

Fit to Make the Call: Officials Aim to Improve Fitness

Each school year brings with it a multitude of high school sport seasons. Student-athletes are constantly preparing to take the fields and courts, but they're not the only ones who gear up for each season. Officials, those who ensure the athletic contests are played fairly, are also working to improve their game. You may notice them looking better in their stripes.

Just as student athletes train to compete at peak levels of performance through intense workouts and nutrition programs, the Capital Area Officials Association (CAOA) is encouraging hundreds of MHSAA registered officials to do the same.

High school sports officials come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life: Doctors, lawyers, firefighters, prison guards...you name it. Officiating high school sports involves many skill sets to perform at a level that the student-athletes deserve. Knowledge of rules, officiating techniques, communication skills, hustle and positioning are all skills of the veteran official. An attribute sometimes underemphasized is physical conditioning.

The CAOAA, a MHSAA Approved Association in mid-Michigan with 259 members, has made it a priority to emphasize health and fitness for the 2009-10 season. For the first time, the CAOAA has adopted a theme for the year: "Getting the CAOAA Fit". Each meeting incorporates a health and fitness component in addition to the usual rules study, film review, and mechanics training.

"The theme came about because many of the CAOAA board members have improved their own fitness," said Jeff Spedoske, president of the CAOAA. "Some competed in 5Ks, 10Ks, half-marathons, marathons, and triathlons last summer. We also have a group of members who officiate at the NCAA level. Officiating at that level is very competitive and being in good shape is essential."

Spedoske believes being healthy and fit is a vital component to successful officiating. "The players in the games we work are teenagers in the best shape possible," he said. "We have to be able to keep up. Our main goal when working a game is to make correct calls. Being in the right position is essential to making those calls. If you can't keep up with the game, you will be out of position and miss calls."

Many CAOAA members participated in the Women Working Wonders 5K Run/Walk (page 23).



MHSAA File Photo

One of the first classroom presentations of the season was given to the general membership by Scott Sehnert, registered dietitian, board certified specialist in sports dietetics, and Coordinator of Sports and Cardiovascular Nutrition at Michigan State University. Sehnert delivered the message on improving nutritional intake before and after events with a talk tailored to officials titled, "Eating on the Road." He spoke about food options to provide fuel to help officials perform at their best. "Think of yourselves as athletes," Sehnert reminded the officials at the meeting. "Look to what you need to fuel yourself at the sporting event and then think ahead about what to eat to recover from that game and to be ready for the next one."

— Mitch Smith

Mitch Smith is a MHSAA registered football official and a member of the CAOAA

Make a Stand at Concession Stands

You're eating on the run and you've found yourself at a concession stand. Instead of a hot dog and pop, grab a sports bar, trail mix, popcorn and a bottle of water. If you're on the road and stop for fast food, study the menu and substitute fruit for the fries; get the grilled chicken instead of the burger.

Pack a snack for before or after the game. Try these favorites so you don't foul out with your pregame and postgame meal.

- Dried fruit and nuts
- Granola
- Sliced cheese
- Peanut butter and jelly or turkey/ham/roast beef sandwiches
- String cheese or Babybel cheese wheels
- Fresh fruit or fruit cups
- Granola bars
- Beef jerky
- Yogurt
- Low-fat milk
- Hummus and pita bread/chips
- Soy crisps
- Snack-size cottage cheese
- Tuna
- Peanut butter and sliced apples

Originally published in *Healthy & Fit* magazine, October 2009: www.healthyandfitmagazine.com