



POINT OF EMPHASIS: FIGHTS AMONGST PLAYERS OF OPPOSING TEAMS

In the wake of a number of recent incidents of fighting between teams, this Point of Emphasis is to serve as a reminder of what our responsibilities as officials are in these types of situations. First and foremost, while we should attempt to intervene by stepping between combatants if possible, officials should never attempt to grab or restrain a student-athlete. This should be left to the coaches and administrators. This is in the best interest of safety for everyone involved, including the officials.

Officials should note the individuals involved as combatants in a confrontation and also any player that enters onto the playing surface during the fight. This even includes players that are attempting to break up the altercation. Often it is easier to notate the players that remained on the bench rather than the ones that left. In these types of situations, all players that leave the bench during a fight (know what the definition of a fight is by rule) are to be ejected. In the most recent instances where bench-clears occurred, there would not have been a sufficient number of players to continue the game. Because of this, and due to the safety and security of the events, the officials called the games at whatever point they had reached. In all of these instances, this was entirely appropriate.

Because the results of these altercations affect future contests for the teams involved, it is also important officials complete and submit an Officials Incident Report as soon as possible. If the officials have an opportunity to view video of the incident, they are allotted up to 48 hours to submit the report. However, officials should contact school administration in person, by telephone or through email before noon the next day to let them know of the situation that occurred and inform them of anyone that was ejected. Do not assume that an administrator was aware of what occurred just because they were present at the contest.

A REPORT MUST BE FILED when an ejection, or ejections, occur. There are no exceptions to this rule. Please see the Officials Report Writing Guide included in this correspondence to properly complete the report. Officials who fail to submit a report as required, in the format required and by the required deadline are subject to disciplinary action. Administrative duties are part of your responsibilities as an MHSAA Registered official. The following explains how incident reports involving multiple ejections should be written:

- If multiple players/coaches are ejected but the contest may still continue with the remaining number of players, a report must be filed for each player ejected from either team. You may copy and paste the same summary for each report and simply change the individual particulars.
- If multiple players/coaches are ejected and the game must be called because not enough players from one or both teams remain to continue the contest, one report may be filed for each team with ejected players. You should include a list of the ejected players (only for the team the report is referencing) in the summary of the report. These can be found through the lineup card(s) or scorer's book.



Officials Incident Report Writing Guide

Writing a clear, concise and accurate report can be a challenging, if not daunting, task. So if you are one of those individuals whose report writing is limited to the ever-so-rare ejection report, let us go over a few things that will help you improve your reports and assist recipients in understanding the events that occurred.

An officials report is a description of the **facts** surrounding a particular incident. A well-written factual report plays an important role in describing an incident and assisting those responsible in determining what should, or should not, happen to the offenders. As a result, it is of utmost importance that the officials report is detailed, factual and easy to read.

Reports should be prepared in a timely manner and accurately represent the incident in a clear, concise, well-organized, and comprehensive manner. All relevant details should be included and any ***information elaborating the facts, offering opinions, or providing unnecessary commentary are not appropriate.***

It is important for the reporting official to utilize proper wording, grammar, spelling, punctuation and terminology consistent with rulebook cases pertinent to the incident. The writer should avoid incomplete or improper sentence structure as it leads to confusion or misinterpretation.

Do not over or understate the facts or the actions of the involved parties and do not rationalize in order to minimize anyone's involvement in the incident. Likewise, it is just as important that the reporting official does not minimize the mistakes or failures made by other officials that may have led to the incident. Those actions suggest an inability of the official to accept responsibility for his or her own actions. A fair and honest evaluation of an incident is difficult if the actions of the other involved official(s) are absent from the report. Failure to disclose the actions of an official or his partner(s) could negatively affect the reputation of the reporting official and damage the integrity of officiating as a whole.

Remember, in this age of video technology and improved cellphones, every action and official is under continuing scrutiny. No official wants to be "caught" stretching or avoiding the facts when presenting their report. When writing your report, here are some tips that will help you:

1. **Keep it simple.** One sentence, one idea. Short sentences are easy to read and understand. Long drawn out sentences can complicate grammar and punctuation, and open the door for sentence errors.
2. **Use simple language.** Avoid words not used in everyday conversation. An officials report should not require a Google search to understand. Avoid slang, abbreviations and unprofessional language in your descriptions. However, when directly quoting the parties involved, exact language should not be paraphrased (see item four below).
3. **Write in properly formed paragraphs** by organizing information into groups...what happened, who said what and what actions you took.

4. **A quote is a quote**...even if it is profane. As offensive as it may be, statements made by the cited parties, including foul or offensive language, needs to be spelled out and quoted in the report. It is not acceptable to say “the F-word,” “bad language,” or “F@#!” to describe profane language. You must spell it out.
5. **Open with the basic facts** of who, what, when, where and why. Writing an opening sentence or statement lets the reader know what the report is about before they read in its entirety. Write an opening that includes objective information. **For example:** On Monday, January 19, 2018, during the 135-pound match between Joe Shoe from Chelsea and Frank Sock from Hart, Shoe screamed and complained that Sock had bitten him.
6. **Describe what happened.** After the opening statement, use the full names, the uniform numbers, the specific position and/or title, and the respective institution name for anyone referred to in the report, including your partner(s).
7. **Accurately report the role** you and/or partner(s) may have played in the incident. Do not omit any information describing the involvement you or your partner(s) may have had even if it reflects poorly upon you. Keep in mind that for the most part, video does not lie and spectators can make good witnesses. Any information you withhold or inaccurately report could surface later, causing problems for you, your partner(s), your assigner, your coordinator, and the MHSAA. Protect your integrity and the integrity of officiating by telling the truth, even if it does not cast you in the best light.
8. **Include information presented to** you by your partner(s), if you have a partner. Your partner(s) make great witnesses and might able to provide additional information you may not know about. Before you write your report, make sure you ask your partner(s) what they may have seen or heard. If need be, write it down or better yet, have them write it down themselves. After writing your report, let your partner(s) proofread it before submitting it. They may have additional information or find mistakes needing correction.
9. **Proofread your report** for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Do not rely solely on spellchecker to review your report. Make sure you read it and if need be, let someone else read it. Double check your facts and make sure your report is accurate.
10. **Submit your report and keep a copy for your records.** If you do not receive an email confirmation the report has been submitted, contact the Officials Department at 517.332.5046.

Remember, the report should provide a clear and accurate picture of what happened. The basic facts of who did what, when, where and why are noted using proper writing techniques. It needs to be short, simple and to the point; but most importantly, give the entire fact-based description of the incident.