



# CHOCOLATE MILK *Nature's Sport Drink*



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### Striking A Balance

January 23, 2018

This past fall, the feature topic of the seven Update Meetings of the Michigan High School Athletic Association was the Transfer Rule . . . its history, rationale and reasons why it should and shouldn't be altered to counter the transfer epidemic that school of choice laws and the youth sports travel team culture have infected upon school-sponsored sports in this and other states.

The Update Meeting presentation included cautions that, while the vast majority of school administrators and coaches want a tougher and tighter transfer rule with longer periods of ineligibility and fewer exceptions that permit immediate eligibility, many people outside of school sports believe such changes would infringe upon their individual choices; and even some people involved in school sports at the local level lose interest in supporting the rules already in place when they are applied to their own situation.

The Update Meeting concerns have been legitimized during more recent months in both high and low profile situations.

There are suggestions that the MHSAA should have an investigations department to search for and penalize athletic-oriented transfers and unscrupulous acts by coaches, parents and others. Which is a foolish notion. The MHSAA does not have subpoena power, can't perform wiretaps, and cannot devote the personnel and other resources that an investigations department would require. Even with hundreds of millions of dollars in resources, the NCAA has not been able to execute that function for intercollegiate sports, and recently the FBI stepped in to do the difficult work.

As has been its long-standing and generally effective practice, the MHSAA relies heavily on its member schools to help enforce its rules, which schools agree to do as a condition of their voluntary membership.

At the other extreme are suggestions to do away altogether with transfer eligibility rules. Let anything and everything go. Which is what we call the AAU, an incompatible approach to student-centered, school-sponsored sports.

Striking a balance is a difficult, but worthwhile endeavor. To that end, the MHSAA Representative Council works tirelessly on behalf of member schools to establish the proper set of rules to create competitive equity.

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### About the Author



Jack Roberts has been at the helm of the MHSAA as its Executive Director since 1986, implementing programs and overseeing tournament administration and regulations for the Association which boasts 1,500 member schools, 10,000 registered officials and 13,000 head coaches.

During the last 45 years, Roberts has spoken to educator and athletic groups, business leaders and civic groups in almost every state and five Canadian provinces. He is one of the nation's most articulate advocates for educational athletics.

Roberts has served on the board of directors of the [National Association of Sports Officials](#) (NASO), is in his second term on the board of the [National Federation of State High School Associations](#), and is the first chairman of the [NFHS Network](#) board of directors. He has been board president for the [Refugee Development Center](#) for nine years, and is a past-chair of the board of directors of the [Michigan Society of Association Executives](#). He is chair of the board of trustees for the [Capital Region Community Foundation](#) for 2018.

He is a 1970 graduate of Dartmouth College, where he played defensive safety for the Ivy League's winningest football team during that span, and he sang in Dartmouth's close harmony vocal group.

His wife, Peggy, has retired from a 30-year career in social services, and is serving as president of the board of the Fenner Nature Conservancy in Lansing.