

AIA Football Sports Advisory Committee
December 11, 2013
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
AIA Office Board Room

Call to order: 9:00 a.m.

1. Roll Call

Members in attendance:

Lee Haws/1A Adm. Tim Slade/1A Coach

Rhett Stallworth/2A Coach

Jerry Link/3A Adm. / Jim Fairfield/3A Coach

Nathan Slater/4A Adm. Nemer Hassey/4A Coach

Mike Sivertson/5A Adm./Dana Zupke/5A Coach-Committee Chair

Members not in attendance:

Don Conrad/2A Adm.

Visitors in Attendance:

Corey Newland (Paradise Valley Unified Dist. Athletic Director)

David Inness (Northwest Christian Athletic Director/Football Coach)

Rich Wellbrock (Desert Edge Football Coach)

2. AIA Football Sport Advisory Meeting minutes from May 30, 2013 meeting reviewed/approved.

3. New Business

- a. *Discuss possible recommendation to AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and AIA Executive Board regarding change to present AIA bylaw; articles 23.5.3.1 and 23.5.3.2(unlimited or increased game participation limits)*

Tim Slade gave an update from the AIA Sport Medicine Advisory Committee. He shared that the Sport Medicine Advisory Committee is concerned with the number of contact hits a player might be exposed to in the course of a season of practice and competition. He shared that Dr. Cardenas presented information regarding the seven football related deaths that occurred nationally in the fall of 2014. Compared to 39 deaths twenty years ago, the percentage of fatal injuries involving football player is way down, but the committee's view is that even one is too many. Advancements have been made in medicine related to identifying and treating concussions. Efforts are increasing to reduce the number of potential hits in practice and in competition a player is exposed to.

Discussed were the Arizona State Statute that identifies the medical personnel that can determine if a player can return to practice or competition if the player exhibits physical signs of a concussion. Those medical positions include and are limited to the following:

- M.D
- D.O
- Certified Athletic Trainer
- Registered Nurse Practitioner
- Certified Physician's Assistant

Tim indicated that the term “unlimited” in article 23.5.3.1 is a red flag to the medical community. In Div. V and VI, many players are exposed to as many as thirteen games (excluding playoffs) in the regular season, many times two competitive opportunities during the same week.

Nathan Slater recommended that Divisions V and VI adopt the Division IV article 23.5.3.2 that allows a player to participate in fifty percent more games than the ten games allowed in article 23.5.3.. Addition thought was expressed that possibly freshman or junior varsity games be played early in the week, replacing a contact practice or play freshman/junior varsity games following varsity games, with the games limited to players that did not play in the varsity competition.

Dr. Slemmer shared that with the types of offenses being played at the high school level, there are more plays in a game today than a decade ago. He expressed that, at many schools, particularly at the junior varsity or freshman level, many players never leave the competition field. When litigation takes place after an injury or death of a player, a lawyer will look at the total picture of contact opportunities a player was exposed to. The rules regulating practice or completion contact exposure must be defensible.

Some other items discussed as options:

- Forty quarter rule
- Reduce junior varsity and freshman game quarters to ten minutes instead of twelve.
- Go to the Div. IV article 23.5.3.2 (50 percent) rule and limit Division IV/V &VI to eight junior varsity or freshman games instead of the current nine allowed.

The Division IV/V/VI representatives were asked to discuss these ideas with the groups they represent and bring back feedback to the following meeting

b. Officiating related items:

- *What programs can the AIA football advisory committee put forth to improve football officiating?*
- *Can the AIA create an opportunity for a preseason and postseason meeting between coaches and officials?*
- *Concern regarding the consistency in officiating from game to game. There were issues this season in which different crews had completely different interpretation of the same rule. When do coaches get the chance to discuss this in a positive manner with officials? They do not want to hear it during the game*

Gary Whelchel addressed the committee and share a power point the training all football officials go through each year in order to officiate AIA related games. He shared the AIA Football Officiating Manual that is tied to the training, multiple training meetings officials are recommended to attend and the AIA evaluators that attend games and not only meet with the crews they observe but file observation reports with the AIA Officiating Office, all for the purpose of attempting to create consistency within the football officiating ranks. Gary went into detail regarding the review of ejections and plays of concern sent to him by coaches for he and lead officials to evaluate utilizing Hudl video (when given access by the school). He indicated video of plays from regular season competition are utilized in the training sessions.

Gary admitted that assigning officials outside of the metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson is challenging. He can't, at present, force officials to watch videos for training, but to work AIA State

Football Tournament games, participation in video training is required as are evaluations by AIA officiating evaluators at games.

Gary indicated to the committee that the officiating department has attempted to have pre-season meeting with coaches in each sport. He indicated that at a recent pre-season basketball official/coaches meeting, there were 65 basketball coaches in attendance. At a recent Sollenberger football event at University of Phoenix, 775 officials attended but only five coaches. Committee members recommended the following:

- Advertise the official/coaches pre-season rules meeting to create more awareness among coaches
- Hold meeting in a variety of statewide locations to reach out to the rural coaches and officials
- Look at a better time to hold the pre-season rules meetings. Coaches are tied up with team practices starting with the beginning allowed time for fall practice to start. Possibly look at spring for the football meetings.
 - Possibly during the AzFCA general session meetings

Gary reminded committee that coaches can propose NFHS rule changes. Last year, seventy rule changes were proposed, only six or seven were approved by the NFHS football rules committee.

Dr. Slemmer shared that he has sat on the NFHS football rules committee (each state has a representative). He indicated that the level of discussion is very high (usual representatives are present officials or state executive directors that were football officials). Only about ten percent of the football rule changes that are proposed are passed. He indicated that the AzFCA has been invited to send a representative, in the past, to go back to the meeting as an observer.

Gary shared that head coaches can send him concerns for his review at any times. The head coach should include his school athletic director in the expressed concern. The head coach must give the AIA access to Hudl so they can review game video.

Gary share that he makes state tournament officiating assignments based on his and evaluators recommendations from game performance of officials.

The last thing Gary shared was that the high school coaches and the AzFCA can assist with the recruitment of young football interested men and women to become football officials.

- c. Discuss creating a timeline for AIA member schools that compete in Div. VI football for declaring that they will field a varsity level team.
 - Discuss recommendation for AIA Executive Board sanctioning for teams that cancel individual games or program after that declaration date.
 - Discuss creating a Div. VI schedule following the declaration date (one season schedule)

Committee discussed the following:

- Create one year football schedule for Div. VI instead of two year block
- Possibly create a preliminary schedule in spring with Div. VI schools requesting varsity schedule
- Div. VI school make final declaration for request of season schedule following the first week of practice
- AIA computer schedule all eight games
- Zero week would be used for adjusted games (due to varsity program cancellation or for scrimmage)
- Establish criteria for breaking up agreed to match ups before preliminary schedules are created.

Chuck Schmidt shared that the cancellation of sport programs continues to be a problem at all levels of schools. Cancellation of varsity games is an area of high concern for the AIA Executive Board.

- d. Discuss playoff venue format for Division IV, V and VI
 - AIA protocol for informing participating schools of playoff date/location changes
- e. Discuss AIA protocol for postponing football playoff games

Dr. Slemmer addressed the committee regarding game location format for Div. IV, V and VI. It has been expressed that those divisions want to use the same format as Div. I, II and III with the games being played at the high seed for the first two rounds and then in the area of the high seed for the semi-finals. He indicated that the AIA staff prefers to create neutral sites in the valley to prevent cross state travel for Divisions IV, V and VI (Thatcher assigned to travel to Yuma for semi-final game versus Yuma Catholic).

Dr. Slemmer reminded the committee of the severe weather conditions that existed across the state. Many regular turf stadium neutral site fields became flooded or play would have severely damaged the turf for those hosting schools winter soccer program competition. The result was, as AIA Executive Director, he had to make decision regarding the playing of semi-final games on the Friday and Saturday as scheduled or postponing until Monday to maintain competition equity between semi-final competing teams and create safer conditions for the participants by allowing turf fields to dry out over the weekend. All semi-final games were postponed until Monday and three game site locations were changed to reduce travel on a school night or because a facility was no longer available on the Monday night of semi-final football games.

Concern was expressed that competing schools should have been contacted about the state football postponements and change to Monday game schedule before it was made public to the press. Dr. Slemmer responded that there was no time to call all the school prior to going public with the postponements. Public and schools needed to be informed quickly to limit unnecessary travel in severe weather and severe road condition across the state. All competing schools were contacted and informed as soon as possible.

f. Discuss developing an AIA policy or bylaw regarding football film exchange

David Inness addressed the committee regarding the refusal by some member schools to share game video with opponents. David wondered if it would be possible to bring forward a bylaw proposal to require varsity coaches to exchange film from previous games. The AIA presently has no bylaws related to game video exchange.

Dana Zupke indicated that he was more inclined to deal with it through the internal operation of the AzFCA rather than through a bylaw addition.

g. Discuss adding another division in football and volleyball.

The view was expressed by a committee member that more divisions in both football and volleyball would give more teams the opportunity to experience playoff competition. Dr. Slemmer shared that the present determination of divisions based on the number of competing school came forward and was implemented due to:

- Competition was watered down
- Power pecking order still existed in every sport even with additional state tournament levels
- Attendance at state tournaments was in decline
- There was a decline in spectator interest during regular and post season competition

h. Consensus recommendations for the AIA Executive Board.

None brought forward

4. Adjournment