

October 1, 2015



President's Note

I'm very excited about returning to competitive cheer season 2015 – 2016 and looking forward to working with veteran officials as well as the newer officials.

MCJA has been busy this summer with a training session at Lansing Catholic High School and assisting MHSAA with training the trainer sessions at St. John's High School.

MCJA will also host the fall training at Mason High School with sessions for the veteran and novice officials.

Once again Safety Sundays will be hosted via a web based meeting frequently during the season. A new piece to the Mentoring program will be a mentoring tool kit to help ensure the new official receives the same training all across the state.

As we begin a new season please keep in mind, as an official we must comply with the letter and spirit of the rules and adhere to the highest ethical standards in all that we do.

Cheers,
Cindy

“Quality means doing it right when no one is looking“ Henry Ford



MCJA Fall Conference

- Fall Conference
- Mentoring
- Safety Updates
- Storm the weather
- What's up with our members

OCTOBER 24, 2015
MASON HIGH SCHOOL
8:30 AM – 5:00PM

Please join cheer officials from around the state and prepare for the 2015-2016 Cheer season. The Keynote speaker, Freddy Krieger, Official Fruit belt Official's Association presents THE MAIN THING, Mentoring and More! from 8:30-9:15 in the Auditorium.

Local Official Associations will be present for you to meet with.

The lunch Membership meeting and the announcement of the OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR will be presented after lunch from 11:45 -12:45 in the Cafeteria.

Kathy Vrugink Westdorp will present a *Live Rules Meeting from 3:30-4:30 in the Auditorium.

Novice and Veteran sessions will be presented during the conference. Check out the sessions “Word on the Street Stunts”, “Follow the Leader” and Round Robin Sessions.

Please visit MCJAcheer.com for more information and to register! Deadline is October 16th, 2015.

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MCJA FALL NEWSLETTER

Taming the Social Media Temptation

Submitted by Jayne Sabaitis

We've all been there, scrolling through our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, liking various photos, videos or comments our friends have posted. We've posted answers to questions on a coaches page and said a stunt or cheer posted was "Awesome" but have we really thought about how that could be taken by coaches or even members of the public who know that you are a cheer official?

As another cheer season approaches quickly,

please remember it is strongly recommended that MHSAA officials do not post on social media. Even a simple "like" on a post could be misconstrued as favoritism. It's always best to err on the side of caution and not post on social media pages at all. Even specific clarification questions should be referred to the MHSAA.

While you should still enjoy watching all of the great cheer videos and pictures posted for all to see, tame the social media temptation and don't post.

Pictured here at Train the Trainer
August 1st, 2015 — St. John High School

An excellent day of learning and collaborating with trainers from across the state. Shout out to MCJA executive Board members Cindy Tyzo and Stacy Smith for their leadership in Competitive Cheer!

MCJA Fall Conference
Officials—Never stop coaching!
Saturday October 24, 2015
Mason High School
8:30 am - 5:00 pm



What's up with the MCJA Membership?

Holly Cusatis has some great news to share about her daughter's cheer team: My daughter, Staci Sommer DeSchryver was named Colorado Cheer Coach of the Year in August, 2015. She's a former Lakeland cheerleader and Cheer!!Michigan staffer. Her Cherokee Trail Cougars have qualified for UCA Nationals the last 2 years and finished top 15 last year.

Nancy Lapekas has retired from cheer judging. MCJA wishes Nancy well on her move to Ann Arbor!

Sheila Brownlee sends cheers to Katie on her wedding! Sheila was thrilled to attend the wedding of Katie (Kaminski) & Justin Gatwood in Traverse City on Set 19. Katie is a 2006 MCCA scholarship winner from Utica High.

Amy Maddox is the very proud mom of son Kyle, who was the Valedictorian for the West Catholic HS (Grand Rapids) Class of 2015. Kyle is in the Honors College at Michigan State! (Amy's alma mater ;-)

Andrea Zimmer has an exciting change! She married the love of her life on September 26, 2015. Congratulations!

Jessica Kingston is expecting her first baby boy in January!

Cindy Tyzo is now Grandma to little Danny, pictured here :) (from daughter Elisabeth).



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MCJA FALL NEWSLETTER

Adventures in Mentoring

Submitted by Jane Plaisted, MCJA Mentoring Director

Let me share with you how I came to the world of competitive cheer judging. I was never a cheerleader, I was never a coach (although I did have a daughter who was a cheerleader.) I worked in a correctional facility as a teacher of 17-25 year old male felons. After my own kids grew up and were in college and beyond, my contact with youth came from the dark side -- drug dealers, thieves, abusers of all kinds; I needed a brighter side. Well, next to Disneyworld, the happiest place in the world would have to be a gym full of cheerleaders, so I decided that was where I wanted to be. Next question was how to get there.

I asked my daughter's coach; she said to sign up for fall training. I did. It was a pretty overwhelming amount of information to absorb, but I tried. Someone at the conference brought me over to a coach, told the coach I was new, and the coach took my address and said she would call. I will forever be grateful to that coach for following through and actually calling,

and I went to my first meet shortly after.

That was it! I was judging! I probably don't have to tell you how good I was, although, to be fair, judging wasn't as complex as it is today. Still, I went to every training offered, and I read my manual like it was a bestseller. By the end of the season, I like to think I was moderately competent. Maybe.

Thankfully, entry into the competitive cheer officiating world today does not have to be so inefficient, isolated, and ineffective. Recognizing the need to educate and train those who wish to be capable and effective officials, MCJA has developed a mentoring program for new officials. Anyone who is serious about learning the skills of cheer officiating need only go to the MCJA website and request a mentor. As mentor chairperson, I will try to find someone in your area who will personally "show you the ropes"; your mentor will have you job shadow, demo how to do score sheets, offer choices of work sheets, and offer tips

and recommendations. Your mentor will be available for questions and advice, reassurance and explanations; she is your go-to person for whatever you need. Please trust me, all new officials; this system will better prepare you and make your new endeavor go more smoothly, all while better serving the sport of competitive cheer. Welcome aboard.

Oh, one more thing: please come to fall training.

See you there!

Safety Sundays

Coming Soon

Watch for details to come!

***"Refereeing is about
creating good habits
so that we can depend
on them at the
biggest moments..."***

- Monty McCutchen

*Thank you to everyone who attended the Novice Official Training
at Lansing Catholic this summer!*

MCJA FALL NEWSLETTER

Safety Updates

submitted by Cindy Tyzo

A few changes occurred in the competitive cheer rules for this season. Let's take a look at the rule changes and what they mean.

- Provide an exception for the inverted exit to allow for a forward roll from a face down prone position.

Interpretation: All of the rules must be followed as on page 58 of the rule book with the addition to bullet 5 that will read:

Landing must be a step-down landing. The flyer must step down with both feet, first on followed by the other except for a legal forward roll performed from a face-down prone position.

- Allow forward suspended rolls to begin in any position at shoulder height and below – except an inverted position.

Interpretation: All of the rules must be followed as on page 48 and 53 of the rule book with the following change on page 53: Second bullet is removed and replaced with, “The flyer begins in any position at shoulder level or below including from the floor. The flyer may not begin in an inverted position.

- Add a four person differential for middle schools.

Interpretation: Add to page 70: “Middle school teams may not exceed a four(4) person differential. For example: If the first cheer has 8 competitors then the second cheer can have no less than 4 and no more than 12.

- Sub varsity (not middle school) teams must follow the varsity teams mandated numbers in Round 2.

Interpretation: The penalty would be the same as assessed for a varsity team if the mandated numbers are not met.



MCJA FALL NEWSLETTER

Storm the Weather—Don't be caught off guard!

Submitted by April Hooker

As I was sitting outside enjoying my morning cup of hot cocoa on the first official day of autumn, I couldn't help but think that winter is right around the corner. And winter brings to mind cheer competitions, snow, driving in snow, and that's when it hit me...an article about Winter Weather Safety Tips.

Some of you might remember that a number of years ago a fellow judge and I were in a pretty bad multi-car accident on our way home from judging a Regional. That morning when we left there were dry roads and clear skies, but when we walked out of the cheer meet hours later, we were in the middle of a huge snow storm. I won't go into details except to say we were both okay, but the car was not as we were forced into a field with about a foot of snow. The following is a list of things we wished we had at the time, as well as a few other items you should consider before the winter/cheer season is upon us.

1. Boots!! Trudging through a field in my black shoes, not the most comfortable.
2. Blanket – my friend did have one in her trunk which she gave up to a little boy in critical condition.
3. We each had a hat and gloves, goes without saying in Michigan.
4. Food and Water – good snack items include anything with protein as it will keep you full longer. I like protein bars as they are easy to pack, don't take up much room, and will last awhile. We left the meet around lunchtime and thought we would eat once we got home, but with the accident we had to wait for the police to conduct their investigation and then we had to write out witness statements. Not to mention we were over an hour from home and had to wait for family to pick us up. This all took many hours and we were starving by the time we were able to get food.
5. A Charged Cell Phone – You never know when something unexpected is going to happen, that's why it's called unexpected. You should also always have phone numbers of other officials you are working with since most schools don't have someone in the office on Saturdays. Plus, even the weeknight meets are after hours and no one might be available to answer an office phone.
6. Snow scraper – BEFORE the first snow fall.
7. Windshield Washer Fluid – and my husband says to check your wiper blades as well. If they are leaving streaks, it's time to get them replaced.
8. Jumper Cables – Last year, while carpooling, I accidentally left my parking lights on and didn't realize until we returned to my car later that day. The lights drained the battery so completely I could not even use my key fob to get into the car. With a little time, I was able to get the key into the keyhole... periodically manually unlock your doors to keep the keyhole in working condition.
9. Antifreeze – make sure it's mixed properly for the winter season. I'm not sure exactly what this means, but my husband said I needed to put it on the list. Ask your car guy.

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MCJA FALL NEWSLETTER

Weather...Cont'd

10. Gas – I have a rule that I don't let my tank get below half full. Imagine sitting in a ditch in the middle of winter. It will get pretty cold waiting for help to arrive.
11. Tire Pressure – Proper tire inflation helps with traction as well as gas mileage.

A few last things to think about...watch the weather and leave yourself enough time to get to your competitions safely. Slow down and stay safe! And as my Brazilian sister-in-law is fond of saying, "It's better to be late than to not get there at all." She should know as she's always late :)

Officiating Tips from Women's Lacrosse Officials

A life and officiating tip to start this week. Are you holding onto anything from last season or summer games that are negatively impacting your day to day life? Or are you holding onto some other stress in life that is making it hard for you to officiating to the best of your ability? If so read on.

A psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired: "How heavy is this glass of water?"

Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. to 20 oz.

She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralyzed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." She continued, "The stresses and worries in life [and officiating] are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything."

It's important to remember to let go of your stresses. As early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the evening and into the night. Remember to put the glass down!

Tip #70 – "Avoid all-or-nothing thinking." Officials are expected to start off perfect and improve from there. It is an unreasonable expectation from those not wearing stripes, and it is equally unreasonable for anyone officiating a game. It isn't that mistakes might happen, but rather, mistakes will definitely happen. What matters is how you respond to the mistakes. Screwing something up in the first minute of the first quarter does not mean you have to suffer for the rest of the game. Address the problem as soon as you can, fix it if the rules allow, and move on to the next minute with the goal of doing the best possible job you can.

The Mental Game of Refereeing

Author: Brian Baxter

June 17, 2015

“And all the time, we talk to our athletes about 'move on to the next play,' 'make sure you envision this,' 'be in a zone,' all those different things. We always talk about it, but nobody teaches it. Nobody teaches the athlete how to move on to the next play, nobody teaches the athlete how to get in a zone, and there's a whole new field based on mental training...”

The above quote by former NFL Coach Eric Mangini was of course referring to athletes. But anyone who has done any refereeing is nodding their heads in agreement reading it. Referees are just as likely as athletes to have a poor performance due to self-doubt, being unfocused, and having trouble with dealing with the emotional ups and downs that can happen in competition. And therefore, the same mental training techniques that athletes used can be used for referees to improve confidence and consistency in performance.

The field of sport psychology has [grown in popularity recently](#). When working with athletes, I use sport psychology techniques such as visualization, goal setting, pre-performance routines, positive self-talk and more. One of the most important aspects of the mental game is focus. I ask athletes (and it's no different for referees) to “control the controllables,” those factors that are 100% in your control:

- 1 – Effort – how hard you try
- 2 – Attitude – your mindset and how you react to things
- 3 – Preparation – how you get ready mentally for performance
- 4 – The present moment – ability to focus on what's happening now

By focusing more intently on the controllables, you have more confidence. Things that are not in your control, like the opponents, fans, coaches, weather, past and future, should be taken into account, but not spent a whole lot of mental energy on. Those out-of-controllables can quickly become distractions, and often lead to more mistakes. It is the referee's job to have clearly defined strategies to help them re-focus when they get distracted.

For referees specifically, this is a common question I hear: “how do I move on from a mistake? How do I keep it from snowballing out of control and into a poor performance?” Just like with athletes, the key to recovering from a mistake is the ability to re-focus. The correct line of thinking once this happens is “What can I do about it now?” This question brings you back into the present moment, and gives control of what to do next back to you.

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Executive Board

Cindy Tyzo, President
248-539-1864
crtzyo@aol.com

Juli Brown, President-Elect
810-623-9372
jbrowncheer@gmail.com

Jill Lansky, Secretary
269-806-0476
jill@KPL.gov

Jayne Sabaitis, Treasurer
517-404-8495
jayne@zetaone.net

Stacy Smith, Past-President
269-806-0427
stacyreeneesmith@netzero.net

Candy Cox, Executive Director
517-617-1278
coxc@bhsj.org

Marilyn Bowker, Trustee
517-349-9233
cheersmb@aol.com

Representatives

Karla Koviak
269-788-4443
krkoviak@gmail.com

Jane Plaisted
616-676-0192
jplaisted@sbcglobal.net

Sheila Brownlee
586-321-5401
cheeriosheila@aol.com

Bonnie Koenig
bbkoenig@gmail.com

Laurel Kobe
248-794-9562
laurelkobe@hotmail.com

Representatives

Susan Wood
248-656-1053
swood@rochester.k12.mi.us

Laurie Bilke-Snyder
313-433-1434
lkbsnyder@gmail.com

April Hooker
269-430-1125

Phyllis Olszewski
231-536-3146
bpolszewski@att.net

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Have something to share with MCJA?

MCJA welcomes submissions (opinions, training tools, helpful hints, cheer inspiration, family news and more) from all members for the quarterly newsletters. Send yours to mcja.info@gmail.com for the chance to be featured in an upcoming newsletter.

Wish List

submitted by Mary Milke

As judges, we are often asked what WE want. There are entire conference sessions based on “What the Judges Look For”. Very rarely do we ask ourselves “What do the coaches want?”. Most of us have been both coaches and judges, and we have seen it from both sides. We know how tough both jobs can be. As a judge for 22 years, I thought I already knew what coaches want, but I wanted to be sure. I asked several dozen coaches to honestly (and anonymously) send me what they want from their judges. Some of it was expected, some was very eye-opening. These responses are from state finalists, new coaches, and everything in between. Before you jump in to defend or disagree, remember that this is their perception and perception is reality until that perception is changed.

Consistency-

“Honestly, just consistency across the board is the biggest for me. Scoring these days is so up and down week by week, round by round, judge by judge. I understand everyone sees things in different ways, but when it comes to round 2 skills there shouldn't be one judge that see's (something such as) switch splits at a 9 and the next see it as a 6.”

“I especially feel like last season was one of the worst as far as consistency goes. I know for us one competition was scored with a home team advantage and that is just not ok.”

“...Stop having favorites. If I score a 7 and another team scores an 9.5 (just an example) then give ME the feedback. Don't save your comments for only those people who are already performing well.”

“Judge what they really see and don't consider the name attached to the team beforehand!”

Of course, none of us would like to think we are inconsistent, but we are human. As judges, we need to ask ourselves what we can do to be as consistent as possible with ourselves and fellow judges.

- take an MCJA training course every year, lots of things can change each year
- know the deduction system and follow it
- practice with video before the season begins
- take good notes
- get a copy of the scores after the competition and see how they matched up
- take a moment to reflect after each competition
- ask yourself if you may have unfair “style preferences” or biases
- ask yourself if you are reluctant to give a team a lower score or deduction because they will “terrorize” the judges panel afterward, or they are your friend and you are afraid to face them

Like anything in the world of cheer, 95% of what we are doing is pretty darn amazing. We have some of the best trained judges in the nation! Nevertheless, like the athletes, we must continue to work toward perfection knowing perfection isn't possible.

October 1, 2015

Wish List...cont'd

submitted by Mary Milke

Feedback-

“I love when judges comment, too! I know it's tough, but the comments always help.”

“More feedback for sure. A number doesn't explain what they saw only what they felt it deserved. Knowing what was seen means we can correct it.”

“Feedback x 1,000. Not every school has had a program for a decade and knows what your random 7.4 means. In other sports, it's a definite score based on a definite action. In competitive cheer, it's (more) subjective. Without feedback we have no idea why you scored the way you did and therefore have to now guess on what exactly is the reason that score was given. I've always felt feedback should be mandatory for judges. If the results of our hard work is in your hands to score, you should be required to tell us why that score was given.”

“Feedback. Comments. Approachability for conversation between rounds and after the meet. Stick around after. Look available. Nothing is more upsetting than getting a score sheet with no comments and going to ask why this was the score and being told ‘I don't remember’ or ‘I made 4 tally marks’.... Tally marks for what? I trust the system but as a coach specifics are invaluable!”

“Trying to understand what the judges ‘tally marks’ mean and where we can fix things is super hard. Comments are huge and that's why there is a big section on the score sheets for comments but it's almost always never filled in.”

“Be knowledgeable. Be able to answer questions. Example: ‘Is a certain stunt illegal?’”

This one is hard. There is such a time crunch, that making comments is extremely difficult! Having a comment judge is definitely a plus, but we don't always have one. After 20 teams, even with very good notes, it can be difficult to remember what our hash marks mean. That being said, I still believe that if we write it, we need to be able to justify it. If we can justify it, then sticking around afterward to help coaches understand can be a very rewarding experience.

It may be the 100th competition you have judged, but to an athlete, she will only be on the floor for a few minutes. To her, the numbers you write down mean everything! That coach has to go over the scores given with his/her parents and team. They base their next practices on how to improve the scores we write. As judges, we should never feel like we are “all powerful” wielding our score sheet as a sword believing that no one should question our authority. Judging should be an extremely humbling experience knowing that your pencil can make or break someone's day or season.

I will continue to encourage coaches to attend judges training. It was some of the best advice my coach ever gave me. It helped me know my sport and understand how difficult judging can be. Judges can also do a lot to change coaches' perceptions by being as knowledgeable and approachable as possible. Many of our judges are extremely consistent and very helpful. We just need to make sure we are encouraging other judges to do the same. Remind our mentees of how important consistency and feedback can be.

Coaches and judges share the same love for this sport and its athletes. We need to take down the shroud of mystery and work with all of our coaches to do what is best for kids.

“When I am right, no one remembers.

When I am wrong, no one forgets.”

– Doug Harvey, Hall of Fame Umpire