



Maryland State Football Proposal for Open Playoff System – Fall 2021

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) in consultation with Local School Systems (LSS) continues to monitor the effects of COVID-19 on student participation in all sports. The MPSSAA supports a continuity of participation in a safe and meaningful way that provides a balance of health and safety for student-athletes with educational-based athletic opportunities.

Purpose:

The purpose for this proposal is to alleviate issues associated with COVID-19 quarantines, loss of contests, and to provide an equitable opportunity for all schools to compete in the 2021 Football State Championships. Currently, football is the only sport in the MPSSAA playoff system in which teams must earn their way into the playoffs. This proposal strives to maximize student participation by making modifications that will provide an opportunity for all schools to make the playoffs regardless of regular season complications due to COVID-19.

Rationale:

The proposal is imperative to maintain a competitive and fair playoff system. The goals are to maintain parts of the current system, to include the point system and the regional alignment structure, as well as encourage full transparency when dealing with COVID-19 situations by removing any concern of playoff implications. The focus is to align with the playoff standards of other sports within the MPSSAA, in which all schools regardless of regular season results are able to participate in the state tournament.

Process/Timeline:

The MPSSAA in consultation with LSS continues to monitor the effects of COVID-19 on all of its sports and programs to promote a continuity of participation opportunity. In accordance with COMAR 13A.06.03.07(7) and under General Policies found on page 2 of the MPSSAA Fall Bulletin, “All policy and procedures changes for State tournaments shall be subject of the approval of the MPSSAA Executive Council with the Association Tournament Committee serving in an advisory capacity. Emergency decisions on tournament policies and procedures may be made by the MPSSAA Executive Council”.

The MPSSAA Executive Council will use the below timeline to gather feedback and make decisions on this proposal.

Date	Who	Action
September 10	Executive Council Supervisors	Release proposal to supervisors and MPSSAA Football Committee
September 13	MPSSAA Classification Committee	Create classifications and region alignments
September 15	MPSSAA Football Committee	Take action on the proposal
September 24	Executive Council	Take final action on the proposal

Classification Alignment:

The MPSSAA Classification Committee will review the enrollment numbers of the 182 member schools who have acknowledged they will have a football team in 2021. The classification committee will evenly divide the 182 schools into two additional classifications (4A, 4A-3A, 3A, 2A, 2A-1A, 1A). These six classifications will provide for no more than 32 teams in each classification, allowing for four regions of eight schools to compete towards a state title. The MPSSAA Executive Council will ratify these classifications.

Intended Outcomes:

This proposal provides an open format playoff structure for the sport of football. This proposal accomplishes:

- An opportunity for all schools to experience high school state tournament football in 2021 after the 2020 state tournament was cancelled;
- An opportunity for all schools to make the playoffs without concerns of loss of contests due to COVID-19 keeping a team out of the state tournament;
- Encouraging complete transparency from students, families, and coaches related to COVID-19 exposures, knowing a temporary quarantine will not affect the teams opportunity to make the playoffs;
- Easing the pressure on local school system athletic directors to reschedule too many contests in a short period of time in order to assist their team into making the playoffs;
- Ensuring school teams have meaningful seasonal opportunities, especially if COVID-19 quarantines disrupt a school’s season;

- Providing additional participation opportunities to students who may lose games this year or who had limited or no season in 2020.

Proposed Changes:

Policies and procedures found in the current MPSSAA Football Bulletin will be used to determine the final point standing for each region. Schools earn win points based on teams original designation as a 4A, 3A, 2A, and 1A school.

Schools may choose not to enter the state tournament by submitting a signed letter to the MPSSAA that is received prior to the state tournament-seeding meeting on October 31, 2021.

Using the approved classification alignments as proposed by the classification committee, the Football Committee will approve the regional seeding standings for all six classifications.

MPSSAA health and safety policies as detailed on Page 6 of the MPSSAA Fall Bulletin will apply as it relates to multi-jurisdictional competition and COVID-19 exposure during the state tournament.

Classifications will compete as detailed in the MPSSAA Football Bulletin through the state tournament series. The MPSSAA will make adjustments to its State Final Schedule to accommodate six state championship games, as opposed to the traditional four.