

Limits

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who works more than one inning and less than four innings in a game must have one calendar day off. A pitcher also is limited to 10 innings in one game, with one pitch thrown in an inning constituting a full inning.

The MPA baseball committee began discussing pitch-count restrictions well before the 2016 season, and schools were encouraged to track pitch counts during games at all levels this spring in order to help develop the most efficient way of tabulating pitches and tracking subsequent eligibility.

The MPA also has included an advisory in its recent annual baseball bulletins that says in part, “A coach who has the best interest of a player in mind will remove that player once a total of 90-100 pitches have been thrown.”

The momentum for using pitch counts throughout high school baseball nationwide has stemmed in part from its prevalence in youth baseball.

Little League Baseball employs pitch-count restrictions in all of its age divisions, including the Senior League (ages 14-16) level that stages its annual World Series in Bangor each summer — the scoreboard beyond the right-field fence at Mansfield Stadium, where the Senior League World Series has been held since 2002, includes a pitch counter.

“I’ve watched it implemented at the Senior League level and was kind of skeptical when it first came in, but you see a lot of different strategies with it that make things pretty interesting,” said Brewer High School athletic administrator Dave Utterback, a member of the MPA baseball committee and former varsity baseball coach at Old Town High School.

“You see in the Senior League World Series where a pitcher gets to that 30-pitch threshold and then the manager yanks him so he can pitch again the next day. They have five guys ready to go every game so they can do that every game and it works.”

At least three states previously approved the use of pitch counts in high schools. Delaware and Vermont already employ such restrictions while the Alabama High School Athletic Association Central Board of Control was set to switch from innings pitched to a pitch count beginning in 2017.

Also sparking the national drive for pitch counts are concerning health trends related to overuse.

In one example, a 2015

study by the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine found that 56.7 percent of all ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction (Tommy John) surgeries performed in the United States between 2007 and 2011 were done on 15- through 19-year-olds, with the number of such surgeries increasing by an average of 9.1 percent each year.

Concern for the health of young pitchers and the movement toward using pitch counts in the high school ranks even drew Major League Baseball’s interest in a recent news release.

“We are pleased to see the NFHS taking this significant step toward curtailing pitcher use and fatigue,” said Chris Marinak, MLB’s senior vice president of league economics and strategy. “The health of high school pitchers is critical to the future prosperity of our sport. We will continue to work alongside USA Baseball as we further proliferate this important initiative.”

Maine’s task

The Maine Principals’ Association, like other state members of the National Federation of State High School Associations, must develop a policy for instituting pitch-count restrictions before the start of the 2017 baseball season.

According to MPA assistant executive director Mike Burnham, the likely timetable for creating the policy will begin formally with an August meeting of the association’s sports medicine committee.

“They’re going to give us guidance as to what the numbers should look like for pitch counts,” said St. Onge, who is expected to represent the MPA baseball committee at that meeting.

The MPA baseball committee has scheduled a special meeting for October to draft language for a pitch-count proposal for consideration by the MPA’s general membership at its fall conference in November.

Before that final proposal is generated, several issues must be addressed — beginning with the actual pitch-count limits.

Most states are expected to use USA Baseball’s Pitch Smart standards as the template for their discussions.

USA Baseball has published recommended pitch-count restrictions for various age groups, with guidelines for ages 15-18 requiring no calendar days of rest for one to 30 pitches in a day, one day of rest for 31-45 pitches, two days of rest for 46-60 pitches, three days of rest for 61-75 pitches and four days of rest for 76 or more pitches, with per day limits of 95 pitches for

13- through 16-year-olds and 105 pitches for 17- and 18-year-olds.

“That’s going to serve as the framework for what a lot of states are going to end up doing,” said Utterback. “There’s that old saying about not trying to reinvent the wheel, and the people who put those numbers together are experts, they’ve got all the research and data that shows when arm fatigue happens depending on the age and the pitch count.”

“If the wheel’s already been invented then we might as well roll with it.”

The USA Baseball Pitch Smart guidelines — developed by a panel that includes famed orthopedist Dr. James Andrews, Major League Baseball medical director Dr. Gary Green and team physicians for the New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers, Philadelphia Phillies and San Diego Padres — offer slight variations based on the age of the pitcher, and the MPA baseball committee will have to determine if it prefers using different pitch-count limits for different ages, different pitch counts for different levels of play or a single range of pitch-count restrictions throughout the high school ranks and what those numbers will be.

“I think there’s going to be some very good discussion around do you have different pitch-count levels for different age groups, like varsity versus [junior varsity] versus freshmen,” said Burnham.

A related issue is that while USA Baseball guidelines recommend four calendar days of rest after a certain number of pitches in a game (66 or more for ages 13-14, 76 or more for ages 15-18), many Maine regular-season schedules traditionally have been arranged to correspond with the current state rule that requires three calendar days off for a pitcher who works four or more innings in a game.

In addition, the state’s recent postseason schedule has enabled a pitcher who worked four or more innings in a regional championship game to also pitch in a state final after three days of rest depending on the rotation of games in the four statewide classes.

Every other year, for example, the Class B North and South finals rotate between Tuesday and Wednesday with the state finals always on the ensuing Saturday. That means a pitcher could work four or more innings in both games every other year when the regional finals are played on Tuesday but not in the years when the regional finals are on Wednesday.

“One of the things that might change from this is that you may see coaches de-

veloping more pitchers because of pitch counts,” said St. Onge.

Another concern involves how to manage and report pitch counts during and after games.

“The biggest move we’re going to have to make is how to monitor it,” said St. Onge. “To be honest we’ve kicked around a number of different ideas and we’re going to try to find the one that works the best for both our schools and our athletes.”

Keeping track of innings pitched under the current state rule traditionally has involved the honor system, though in some cases coaches have used newspaper accounts or other lines of communication to learn how opposing pitchers were used —

Web.com tournaments. That means he can choose the events he wants to play in. Elliott hopes to attempt a full schedule of tournaments this summer for the first time in 10 years, as his son Blake is now 9 years old.

“I’ll go to Travelers in a couple weeks at a course that I know pretty good,” Elliott said of the PGA stop at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Connecticut.

“I’m going to try a bunch of the Champions Tour events the rest of the year,” he added.

In the meantime, Elliott will make the usual summer tournament stops in New England. That includes picking up some extra money for high finishes in the senior division.

“I’m 52, but I’m playing as good as I’ve ever played,” he said. “I’ve been working out in the gym, trying to keep myself in shape so I can continue on for a while.”

a 10-second penalty by the Tour’s race jury for a “hand-sling” in Friday’s stage.

Dutch rider Bauke Mollema, who was in second place, also crashed and his hopes of finishing on the podium in Paris disappeared. He is now in 10th place.



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Sebasticook Valley’s Josh Perry releases a pitch to Bronco-Hermon during their District 3 Senior League all-star baseball tournament game at Mansfield Stadium in Bangor last Friday. Little League Baseball employs pitch-count restrictions in all of its age divisions and a similar rule will be in place for Maine high school baseball next season.

Elliott

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spanned 19 seasons but primarily covered 1994-2004. He won the 1994 Nike Mississippi Gulf Coast Classic and the 1997 Nike Alabama Classic.

Elliott still believes in his ability, even though he is more than 10 years removed from his last regular tour gig.

“I’m the same as I was when I was 25 years old,” Elliott said. “I hit drive the ball good, I putt decent, I hit the irons good.”

Experience tells him that putting together the various elements of his game for an extended period could serve as the catalyst for the next productive chapter of his career.

“I’ve been playing good all year,” he said. “I’m confident with the putter. I’m a little off

on the reads. It’s nothing too different from the last 30 years.”

Before the GBO, Elliott finished tied for fourth at the Connecticut Senior Open, which was won by GBO regular Eric Egloff, and took third at the Vermont Open Championship.

However, Elliott has continued to pursue Tour-level golf. Earlier this month, he shot a 66 to qualify for the Dicks Sporting Goods Open, a PGA Champions Tour event at En-Joie Golf Course in Endicott, New York.

“I did good. I shot 70, but there was a mistake on the card, and I didn’t see it, and I got DQ’d,” Elliott said. “That was my first Champions Tour event I made, and I screwed it up.”

Even so, he is confident there will be other opportunities. Elliott is exempt into the Monday qualifiers for PGA Tour, Champions Tour and

Tour

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urday before the ceremonial ride to Paris.

“Tomorrow is going to be hard, it’s going to be really hard and I’m sure that I’m

going to be a bit stiff after today,” Froome said. “Hopefully I can rely on my teammates and it’s just one last push.”

Britain’s Adam Yates dropped from third to fourth, 4:36 behind Fromme and nine seconds behind Quintana. Yates was handed

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