**WMSOA Pre-Season Meeting Minutes – FALL 2013**

Saturday, August 3, 2013 Grandville High School

(Make-up meeting covering the same agenda held at Grand Rapids Christian High School – Monday, August 12)

Doug Turkstra, WMSOA President, opened the fall pre-season meeting at 9:20 am, following the NISOA Fitness Test run at the Grandville HS track, which consisted of a 12-minute run for distance, the NISOA Pro-40 (Square) test, and the AR-50 test. Between the end of the fitness test and the opening of the meeting, donuts, snacks, and beverages were available; and members who had ordered uniform and equipment items were able to pay for them and pick them up.

Doug welcomed everyone in attendance to the HS portion of the meeting, thanked Tom Walters for arranging the use of the Grandville facilities for us, and reminded everyone to clean up after the meeting so we can maintain our good relationship with Grandville and come back again in the future. He introduced about 10 new members of WMSOA and recognized our members in attendance who had been assigned to MHSAA Regional, Semi-Final, and Final game in the girls’ tournament last spring.

Greg Pilbeam introduced guest speaker, Jim Haskins, Commissioner of the OK Conference, the largest athletic conference in Michigan with 49 member schools out of the 69 schools for whom we currently assign.

Jim shared appreciation for the open communication the conference has with our association. He indicated that Kent City will be leaving the conference soon, but that Fruitport and Spring Lake have applied for future membership.

Jim pointed out that there have been many recent AD and administrator changes in the schools, taking experienced people out of these positions and making it harder to deal with issues at times because the new replacements are not always aware of certain things that need to be done. If you experience issues with the administration of your soccer games, let Greg know so he can contact the conference to get them addressed.

The OK Conference is working with 96.1 ESPN Radio to broadcast updates of conference sports activities on Monday, Thursday, and Friday nights with such things as a “tailgate of the week” or a “game of the week” and general recaps. This is to pick up for the loss of HS sports coverage in the local newspapers, as they shrink their reporting and distribution. The conference is also looking to participate in or help with some special fund-raising programs and promotions like those many schools are now offering.

Jim referred to the new MHSAA Heat Index Policy (details available to view or download on MHSAA website) that schools must administer. Be aware of the policy and prepared to suspend or stop games when heat/humidity conditions make it necessary to protect the players and yourselves.

He also spoke about the Concussion Protocol for players receiving blows to the head, which is an ongoing concern. In particular, if BOTH teams have a certified trainer/medical professional at the game, the decision on the player’s ability to return to the game is made by his team’s trainer/medical professional. If only ONE team has a trainer/medical professional in attendance, that individual is responsible for return to competition decisions for all players from each team.

Red cards and any other significant safety or security issues should be reported to Greg as soon after the game as possible so he can let Jim know to start the communication process with the schools about them. Do not tolerate any form of racial, ethnic, religious, or other objectionable slurs. These should automatically result in red cards, and they are taken very seriously.

Mark Lundvick shared a printed handout about new NFHS and MHSAA rule changes. A copy of the handout will be attached to the email to members sharing the meeting minutes. PLEASE PRINT OUT AND STUDY THE RULE CHANGES. Several of them make significant changes to the way HS games are to be officiated in Michigan:

1. No more 10-minute sit out for Yellow Card. Player MUST leave, but can come back at next substitution opportunity.
2. 2nd Yellow is a Red Card. Player is disqualified and team MUST PLAY SHORT.
3. UNSUCCESSFUL attempt by foul or handling to deny obvious goal scoring opportunity is now Yellow Card.

Please make sure you know all of the changes that are detailed on the handout.

The second page of the handout covers important points about Referee Safety relative to your Pre-Game, In-Game, and Post-Game preparation and activity. Please be aware of these points. Referee assault is an ongoing problem in many sports.

Mark also reminded us that we should not use social media to discuss or comment on our soccer activity and to avoid any appearance of favoring a particular school or coach by our actions before, during, or after a match.

Greg shared the assignors’ report, indicating Matt Koekkoek will replace Matt Carlson as assignor for many of the Lakeshore-area schools. Matt Carlson’s work has been greatly appreciated, but personal obligations make it necessary for him to turn this responsibility over at this time.

Please remember to set up your date and time “blocks” in Arbiter for when you are not able to work, and remember to update them any time you know your availability needs to change. Don’t put yourself in the position of having to decline games and avoid turning back games you have already accepted except in emergency or otherwise unavoidable situations. Check Arbiter daily during the season to make sure you know what your upcoming assignments are and that they have not changed.

Greg shared a statistic from the NASO Summit in Grand Rapids in late July that 80% of new officials quit within 3 years, most of them because of problems caused coaches and spectators. If you encounter this, DEAL WITH IT. Issue cards to coaches and get game administrators to handle disruptive spectators. Help out the crew that will be on the next game.

Work with our new officials when you see them on your games. Many will be able to benefit from your experience. Overall, Michigan is down more than 2000 registered officials in the last two years. We need to retain those we have and recruit more to replace those who decide to leave.

Call schools ahead of your games to make sure the site and time are what you expect. Then contact your partners to make sure you are all on the same page. Carry the new 2013-14 MHSAA Soccer Rules Supplement (available on MHSAA website) and the Overtime Procedures chart (available on WMSOA website) with you to your games so you are prepared for the situations they cover.

Arbiter reports for Greg should include brief but specific information about cards, injuries, and safety/security issues. Please call Greg and submit your reports about these things as soon as possible after your games.

Duncan Purvis reported regarding the NASO “Assigning” Summit that all assignors in all sports have the same issues with turn-backs and declined assignments. Keep your schedule up to date and check often for new games and changes.

The game is changing. Kids are more skilled at earlier ages, and they are also emulating what they see on TV – a faster game with more tactical fouls. Be ready to recognize what teams and players are doing in the game. Deal with what needs your attention, but also be ready to subtly acknowledge when players do something well.

If you want to be considered for MHSAA tournament games, you must complete the on-line rules meeting, submit your game schedule, and take the on-line tournament rules test. This does not guarantee you will receive assignments, but not meeting these requirements means you are not approved for them.

Use common sense when dealing with equipment issues like shin guards or tape on the socks. Michigan is NOT enforcing the new NFHS uniform rules until fall of 2014.

WMSOA is working on revisions to our association’s by-laws. These will be sent out in the fall for your consideration prior to our Annual General Meeting in December, when we will vote on whether to accept them.

This concluded the HS portion of the meeting, and there was a short break prior to starting again for the NISOA meeting at 10:55am.

The NISOA meeting began with thanks to everyone for their efforts to meet the fitness test requirements and for getting ready for the upcoming season. The MIAA was not able to send a representative to speak with us, but they did send their appreciation for what we do for the games.

MIAA will continue to do site reviews to see how game administration and support for the officials is being handled, and WMSOA will continue its program of having our own observers at some college games, as well as some HS games.

MIAA gets a “card” count and is ready to deal with any misconduct issues in a manner appropriate to the incidents.

Enforce the rules for those things that need attention. You have the backing of the schools, of Kim Vieira, and of WMSOA. Keep the games safe.

Medical personnel should be at all college games, and the person’s name should be included on the game report to confirm their attendance.

Just as in HS, stay off of social media with regard to your soccer activities, comments, and opinions about the college game.

Game reports should be brief but accurate, and get them in as quickly as possible. Include any safety or abuse issues in your reports. Be sure to contact your assignor and the appropriate authority with any information required regarding cards, fighting, or other significant concerns. Greg or Keith Miller will contact you if more information is needed.

Keith mentioned that there are NO specific rule changes for college soccer this year, but there are some points of emphasis for us to consider. We should be fair, unbiased, and neutral in our approach to the game. We should always act in a controlled and professional manner and avoid be adversarial. If you are injured and not able to properly do your job, consider whether you really should be working the game. If you cannot meet your responsibilities, contact your assignor as soon as possible to request a replacement.

Review the rules about “Fighting” and make sure that you inform the player, the coach, and the scorekeeper if that is the reason for the ejection of a player. Also be certain that “fighting” is indicated on the game report for any such ejections.

Watch the players at all times. Discuss in your pre-game who will write first when recording goals, cards, etc. so action between players on the field is missed. The suggested order for writing to your book is “Trail AR, Lead AR, Center” so the other two can keep your eyes on things.

The deadline for taking the on-line NCAA rules test on the NCAA Soccer Central Hub in Arbiter is August 19. You MUST take this open-book test and score at least a 90% grade to pass to be considered for post-season NCAA tournament games. You can take the test a maximum of two times. Note that more than 25% of those who have taken the test so far have failed it and are not eligible for the post-season.

The meeting concluded shortly after 12:00 Noon.

Attendance at the meeting: 74 signed in prior to the HS meeting on 08/03, with a total of 83 signed in that day. An additional 33 people attended the make-up meeting on 08/12.

Thanks to all who attended these meetings. The turnout was very good and much appreciated. We look forward to the coming season and to seeing many of you on the fields. Have a great fall season.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Olsen / WMSOA Secretary