April 8, 2015

Dear Fellow Ohio Prep Sportswriter,

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to attend today’s annual meeting. Your dedication to making our profession better for everyone is a credit to all.

As always, on behalf of the organization, our sincere thanks to Dr. Dan Ross, and especially Tim Stried, as well as the entire OHSAA staff for their unwavering commitment to see this organization remain strong. If not for the efforts of Tim, I don’t know if we would be in existence today. Thank you, Tim.

The challenges we face to perform our duties at the highest possible level seem to continually grow.

With printing centers now printing multiple papers, it has forced deadlines to be earlier and earlier to where getting a high school game story published in a timely manner is a tremendous challenge. Space is tighter and tighter, the commitment from those in charge seems to be less and less, yet every one of us still realizes the always-growing interest in all high school sports and the demand for its coverage.

There are also the dramatic changes in technology and deciding what goes in print in the newspaper, what goes on the newspaper’s website, as well as school websites, blogs and seemingly everything else.

It has certainly changed since the days this organization was founded in 1972 by the likes of Dick Zunt of Cleveland, Frank Shepherd of Coshocton, Tom Metters of Athens, Cal Pokas of Martins Ferry, Persh Rohror of Ravenna, Dave Long of Dayton and Jim Wharton of Columbus, just to name a few.

But the mission is as important as ever, and we as a singular voice can keep this proud century-old tradition of high school sports coverage in the written word alive and well.

As we transition into this ever-changing world, you can help in many ways.

You can be our grass-roots coordinator in your corner of the state. As you cover football and all other sporting events next year, please give your fellow sportswriters a special invitation to join us next year and proudly enter his or her finest efforts in our annual writing contest, a true cornerstone of our organization.

But also during the coming year, I want to make this a year we help alert everyone to the importance and interest of covering high school sports. It truly is important to the bottom line of every newspaper to reach out and report the efforts of all of these outstanding young people, not just a few teams or individuals, but everyone who is the local connection that binds the community with its newspaper, whether the team is marching toward a championship or not.

Please let me know at my email at rrheath@roadrunner.com if there are ways we can, as an organization, assist you or if you have a thought that can be of service to all your fellow sportswriters.

Finally, I hope you will remember one thing as you report your results of the high school sports world.

I have completed a great deal of research on the history of high schools athletics, especially in southern Ohio, and each year it seems to get harder and harder to find just some of the basic facts. In recent years, I have worked to collect the final boys and girls league basketball standings from throughout the state, and especially in northeastern Ohio this year very, very few papers even kept any high school standings, including all the major ones.

As many of you know, in my other life I serve as the mayor of the city of Jackson, but one of my toughest challenges this time of the year is trying to find the final won-lost records of the teams in the Cleveland Senate, which should be one of the truly iconic high school athletic leagues in our state.

If I have one goal this year, it would be to make sure we don’t lose our history and work together with our high schools and their athletic leagues and conferences to provide a more timely accounting of their teams while making sure this information is preserved.

For example, many of the leagues in southwestern Ohio, such as the Cincinnati Hills League, have outstanding websites that are kept current in all sports, which makes for an outstanding resource for sportswriters who need current and accurate information in a hurry.

Unfortunately, I believe only the Patriotic Athletic League has a website in the Northeast District. If these leagues were encouraged to develop websites using the southwestern Ohio websites as a model, especially the new leagues that will be commencing next year, what a great asset it would be in promoting the athletes and teams of all
schools, as well as providing a wealth of current and timely information to those of us working so hard to accurately report these results usually in a very limited time span.

Fortunately, more and more OHSAA multiple team tournament events (track, cross country, wrestling, golf, etc.) on the sectional, district and regional level are using Baums Page to record results, but I believe the Central District has done the best job on its website of the district websites of recording all OHSAA district-level tournament events and providing a historical perspective as well.

It would be another great asset if all of the district’s websites could follow suit and all of us would know we could go directly to that website and access all of this vital information.

Finally, the OHSAA on its website has provided a space for all schools to report the results of all of its varsity teams which could be another great reference in trying to report team and league standings, and assist in finding the records of various teams for upcoming or just completed games.

Sadly, though, only a minority of schools make a sincere effort to fulfill this potential. I am sure every school has a computer class of some kind, so wouldn’t it be a great teaching tool to those students in those classes to learn how to gather the information, make sure it is correct, and then post it in a timely manner?

Another great resource vastly under-utilized.

With the tremendous advances in technology, the foundation is in place to have the resources to make our jobs so much easier, know we are getting the correct information, and preserving our history as well.

The Northeast District possibly has one of the proudest high school athletic traditions of any area in America, and it truly saddens me to see that history slip away because we are not fully utilizing the tools that are in place for us to use.

While our jobs become more difficult with earlier deadlines, changing priorities and other challenges, we need to offset these with ways to make our jobs easier and more efficient.

It will take the combined efforts of all, the sportswriters encouraging the leagues, conferences and schools to lend a helping hand in creating these websites and utilizing the OHSAA website to its maximum potential, district boards making it a priority to get results on its websites in timely manners, and with all of these combined and dedicated efforts, we can make sure the foundation for the current availability of timely information is always at hand and preserve the history of one of our most treasured traditions, the high school athletic programs and athletes of the great state of Ohio.

Sincerely yours,

Randy Heath, Jackson
2014-16 President
April 8, 2015

Dear Fellow Ohio Prep Sportswriter,

As our organization has grown in recent years, we have received more and more interest from other media outlets, such as radio and television, to join our group.

I have broadcast games for over 30 years and was a member of the old Ohio Prep Sportscasters Association, which was very strong in the 1970s and 1980s when stations from across the state would broadcast the entire state tournament.

Unfortunately, as those members left broadcasting, the organization began to wither and eventually disbanded.

At our most recent executive committee meeting, we discussed having the radio broadcasters group, and those who work in television, to go off into their own separate branches into what would be called the Ohio Prep Sportscasters Association and the Ohio Prep Television Association.

This way, these media outlets could deal with the issues that directly affect them and allow us to directly deal with the issues that affect us.

In addition, it would allow both of these groups to form a separate Hall Of Fame for each to honor those who have distinguished themselves during their broadcasting careers.

Although this will not affect the operation or direction of our organization in any way, we would create an umbrella group called the Ohio Sports Media Organization where all three groups could join together if ever necessary for special events or to deal with an issue that might affect all.

I hope this is satisfactory to all in attendance, and you will give your approval today for us to move forward in this direction.

Sincerely yours,

Randy Heath, Jackson
2014-16 President