

NMAA Baseball Sports Specific Committee Meeting
December 12th, 2014
2:30 P.M. – NMAA Office



Agenda

A. Welcome/Introductory Comments

B. Current Issues at Hand

1. Future State Tournament
 - a. Format
 - b. Seeding/Selection (review new criteria for 2015-16 seasons)
2. Contact Time (out of season coaching during the school year)
3. Wood Bats
4. Pitching Restrictions
5. Umpires Training/Clinics

C. Other Issues from Committee Members

D. Final Comments

E. Adjournment

Baseball Sports Specific Committee Meeting
Notes for December 12, 2014
2:30 PM – NMAA Office

The baseball sports specific committee met on Friday, December 12, 2014 at the NMAA Office in Albuquerque. Those present as members of the committee were as follows: Dusty Young, NMAA; Greg Haston, Hobbs HS A.D; Kenny, Barreras, APS A.D.; James Weems, Capitan HS, At Large; David Naylor, East Mountain HS, At Large; Artie Sanchez, Cobre HS, 3A; Claudie Thompson, Silver HS, 4A; Mike McGaha, Piedra Vista HS, 5A; Gil Padilla, Las Cruces HS, 6A; John Brusuelas, NMOA Umpire.

1. Mr. Young started the meeting by bringing up the potential state tournament format changes that were discussed during the May meeting. He stated that although the NMAA staff was open to the idea of a double elimination format, more research on the matter had to be done and thus adjustments wouldn't be made until the 2016 season at the very earliest. Facility issues must be considered first along with budgetary concerns from this drastic of a format change where many more games would be played. Coach McGaha explained a key to the facility issue would be having Rio Rancho, Cleveland, UNM, and Isotopes all available at the same time for multiple games on multiple days because of lights being needed. This would prove to be difficult because of the schedules for the college and professional facilities. More discussion brought up the idea that extending the spring season one week would be a huge help to the possible use of a double elimination format as the early rounds could be held on one weekend with the later rounds the next. Otherwise, utilizing a double elimination format with today's states would extend the tournament one more day thus making kids miss even more school – which is of course not a positive thing. Mr. Young finished the discussion by stating that he was confident the NMAA could make things work logistically, but his biggest concern was with pitching and young arms being taxed with a double elimination format. He stated that there is at least one kid per team that reached the final in each state tournament that hits the 12 inning limit, and his fear would be that this would now turn in to 2 or 3 kids per team that were now throwing this much. He then stated that the idea would be sent out to the membership during the spring season for a larger sample of where the baseball community would like to go moving forward.

Mr. Young then explained that there were some minor changes to the seeding and selection criteria for 2015-2016. After reviewing the changes, Coach McGaha stated that the NMAA has done a great job and looking at criteria points one by one makes it extremely objective and easy to understand. Mr. Haston seconded this and felt that it was very easy to tell where a school stands at the end of the year because all points are transparent with the exception of coaches input. This was the only concern from the committee because some still feel that coaches take advantage of this particular part of seeding/selection by lobbying for their team, district, region, etc. and this causes some subjectivity in a process that is supposed to be completely objecting. Mr. Young explained that for the most part, he has seen that coaches do a great job in reporting accurate data. Although seeding/selection seems to be in a good place, especially in the sport of baseball, it is an issue that the NMAA staff will continue to review on an annual basis.

2. Mr. Young then brought up an agenda item that was brought up by several committee members and various coaches – out of season coaching during the school year and

contact time with athletes. Coach McGaha explained that this was a huge issue for him, and not really out of season coaching during all offseason months but more so during winter break. He felt that a great injustice is being done to baseball programs because they are one of only a handful of the 13 NMAA sports that must have mandatory down time right before the start of their season. The argument is more towards strength and conditioning where athletes work hard during their offseason programs and then cannot take part in up to three weeks of workouts because of the fact that school is not in session and finals weeks sometimes have mandatory dead time as implemented by the school. Mr. Barreras brought up the fact that although it may seem like a baseball issue only, it does affect other spring sports like softball, golf, tennis, and Track, along with even fall programs like football. Although the committee is very adamant that changes should be made to the winter break regulations, they do understand that it is a more global issue that administrators must consider from many angles, and thus more discussion must take place before a decision can be made on what is best for the membership.

Contact time was also discussed as it relates to activities outside of practice and strength/conditioning workouts. The NMAA is currently looking at the 7.5 hour rule out of season during the school year and how things like fundraisers, social activities, and community service projects should be looked at. The committee felt that these activities should in no way be counted towards the 7.5 hours because they are for the good of their athletes and programs. Mr. Young explained that this was another issue that the NMAA would be collecting feedback on over the next few months as potential changes and/or clarifications would probably be made to the current rule to do what is best for all.

3. Mr. Young again mentioned wood bats and that the current bylaw mandating their use would be up at the end of the 2016 season. The committee was asked how the baseball community felt about this issue and the overwhelming response was again that wood bats were great for the game and the state. It was argued that more kids can now play the game because the gap between the average and below average baseball player was narrowed significantly. It was also stated that even more players can now pitch and schools are thus allowed to take better care of arms throughout a season. Performance was also discussed and most of the group felt that there is not much difference between the metal BBCOR and wood bats, and that the wood bats are actually better because it truly teaches an athlete how to properly hit. A very interesting point brought up was that the use of wood bats has actually caused expenses for programs and kids to go down because the cost of a good metal bat has skyrocketed in recent years. Instead of paying \$400 for one bat, kids/teams can now purchase multiple wood or composite wood bats for much less.

4. Mr. Young then brought up pitching restrictions and the 12 inning per 72 hour rule. He stated that the National Federation of State High School Associations is looking at player safety quite a bit these days, and although concussions have been the major focus for several years now, pitching and arm safety within the sport of baseball will be their next push. He stated that the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee is looking at pitch counts and trying to mirror some of the things that are done within other youth baseball organizations. Although there is still much discussion to be had, Mr. Young stated that he did feel the 12-inning rule should be looked at and possibly adjusted moving forward – especially within the state tournament. He also stated that although national recommendations are probably coming, the NMAA would put together an advisory committee in the future which would analyze all information to do what is best for the state of New Mexico – similarly to what has been done in the sport of football.

5. Mr. Young then brought up umpires and officiating within the sport. He started out by stating that the Mountain West Conference has approached the NMAA/NMOA and is interested in sponsoring a camp for umpires that will focus on 3-person mechanics and overall improvement. This will take place each fall in Albuquerque and the NMAA is looking at ways in which it can help provide scholarships to officials from outside the central region so that this great opportunity can be made a reality for umpires from across the state. The coaches felt that this was a great opportunity and pushed the idea of getting guys from all areas of the state to attend. Mr. Young also explained that the NMOA Executive Board is looking at their constitution and will be considering changes with regards to eligibility for state tournament selection. In baseball, this would mean that the two year's on, one year off requirement would be eliminated, thus allowing for the best umpires to be at the state tournament each year. Mr. Young also explained that although the original intent of the rule (to allow for "new faces" at state) was good, the new selection process would allow for the NMAA staff and assignors to bring in new folks while not compromising the integrity of the tournament by keeping the best of the best at home during their "year off". The coaches were very happy about this and felt that was a major step in ensuring a quality state event. Coach McGaha then went on to say that the 2014 tournament was the best ever in terms of officiating and the group did agree. They also agree that officiating is improving overall, BUT that numbers are causing issues in some areas and that we need to work as a group to get new folks involved while also setting up mentor programs throughout the state (maybe even cross-group) to ensure younger umpires stick with it for more than a couple years. The last area of concern with umpires was brought up by Coach Weems and was regarding being able to know exactly who is calling their games. He asked about a "card" that was discussed in years past which would be given to coaches at the pregame meeting with each umpire's name. Mr. Young explained that although that did not come to fruition, the state wide use of the arbiter in baseball was being discussed and this would alleviate that problem as coaches would then be able to see the names of all umpires for their games within that system. He also explained that the coach feedback on umpire performance would be integrated in to the arbiter should the NMAA go this route. The coaches on the committee then stepped in and stated how important it was for everyone to participate in the official's evaluation/feedback process. Many of the committee members do take part, but they stressed the need for all of their colleagues to do the same in a continuous effort to make the game better.

Coach Sanchez brought up one final issue at the end of the meeting regarding the north/south all star game for the smaller schools and the fact that holding baseball and football at the same time has caused some issues where kids now have to make a choice as to which sport they want to participate in. It has thus "watered" down the all-star games. Mr. Young explained that this was handled by the NM High School Coaches Association but that he and the SSC could discuss the issue with Executive Director Buster Mabrey.

Once again, the committee felt that the overall state of high school baseball in New Mexico was very good and that the committee should commence regular discussions on some of the "hot topics" over the coming months to ensure that trend continues. Mr. Young thanked the committee members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:15pm.