

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS COACHES ASSOCIATION
PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING PLAYERS OUT OF RANKED ORDER OF ABILITY



STACKING: Stacking is having players not in ranked order as defined by the MHSAA rules. Any line-up must be verified prior to competition by current challenge matches conducted with integrity and honesty.

CHALLENGE MATCH: A coach needs written verification to explain his/her line-up and must use a consistent format throughout the season for such (The MHSTeCA recommends the official Challenge Match Verification Form accessible from the association website).

Overview:

Challenge matches are typically played at the beginning of each season to establish a ranked order. However, player improvement before the mid-point of the season may cause some ranked order issues. MHSAA rules require consistent and current challenge matches. Most coaches overlook the current part. Coaches should be able to verify their lineup with challenge matches dated up to the midpoint of the season. Using this best practice will help minimize the likelihood of any concerns. However, when a concern arises knowing the best course of action to resolve the issue is important.

General Best Practices:

- Research match scores to check for any scoring inconsistencies between the flights in question.
- Monitor scores and line-up placements of the team in question on mlive, the mhsteca facebook page, or other score reporting mediums. (mlive has a great new smart phone app which allows for the user to follow any specific team and sport).
- If the problem persists and evidence continues to be compiled, a professional letter should be submitted to the school in question by an administrator detailing the concern and evidence.
- Contact league and regional coaches who play the team in question- giving an advance notice to the concern.
- The area claims committee representative should be contacted to help mediate a resolution.
- Regional and League Directors and the MHSAA should be made aware of the situation to monitor and support a resolution.
- If a solution cannot be reached locally: a claim can be filed to the MHSTeCA Claims Committee.
- All actions should be conducted professionally with the goal to reach a resolution.
- A significant number of match scores over an extended period of time should be evaluated to determine any ranked order concerns (one outlying match score is not sufficient evidence).
- Give strong consideration to not scheduling competitions with the team in question.

Dual Competition Situation:

- A lineup concern may arise in a match when a coach has viewed a discrepancy in the quality of play between two flights.
- If there is no outside supporting evidence the concerned coach must be careful not to make accusations. Further information should be gained prior to any accusations.
 - Are the players improving at different rates since their first challenge match?
 - Are challenge matches current and consistent?
 - Have a majority of matches been played? Or could a re-challenge and line-up switch (if merited) still happen?
 - Are there any scores from other contests that support the current ranked order or out of ranked order?
 - Has there been enough time in the season to create a justifiable lineup?
- A coach should ask to see challenge matches from the opposing coach, while explaining their concern only if the above questions are addressed and the ranked order concern is not resolved.

Multi-Team Competition Situation:

- In a multi-team competition, it is always a best practice to consult with other participating coaches to see if they have a similar concern. Do so professionally and discretely. If the concern is supported by multiple coaches, all should address the concern with the coach in question. Use the best practice talking points from above.
- During an actual contest, there are not always scores available, to support a concern (most concerns are raised based on visual match-play evidence). The concerned party should NOT accuse the coach of stacking without obtaining evidence from scores. It is a best practice to comment and pose questions based on the current visual play evidence. Raise a level of concern based on this evidence, and if merited ask to see challenge matches as they must be provided if requested by rule.
- Coaches are required to always keep challenge matches on hand, however this practice is often forgotten. The more consistently coaches have conversations when there is a concern, the more coaches will have challenge matches on hand to resolve concerns.

Conference Tournament Meeting:

- The meeting manager should remind coaches to bring their challenge matches as a standard procedure for every meeting.
- When a ranked order concern is raised to a conference, it is the responsibility of the conference to resolve the concern as the local governing entity. The school should be approached by a conference administrator prior to the conference tournament coaches meeting.
- If a concern remains at the conference meeting, the coaches of the conference shall collectively work to reach a resolution.
- An Administrator of the conference should be present to act on the behalf of the conference and the rules of the conference. All conferences abide by MHSAA Tennis Coaches Rules Book.
- Prior to seeding any flights the Administrator should mediate a discussion of the concern. The Administrator should ask for all evidence from both sides. Each side should be permitted to make a case professionally and respectfully.
- The evidence should be weighed and discussed.
- Next, there should be a closed vote administered over the evidence.
- Based on the majority of votes the lineup in question should either remain as is, or be corrected to follow the ranked order of ability rule with the fewest changes to the lineup as possible.
- The issue should be reported to the Conference, the Regional Manager, the claims committee, and the MHSAA.

Regional Tournament Meeting:

- If a ranked order concern has not been resolved by the time of the regional meeting, the Regional Tournament Director (Hosting Administrator) shall facilitate the same process listed above during the Regional Seed Meeting.
- Important to note: the above steps and best practices are a component to the procedures recommended by the MHSAA and are supported by the MHSAA in resolving stacking issues at the Regional Level prior to competition.
- It also is important to note that once a lineup switch is approved by a majority vote from the head coaches, the lineup must be switched no matter how the minority of coaches responds to the vote. A regional Manager may not set aside any rule.

No Challenge Matches Available Scenario:

- In any of the above scenarios, a coach may state that they do not have challenge matches for any reason. If no challenge match evidence can be given then it should be weighed accordingly. A coach may be given the time to provide proof of a challenge at a later date but should be mentored to always have challenge matches on hand.
- If no challenge match(es) can be provided, a vote from the coaches may be taken to decide if the players without documented challenge matches shall be permitted to participate in their submitted flight placements given the concerns of ranked order of ability.
- If the players did not play challenge matches, the coach should be mentored on the rules of high school tennis: "current and consistent challenge matches" are required for all players. Players should not be participating in competition if their flight position cannot be justified with current and consistent challenge matches.