

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Baseball Coaches Association, we would like to express our strong disagreement with the recent recommendation by the Tournament Management Committee to discontinue all Super 8 tournaments for the next several seasons, including the Super 8 Baseball tournament. In our opinion, the recommendation does not flow out of a proper chain of review and discussion through the key constituencies of the MIAA committee structure, and many of the claimed bases for the decision are either incomplete or misleading.

The MIAA has graciously allowed our coaches association to be properly represented by a voting member on its Baseball Committee for many years now. This committee has had a lot on its plate in the past few years, including, but not limited to: the move to Federation Rules for baseball, to the implementation of pitch counts, the new seeding structure of postseason tournaments, the new statewide tournament coming in 2021-22, and last but certainly not least, the handling of all aspects of our sport in the midst of the pandemic environment over the past 13 months. During these many committee and subcommittee meetings of which our membership has been represented, there was substantial talk—and ultimately, approval—of the decision to postpone the Super 8 for 2021 due to safety concerns and equity in the COVID environment. However, not once in these meetings was the subject broached regarding long-term suspension of the Super 8 tournament. It would seem unwise to make such a decision without input from all interested parties, just as the acting members do as part of their job as superintendents, principals, and athletic directors. One can't help but wonder why, if such a change was being contemplated by the MIAA, the association would NOT solicit the opinion of the MBCA in an effort to solve any issues—perceived or otherwise—with the Super 8 tournament. It's one thing if all ideas, opinions, disputes, etc. were heard, and then the Board of Directors made its decision; for better or worse, at least the communication process would have been transparent and allowed for collaborative feedback. Instead, the decision was rendered without any heads-up to the people who take so seriously the stewardship of high school baseball in Massachusetts. We also wonder how much the hockey people were consulted before this recommendation was finalized by the TMC; our guess is, they feel just as blindsided by this recommendation as we do.

In addition to the aforementioned structural concerns surrounding the decision process, there are other aspects and justifications of the proposal that we find problematic. One concern mentioned was the gender inequity in only having male sports with Super 8 tournaments and how this shows a desensitivity to issues of gender equity at the MIAA. In reality, there is nothing preventing any sport—male or female—from initiating a Super 8 (or something of the like) structure to their postseason tournament process. Maybe softball, golf or field hockey simply prefer not to have this style of tournament to determine a champion, and if so, more power to them. Another issue raised was the “old boy” network of selection of teams for these tournaments, implying an intrinsic unfairness to the selection process. To be blunt, we find this claim to be an insult. The Super 8 committee is comprised of hard-working stewards of high school athletics who see dozens of games and do their best to select the best teams to create the best tournament. Anyone who suggests otherwise is grossly misinformed. Finally, the thought was suggested that there is an “elitist” element to such tournaments which flies in the face of the spirit of athletics. To that critique, we point out that we believe the nature of post-season athletics is to reward the excellence of a team's journey through a season to its successful end. In our view, any team who successfully navigates to the end of a tournament full of worthy adversaries deserves its recognition as elite. If you wanted to eliminate “elitism” in sports, perhaps the association shouldn't have post-season tournaments at all?

To conclude, we would like to make clear our strong disapproval of the TMC's recent recommendation to eliminate the Super 8 until 2025, and would very much like to be part of the conversation before and during the April 29th meeting to help the MIAA provide the best baseball experience for players, teams, programs, schools, and families. We strongly believe our organization has the “pulse” of the baseball community and can help guide the MIAA with this decision. Thank you for your time and consideration; we look forward to hearing from you soon.

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