positions at the end of the court. Neither player crosses the sideline between the attack line and the endline. The officials whistle/signal delay of game. RULING: Correct procedure. COMMENTS: The players involved in a libero replacement must enter and exit the court over the sideline between the attack line and the endline so that the assistant scorer (libero tracker) is able to observe and record all libero replacements accurately so the libero tracking sheet reflects the players actually on the court at all times.

BASKETBALL UPDATE

Based on the survey results from basketball pools, the MOA Regional Directors have approved the use of the black and white shirt or the gray shirt with black pin stripes for the 2007-08 basketball season. Remember that for officials working any MHSAA event, each member of the officiating crew must wear the same shirt, which must also have an MOA patch with a white background and black lettering.

SOCCKER SEASON CONCLUDES IN OCTOBER

This year's state soccer finals for Classes AA and A will be held this month. Specific information is listed by classification below:

Class A Playoff Structure

- October 8-13 – First Round
- October 15-20 – Semi Final Round
- October 25-27 – Championship Games
- Higher seeded teams will host

Class AA

- October 25-27, 2007
- Playoffs held October 15-20
- Twelve games per gender. Requires 18-20 officials.
- Siebel (Airport) Fields – Helena

Officials who are eligible for post season assignments were sent a form requesting input on their availability. If you did not receive a form and you are a certified or master soccer official, please contact the MOA office. If you did receive a form but did not complete it, please take a moment to do

so. This information is extremely helpful in filling post season playoff and tournament assignments.

“HITTING THE MARK”

From all reports we have been experiencing a very successful fall sports season to date. Ejections are down this year compared to this same time last year and the weather has cooperated for most events (except a few lightning delays early in the football season and the State AA golf which had to be postponed for a few days because of inclement weather).

Football, volleyball and soccer playoffs are just around the corner and 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 Scott McDonald (volleyball) to explain the selection procedure for the particular sport they are responsible.

Volleyball - The goal of the selection process for volleyball 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 288-289 of the 2007-2008 MHSA Handbook: (1) coaches' input (ballots), (2) individual officials' pool ranking, and (3) MOA office input.

- (1) Coaches' input (ballots): Coaches of their particular activity 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 and certified 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.

For volleyball, officials are prohibited from working more than two MHSA tournaments below the state level each year, 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 volleyball 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 are no coaches' ballots, 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 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 MHSA/MOA office.

Assignments for post season play will begin soon. If Scott, 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 MHSA/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 regarding the process of selecting officials or any questions specific to you regarding assignments, please contact the appropriate staff member.

Have a great remainder of your fall sports seasons and if we can be of any assistance please contact your MOA office.

ENCLOSURES:

Online Rules Clinic Instruction Sheet
MOA Handbook
MOA Pocket Calendar
NFHS Membership Card

2007-08 NFHS Rules Revisions:

Basketball
Wrestling

Basketball Books

Rules Book, Case Book and Officials' Manual
Basketball Preseason Guide
Basketball 3 Person Mechanics Preseason Guide

Wrestling Books

Rules Book and Case Book
Wrestling Preseason Guide