WMSOA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – DECEMBER 1, 2013 – 9:00AM

Grandville High School

WMSOA President Doug Turkstra called the WMSOA Annual General Meeting to order at 9:00AM and welcomed everyone in attendance. Seventy-five people signed in. Most members had arrived earlier to pay annual WMSOA and/or NISOA dues and appropriate game fees and other charges, as well as to partake of the donuts, bagels, and drinks provided for the meeting. Doug thanked the new members who have joined WMSOA over the past year and all members for their flexibility with game assignment changes. He also asked the association to recognize those members who officiated regional tournament games and beyond, including two members who worked in MHSAA championship games.

**Secretary’s Report** - Larry Olsen

Larry stated that he sent out 11 email communications to members this year. These messages included information about Association meetings and attachments with copies of meeting minutes, overtime procedures for the high school conferences for which WMSOA assigns, various MHSAA rules and policy documents, and other items of general interest. It was also noted that our primary assignor, Greg Pilbeam, sent a number of other messages with reminders about game schedule and Arbiter issues and reminders about meetings.

**Treasurer’s Report** - Bob Powers

At this time the Association has a bank balance of $14,127.64, with revenue coming in over the past year of $30,753 and expenses of $21,930. The significant difference between these last two figures resulted from late billing of assigning fees to schools for 2011, so that most of that revenue actually came in during 2012. The Association is in good financial position and has the opportunity to look into putting more money toward referee training activities, such as the assistant referee video produced this year, and into equipment and technology that will let us do more of this sort of thing.

**Assignors’ Report**

Greg Pilbeam gave the over-all Assignors’ report, repeating their thanks to the members for helping to cover all the games in our area, especially considering that more than 275 changes, additions, or adjustments were made to game schedules during the year. Greg, Bill Wagner, and Matt Carlson assigned for 1508 high games, involving 3380 positions, and Greg also assigned 305 college games, involving 915 positions. The number of games and number of changes point to the need for everyone to update your schedule in Arbiter regularly, blocking out those times when you are not available, which helps avoid time-wasting turn-backs. Be sure your personal information is current so assignors, partners, and schools can contact you easily if there is a need to do so.

Greg mentioned that we have applications in hand from some potential new referees that we will begin to process, which we hope will allow us to bring in some additional new members. He also discussed MHSAA’s plans to move forward with Arbiter Game for all high school assigning, including the state tournaments. Local assignments will still be made by WMSOA, but through a new MHSAA account. With this change, it will be necessary for officials to be registered with MHSAA before any games can be assigned; and taking the on-line “Rules” test will be required for consideration for tournament assignments.

Officials who receive a “5” rating (the lowest possible) should note that they must be sent a letter detailing the reasons for it. You may appeal any such rating, but in particular one for which you are not notified. We have had several instances where officials rated “5” have had those ratings overturned and removed from their records. You may check your rating in the “Officials” section of the MHSAA website.

There were over 50 red cards and 250 yellow cards in high school games this year. 10 of the red cards were issued to one school, and there was no dispute of those cards by the coach. Many of the cards were issued early in the season, with the frequency decreasing as the season progressed.

RefPay was only used by three schools this year, which was well below the number anticipated. It is likely, however, that more schools will go to it as they figure out how to use it. If you do not have a RefPay account, please consider opening one so schools using the system can pay you. Be careful in setting your personal preferences in the system to avoid any unnecessary fees, such as those charged for having payments automatically transferred from RefPay into a personal account.

Be aware of rule differences between high school, college, and USSF; and apply the rules correctly. We have had several cases where HS officials have not issued deserved yellow cards because of concern about the “10 minute” rule at the end of the game. If a card is warranted, issue it. Also be sure that you are wearing the proper uniform, in good condition, for whatever game (HS or college) you are doing.

Keith Miller spoke about ratings from college coaches. Be very careful about what you say and who can hear you when discussing your games, either before or at half-time or after, and in how you conduct yourself at the games and after. Physical fitness is highly important in college games. If you ever feel you are not physically ready to handle any particular game, contact your assignor to see if someone can take your place. It was also indicated that there 10 red cards in collegiate games this fall, and that there were no protested games in the MIAA, 2 protested games in the WHAC, and 1 in the GLIAC.

NISOA officials are now required to submit a “background check” form. Keith has the forms available if you were not able to attend the AGM, or you may find it on the “Forms” page of the NISOA.com website as the Member Re-registration Statement (Nov 2012). Complete the form and send it to Keith as soon as possible. You cannot be properly registered with NISOA without it. NISOA officials in WMSOA will also be required to have a headset for radio communication during games. The MIAA is already using the radio system, and the WHAC is seriously considering adding it for their games.

We are all under more scrutiny than ever and cameras are now everywhere. You may be filmed at any game. Assignors are now getting more questions about referee decisions and receiving more videos to review. If you think there are issues with or there may be complaints or protests about your performance, contact you assignor as soon as possible after the game to give him the details. It is highly important that we all conduct ourselves in a professional manner at all times, apply the rules of the game correctly, and do our jobs to the very best of our abilities.

**Members in Good Standing**

Bill Wagner reports that we currently have 140 WMSOA members in good standing with MHSAA, which requires that one have been a member of our association for one year and to have attended 50% of our association meetings. Exceptions are still allowed if you are unable to attend a meeting because you are officiating a game. You may also be credited with attendance if you attend training meetings of other local associations, NISOA chapters, or USSF training sessions. Members are reminded to regularly check their “approved” status in the Officials area of the MHSAA website, especially after your annual recertification, and to let Bill or a board member know if you find you are not properly listed.

**Ethics Committee**

Vice-president Mark Lundvick reported that we have had no significant ethics issues this year, and then he recapped the areas WMSOA considers when presented with possible ethics concerns:

1. Cases of unprofessional conduct or inappropriate behavior, actions, or communications between officials and players, coaches, schools, spectators, or other officials. You should report anything of this nature to Mark, to your assignor, or to any board member as soon as possible.
2. Improper application of “concussion” protocols for high school or college games.
3. Assignment issues – be straight with your assignors, don’t misrepresent yourself as to your availability or ability to work particular games. Communicate with the assignor if an issue comes up that makes it necessary for you to turn back a game, especially if that is the opportunity to take a “better” game. Failing to honor your commitments is a serious matter.
4. Misuse of social media – We have a WMSOA policy against using social media to comment about or discuss anything related to our officiating of games or about the players, coaches, schools, or spectators involved in them. The various “Ethics Codes” for the organizations we represent all have directions about it. Our behavior should always be such that it cannot be called into question. Inappropriate conduct on social media is a potential ethical issue.
5. Conflict of interest – Please let assignors know if you have a potential conflict relative to a school, coach, or player(s). Close relationships can at least give the appearance of a conflict, so don’t put yourself in position for one. It may save you a major problem if a significant issue comes up in a game you are working.

See also the NFHS and NCAA codes of ethics in each of their rule books.

**President’s Report**

Doug reported that NASO (National Association of Sports Officials) is holding its annual “Summit” in Grand Rapids next summer at DeVos Place. The meeting will be held July 28-30 and will include talks and seminars featuring high-level officials from all the major sports; and on July 27 the MHSAA is hosting an “Officiate Michigan” day specifically designed to serve Michigan referees. Cost for the “Michigan” day will be about $35, and the full Summit cost runs upwards of $400.

Doug reminded members that our By-Laws provide for several committees: the Executive Committee, comprised of the board; the Rules and Interpretations Committee, the Ethics Committee, and the Assignments Committee, as well as authorizing others when necessary to deal with other Association concerns. The board will call for a vote later on establishing a special committed to review our By-Laws (last done in 2008) to see if there are ways to update them and improve our association’s ability to serve the members.

The Assistant Referee video we produced was well received by those who saw it at the Fall Cracker Barrel meeting. We are working on adding sound to it and will try to make it available to everyone as soon as possible. We are also considering purchasing new video equipment so that we can do more of these things and be better able to present them at training sessions.

Doug stated that as game officials, we should have little tolerance for disrespect shown to us by players, coaches, and spectators. Deal with any issues in this area in a professional manner and according to the rules and/or protocols of the competition. Remember that eyes and cameras are probably watching everything that you do.

Members were asked to let the board know about any potential new officials. Candidates should go to the WMSOA website and complete the New Officials Form on the “Join” tab and send it to Greg Pilbeam or any board member.

A new version of our WMSOA warm-up jacket will soon be available. Cost will probably be about $30-35, with some of the actual cost being covered by the Association. Final details will be shared with members whenever they are set.

**Board Elections**

Mark Lundvick conducted the elections for the open board positions. Doug Turkstra was on the initial ballot unopposed for the position of President, as was Bob Powers for the position of Treasurer. After opening the process to nominations from the floor, or which there were none, Doug and Bob were re-elected to their current positions by acclamation. Eight candidates were on the ballot for the three Member-at-Large positions, and no further nominations came from the floor. After each gave a brief statement, either in person or by proxy, about their interest in the position Matt Koekkoek and Duncan Purvis were re-elected for their second one-year terms on the first ballot; and in a run-off to settle a tie for the third position, Paul Holwerda was elected to fill that spot.

**New Business**

Doug repeated the board’s interest in setting up a committee to review our Association By-Laws. It was moved, seconded, and approved to do so. The board will do this at its next meeting in January 2013. Suggestions for changes are welcomed and will be reviewed by the committee for possible inclusion with its recommendations to the board. Any proposed changes agreed to by the board will be presented to the membership for approval at the 2013 AGM.

Greg reported that he and John Crumb continue to meet two times a year with the OK Conference to review issues and get an update on any concerns. Most of the feedback on officials’ performances has been positive. There are some questions within the OK at this time on what will happen with the former City League schools and their future direction relative to soccer. It was announced that Grand River Prep will be added to the list of schools for which WMSOA assigns games next year. It was also mentioned that we received positive feedback for our work on the high school and MIAA tournaments.

Whenever you have the opportunity to work with our younger and/or newer officials, be sure to be supportive of them and encourage them to attend our meetings to take advantage of the information and training that is available. It will help strengthen our association and let us put better officials on our games.

Tom Walters reported on his work with referee and site reviews and said that he was very pleased with what he saw. He also suggested using the spring girls’ season, when the pace of the games is typically not as fast and intense, as an opportunity to work on improving positioning, foul recognition, and dealing with transition play in preparation for next fall. Use “down” time when the ball is out of play to move to where you need to be next. Other suggestions:

1. Whistle – Point – Signal…Get what is most important done first.
2. Use you whistle effectively. Vary the tone and intensity to match the situation.
3. Keep the game under control. You are in charge – Act like it.
4. Don’t take dissent or disrespect from coaches or players. Understand the “emotional” moment, but deal with anything more.
5. Look professional. Arrive in a proper warm-up or uniform and show up on time.
6. Introduce yourself to both coaches and give them equal attention before the game.
7. Talk to the player when appropriate during the game, either to admonish or warn, or to compliment.
8. After carding a player in HS, get about 10 yards from the touchline and let both coaches know the reason. Just give the necessary information. Don’t get into a conversation or a debate about your decision.
9. Anyone who would like a game observed should contact Tom so he can get one of your games on his list.
10. HAVE FUN. If you are not enjoying yourself, the chances are good that the players and coaches aren’t either.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Olsen / WMSOA Secretary