

23-24



Out-of-Season Coaching REGULATIONS



Understanding the Summer Dead Period and Preseason Down Time

A Summary of Michigan High School Athletic Association
Handbook Regulations and Interpretations

Three Year-Round Principles...

Three Year-Round Principles apply to schools and coaches out of season ALL the time: both summer and off season during the school year at workouts, clinics, camps, or competitions.

1. **NO activity may be mandatory or part of the selection of the school team.**
2. **NO school general funds; a limit of \$200 per student per sport from school-approved fundraised money is allowed.**
3. **NO school competition uniforms or warm-ups may be used (practice jerseys permitted).**

During the School Year...

During the school year, there are limitations on coaches and some permitted activities:

••**FOUR-PLAYER PERIOD:** Coaches are limited to providing coaching in their sport to four students in grades 7-12 of the School District in which they coach. Even though MHSAA membership now extends to 6th-graders, the out-of-season coaching limitation applies to grades 7-12; so existing programs for 6th-graders with school coaches may continue. The four-player period runs from the **Monday when Fall sports begin (Aug. 7, 2023)**, until the **Monday after Memorial Day (June 3, 2024)**. Coaches can coach out of-season up to four "players" (students in grades 7-12 are called players for this rule). This applies to any setting, including a camp, clinic, AAU game, travel softball team, or indoor soccer league. As has always been the case, two coaches present do not increase the limit to eight players.

••**INCIDENTAL PRESENCE OF MORE THAN FOUR PLAYERS:** Coaches may be present coaching within the four-player rule at a **non-school facility** even if more than four students of their School District in grades 7-12 are present, provided they are only coaching four players and other students' presence is incidental and not prearranged by the coach. This same allowance is permitted to any coach at non-school facilities with multiple playing surfaces, such as is likely to occur at a large soccer or tennis complex.

••**CALLING SOMETHING A CLINIC:** Charging a fee, or holding the event at a non-school facility (batting cage, indoor soccer, or hockey rink, etc.) does not waive the four-player rule. Booster clubs may not fund or support activities during the school year that the school or coach is prohibited from doing, such as batting cages, indoor courts or fields, hiring trainers, etc. High school administrators (including athletic directors) acting on their own in programs involving students in grades 9-12 may not sponsor or support out-of-season programs or perform out-of-season functions that the school or coach is prohibited from doing. This allows administrators to be involved with middle school-age students out of season.

••**ROTATIONS** (also known as circuit training or stations) are permitted, provided there is no more than one four-player group with sport-specific instructions. Rotations from open gyms, weightlifting, or conditioning to four-player sport-specific skill workouts are intended to be a more efficient approach to off-season workouts. Sport-specific equipment is permitted at an open gym but there may not be any coaching instruction. Any number of rotations can have sports equipment for students to select from, but only one group may have coaching instruction and this group may not exceed four students. These rotations must adhere to the elements of an open gym and are not permitted during preseason downtime. See the next page on open gyms. Two gyms on the same campus do not permit two four-player skill groups. The Three Year-Round Principles continue to apply – especially that all sessions are voluntary and not part of team selection.

••**COORDINATING OR ASSISTING:** During or in preparation for the four-player period, coaches may not make arrangements for activities they themselves are prohibited from doing. Groups that exist because of the school (e.g., booster clubs) may not do that which the school or coach is prohibited from doing. Coaches may not provide transportation, create a schedule for more than four of their players, or arrange for someone else to coach to get around the four-player rule. Coaches may be spectators at events but may not coach when more than four of their players are present, and they may distribute information produced by someone else regarding out-of-season camps or clinics. Involvement must be voluntary and clearly not part of the selection of the school team. In hockey, a school may commit to renting ice for the off-season, non-school activity so as to secure in-season ice rentals and pricing. If necessary, consult the exact Handbook language on what is generally prohibited and permitted during or in preparation for the four-player period.

••**CONDITIONING AND WEIGHTLIFTING:** Provided they are not mandatory, or part of team selection, conditioning, and weightlifting are permitted year-round except during the summer dead period. Conditioning must be non-sport-specific and not use any equipment such as balls, nets, dummies, sleds, or helmets. Jump ropes, cones, and fitness apparatus are permitted.

••**OPEN GYMS (& ROTATIONS):** May be conducted in one or more sports but must follow the Three Year-Round Principles and especially not be part of team selection. Coaches may not coach, critique, evaluate, or participate in the sport they coach. Open gyms are student conducted and recreational. There shall be no organized instruction or competition, drills or practice structure, and no instruction by captains, parents, or others. Open gyms/rotations must be open to all students of the school, but not necessarily open to the general public or students from other schools.

••**PRESEASON DOWNTIME:** Just prior to each season, to establish an official start to practice, this period prohibits open gyms, rotations, competitions, or sport-specific camps or clinics from occurring at the school or sponsored elsewhere by the school, regardless of whether that school sponsors the sport. No competition, intrasquad or intersquad may occur with groups that resemble school teams. Voluntary conditioning, weightlifting, and four-player coaching may continue in the preseason downtime – but no open gyms, practices, or rotations. The **FALL** sports downtime is **Aug. 1 to the start of practice**, **WINTER** sports is **14 calendar days before practice begins**, and the **SPRING** sports downtime runs from **March 1 to the start of practice**. **MIDDLE SCHOOLS** observe this period **14 days before practice begins**. Because conditioning is so similar to actual practices in swimming, cross country, and track, coaches in these sports may not provide instruction in any sport-specific technique or conduct sessions that involve both time AND distance during the preseason downtime.

••**CHEER RESTRICTIONS:** Because of the similarity between Competitive & Sideline Cheerleading, a school that sponsors MHSAA Competitive Cheer may not hold any cheer activities from the end of winter sports the **last Monday of March (3/25/24)** to the **Monday after Memorial Day (June 3, 2024)**. This restriction prohibits coaches or cheerleading advisers from working with more than four students from the School District grades 7-12 in cheer-related activities, including but not limited to tumbling, gymnastics, instruction, routine development, tryouts, etc. This rule prevents competitive cheer teams or individuals from holding out-of-season activities under the premise of sideline cheer practices or tryouts. (Note: **Interpretation 235** prohibits a coach from "coordinating or assisting" during or in preparation for the four-player period. A coach may not arrange for a parent or non-staff person to coach out of season or to do that which the coach is prohibited from doing). Ending the cheer restriction time by the Monday after Memorial Day allows a school, if it so chooses, to have fall sideline cheerleading tryouts before school is out in June. Competitive cheer coaches remain subject to the four-player rule until the **Monday after Memorial Day**.

••**CURRICULUM COURSES:** Classes with content specific to an MHSAA tournament sport (e.g., football class) must be open to any student and must provide nearly equal attention to three different topics in an academic term, such as other sports, weight training, fitness, officiating, etc. In football, except during the season, plays and schemes of the school team may not be taught, and regular or improvised football equipment may not be used. Out of season, school coaches cannot be involved in these classes unless they are the full-time teacher of the course.

During the Summer...

During the summer, some limitations continue. Except for football, fewer restrictions are in place. There are no school teams in the summer; however, school coaches and students may assemble from the same school over the summer in various settings beginning on the **Monday after Memorial Day**. Football has a practice limit of no more than seven players in the summer prior to Aug. 1 in informal football activities in helmets and shoes with a coach.

••**SUMMER COMPETITION LIMITS:** Five sports are limited to 15 dates of competition when more than four or seven students from that school and a school coach are present in competition against others not enrolled in that school. Basketball, volleyball, and ice hockey (four players and a coach); soccer, lacrosse, and football (seven players and a coach). Football may only have seven summer dates of competition (7-on-7 passing league games) See the Football Section below. Summer competition must be prior to Aug. 1 and must follow the travel rule if held outside of Michigan: However, when "summer teams" travel out of state to a bordering state and teams are present from other states that exceed the MHSAA travel limit, "summer teams" may participate against any team at the event. Sports not on this list are not limited in summer competition, but the Three Year-Round Principles continue to apply.

••**INCOMING 9TH GRADERS** become "high school students" when the four-player rule ends on the **Monday after Memorial Day**. Provided these former 8th-graders are not still involved in middle school sports, they may begin working out with high schools of enrollment in the summer. This does not change the rule that prohibits recruiting for athletic purposes (undue influence).

••**THE FOUR-PLAYER PERIOD ENDS** on the **Monday after Memorial Day**, which is also the Monday after Baseball and Softball District Tournaments and the Track Finals. Except for the dead period (below), any number of players may have contact with their coach in the summer provided the Three Year-Round Principles apply (there is a seven-player limit in football). Schools must regulate the frequency and intensity of any summer voluntary workouts so students may participate in more than one sport and so that families may have time away from school sports.

••**SUMMER DEAD PERIOD:** A school determined seven-day zero player/coach and zero school facility period of time from the end of school or participation in the MHSAA spring tournaments to **Aug 1**. No coach contact whatsoever is allowed including at fundraisers, functions, or places of employment. Each school sets its own seven-day dead period, and it applies to ALL sports, except that non-school summer baseball or softball games and practices may continue in the summer dead period. Most schools select a seven-day period which includes **July 4**.

••**FOOTBALL:** Only football helmets and football shoes are permitted out of season in ANY setting, including camps or clinics, whether held in-state or out-of-state. No pads except during the season. The exception is that shoulder pads may be worn at college summer camps sponsored and run directly by NCAA/NAIA institutions. A football coach may hold 15 dates of non-mandatory activity with any number of players in grades 9-12 or 6-8 separately. Teams may use these dates as they see fit under other regulations (i.e., practice or 7-on-7), but a team or individual may not exceed seven "7 on 7" competitions. Any camp day would be counted among the allowed 15 dates. When football coaches are in contact with 7 or fewer players, on those occasions, it will not count as one of their 15 allowed dates of activity.