

Tournament Bulletins

Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association
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Policies for all Tournament Bulletins

This publication contains information pertaining to state tournament competition for the spring season. It is divided into two sections. The first section contains information pertinent to all tournaments. The second section contains the particular rules for each sport.

The bulletins are available on the MPSSAA website and copies may be made by local school systems and member schools to provide a copy to the principal, athletic director, and each head coach for the fall season. It is the school's responsibility to read and follow the guidelines provided in this publication.

I. STATE TOURNAMENT POLICIES

- A. The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association games or tournament committees, each representing all of the nine districts shall administer and supervise tournaments in the various sports at the district, region, and state level.
- B. All participating schools shall abide by the rules established by the tournament committee.
- C. Although certain aspects of a tournament may vary from year to year, the following basic policies shall be observed by all tournament committees:
 1. A tournament may not interfere with local school policy.
 2. A school or school system has the privilege and right to decide whether or not it will participate in a tournament.
 3. A school shall compete in its classification when a tournament is so structured.
 4. Student-athletes may only participate in MPSSAA post-season events when their regular season coincides with the season in which the state championship is held.
 5. Certified and approved officials organizations shall be assigned games in a fair, equitable, and nondiscriminatory manner.
 6. All awards and recognition shall conform to MPSSAA Bylaw .08.
 7. A tournament committee shall make every effort to establish game sites that minimize extensive travel for participating teams.
 8. All policy and procedure changes for a state tournament shall be subject to the approval of the MPSSAA Executive Council with the Association's tournament committee serving in an advisory capacity. Emergency decisions on tournament policies and procedures may be made by the MPSSAA Executive Director.
 9. When a contestant is found ineligible during the progress of a tournament, the contest last played shall be forfeited, and the team that was defeated shall take its place.
 10. All-star teams or best individual athlete awards MAY NOT be selected from an approved tournament.
 11. Sports at the state tournament level shall be governed by approved game rules.
 12. If a team or any student participating in state tournament play leaves the field of play before the completion of a contest, or fails to continue play when eligible to do so, or is guilty of "misconduct detrimental to the tournament", then the team, coach, contestant or contestants may be suspended from further participation in the current tournament and from the same tournament in the succeeding year, upon the determination of the tournament committee and the Executive Director. **In addition, refer to section labeled "Misconduct Detrimental to a Tournament" (page 37 in the current MPSSAA Handbook).**

13. The rules of the Association do not provide authority to order games replayed. Protests arising from decisions and interpretations by officials during the game will not be considered. Officials decisions and interpretations are final.
14. All suspended games will be continued from the point at which they were interrupted.
15. Expansion of any sport to the state level shall be recommended by the MPSSAA's Board of Control and approved by the state superintendent of schools after consultation with local superintendents of schools.
16. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (Drones): In the interest of public safety and competitive equity, the use of unmanned aircraft systems (drones) is prohibited during MPSSAA district, region, and state tournament competition. Unmanned aircraft systems may not operate in airspace over host school grounds or facilities conducting MPSSAA events.

D. Region Seeding

1. Unless otherwise stated in this bulletin in a particular sport section, teams are seeded in the region tournament according to the best regular season winning percentage. If two teams are tied, the first tie-breaker is head-to-head results. If teams are still tied, a coin toss determines the higher seed.
2. When applying tie-breaking procedures in instances where three or more teams are tied for a particular seed, the criteria must affect all three (or more) teams equally or proceed to the next tie-breaker criteria. For instance, if team A beat team B, and team B beat team C, but team A and team C did not play, this criteria does not affect all teams equally – proceed to the next criteria. Also, in instances where three or more teams are tied, and a particular criteria applies to all three equally, the criteria may only distinguish the one team among the group that earns the higher seed. The remaining two (or more) teams are then re-evaluated beginning with the first criteria.
3. When calculating winning percentage, the total number of regular season wins (1 point each) and ties (1/2 point each) are added and then divided by the total number of games completed (divisor). In the following sports, if a team has not completed the minimum number of games specified, the divisor becomes the number indicated below (instead of the total number of games).
(i.e. If a soccer team is 7-1-1, its winning percentage is $7.5/9 = 83.3\%$. If a soccer team has a record of 7-0-1 with only 8 complete games, its winning percentage is $7/9 = 77.7\%$.)

| Sport | Maximum | Minimum | Sport | Maximum | Minimum |
|--------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|---------|
| Baseball | 18 | 14 | Lacrosse | 12 | 9 |
| Basketball | 20 | 15 | Soccer | 12 | 9 |
| Field Hockey | 12 | 9 | Softball | 18 | 14 |
| Football | 10 | 8 | Volleyball | 15 | 12 |

4. The policy regarding a “NON-GAME/FORFEIT” on a team schedule is as follows:
 - (a.) In order for a contest to be declared a forfeit, it must satisfy the following criteria:
 - i. There must be a written contract, signed by both Principals, including the time, place, and date of the contest. For teams participating in the same league or conference, the official league or conference schedule shall serve the purpose of a written contract.
 - ii. The head county/league/conference administrator of both schools shall agree that the contest be regarded as a forfeit. In instances where the head administrators do not agree, the MPSSAA Executive Director shall decide. For games against out-of-state teams, the Executive Director (or equivalent) of both states shall agree in order for the contest to be declared a forfeit.
 - iii. The forfeit shall be applied to the season records of both participating teams (a win by forfeit for one team, a loss by forfeit for the other).
 - (b.) A game may be declared a forfeit under the following circumstances:

- i. A team deliberately or inadvertently fails to arrive at the designated site/time (except for extraordinary circumstances or unless mutually agreed upon in advance by the participating schools). Extreme traffic or a bus failing to arrive would be examples of “extraordinary circumstances”. This provision does not include complications arising from rescheduling a game which was previously postponed or cancelled.
 - ii. A team disbands either temporarily or permanently. Under this provision, a team must have played at least one regular season game in order for an opponent(s) to be awarded a forfeit.
 - iii. A team or individual player on a team violates MPSSAA regulations. Under this provision, the MPSSAA Handbook specifies conditions under which a forfeit may be declared.
 - iv. One or both teams are unable to complete a contest according to prevailing MPSSAA or NFHS rules.
5. Once the region seeding is complete and the brackets released, **any corrections due to errors in records or winning percentages will only be made up until 10 AM the following morning.** No changes will be made to the seeding or brackets after that time.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN A TOURNAMENT

- A. It is the responsibility of schools to work with region directors to accurately report schedules, results and records for the purpose of tournament seeding. Failure to do so in a timely and accurate manner significantly hinders the smooth operation of the state tournament and may be considered “misconduct detrimental to the tournament” as outlined in the MPSSAA Handbook.
- B. Postponed contests shall be rescheduled on the next available (nonscheduled) playing date. Any disagreements shall be referred to the appropriate local supervisor(s) for resolution.
- C. All schools entering a tournament must agree to arrangements made by its tournament committee. This includes the time and place of each game and the selection of officials. All games will be played under the rules of the MPSSAA. In cases not covered by written regulations, the tournament committee in charge is empowered to make decisions.
 1. A school may not request a postponement of any tournament game because of illness, injury, or unavailability of some of its players.
 2. A school is responsible for seeing that all its players are protected by insurance in the event of injury.
- D. Games will be played on a basis of shared responsibilities. Personnel from the visiting schools must accept their joint responsibilities with the persons in charge for the supervision and maintenance of good behavior on the part of the students, spectators, and participants. Good sportsmanship, exemplary behavior, and protection of property are of primary importance before, during and after each contest. It is recommended that faculty representatives of the competing teams anticipate and study problems that could arise from such contests and plan cooperatively to deal with these problems.
- E. Schools hosting region tournament games are responsible to provide a qualified game manager other than the participating coach.
- F. The MPSSAA provides a hard copy of the NFHS rulebooks and electronic copies of the MPSSAA Bulletins to all member schools each season. Schools are expected to maintain access to those publications and require teams to have them available at all playoff contests. It is highly recommended that these materials are presented to officials and reviewed at pre-game meetings to verify their availability as a reference during the contest. For instance, unique overtime procedures outlined in a sport-specific bulletin should be reviewed.
- G. The possession or use of any alcoholic beverage or nonalcoholic substitute (i.e. nonalcoholic champagne) is considered to be “conduct detrimental to a tournament”. An individual or team using such products in any form of consumption or celebration will be subject to disciplinary action.

III. POINT OF EMPHASIS

The MPSSAA would like to make a point of emphasis for coaches. Coaches are reminded that you set the tone for your team and are the foremost influential figures representing your school. Your coaching attire and actions should reflect a professional approach that signifies a respect for the game, respect for your school and respect for yourself.

IV. SCHEDULING CONFLICTS

- A. Following are some guidelines to be used when scheduling conflicts arise:
1. Conflicts with region starting times when only two schools are affected may be resolved between the competing schools with tournament committee approval.
 2. Region game dates may be moved with tournament committee approval provided other factors don't render a change unfair to others in the tournament (i.e. baseball pitching limitations).
 3. Graduation takes precedence over a contest involving two schools.
 4. Multi-team events will be contested as scheduled.
 5. Only conflicts with school-sponsored activities will be considered for modification to the schedule. Dinner reservations, hair appointments, limo pickups, photo sessions, after-prom fatigue, etc., are optional activities and not considered official school activities.

V. COMPLIMENTARY PASSES

- A. Complimentary passes are provided for coaches and administrators only.
1. Passes are distributed through local supervisors.
 2. Each pass should have the bearer's name printed on the pass prior to distribution.
 3. A valid driver's license is required to be displayed with each pass.
 4. Admission to Regular Season Events is subject to Local School System Rules.
- B. Additional special passes will be distributed for some tournaments. Those passes will admit the bearer only.
- C. All other individuals age 7 years or older will be charged admission to any MPSSAA event.

VI. RADIO AND TELEVISION

Radio and television coverage of the playoffs and championship games will be allowed by any station that is awarded a contract by the MPSSAA. Radio and television contracts must be awarded through the Executive Director. Schools will be notified by the Executive Director of approved broadcasters.

VII. MEDICAL PERSONNEL

The MPSSAA has budgeted for qualified medical personnel to be employed at each semifinal and final game. Host schools should employ those medical personnel from local sources. Medical personnel will be paid at the local rate. Schools entering the tournament agree to accept the recommendation of the medical professional assigned by the MPSSAA to cover the event.

VIII. THUNDER AND/OR LIGHTNING

If thunder and/or lightning can be heard or seen, participants, spectators, and staff are in danger. Contests must be stopped and protective shelter sought immediately. In the event that either situation should occur, 30 minutes will be allowed to pass after the last sound of thunder and/or lightning strike before resuming play.

IX. POLICE PROTECTION

The game director at each site will employ adequate police protection to supervise parking lots and assist with crowd control.

X. SCHOOL REIMBURSEMENT

The MPSSAA Finance Committee has authorized set funding to be distributed to MPSSAA Districts for the purpose of assisting with some of the travel expenses incurred by schools participating in regional and state tournaments. Each local district shall determine their local process for distribution of reimbursement funds based on participation in MPSSAA regional and state competitions.

Health and Safety

I. GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- A. All participants, coaches, officials, administrators, spectators, and any other individual present at any interscholastic athletic practice or competition must adhere to the local educational agency policies pertaining to health and safety policies.
- B. Multi-Jurisdictional Competition - During any multi-jurisdictional competition, the policies and procedures of the hosting site's jurisdiction shall be followed. When conflicts arise in which representatives, including but not limited to coaches, participants, and spectators, are not following the policies and procedures of the local school system, the site director in collaboration with school administration shall have the authority to:
 - 1. Initially provide a warning to those not in compliance to adhere to the local school system policies.
 - 2. Suspend the competition and refer the conflict to Supervisors of Athletics for resolution.
 - 3. Unresolved matters shall be referred to the the MPSSAA Executive Director.
- C. Shared Responsibility - Games and Events will be contested on the basis of shared responsibilities. Personnel from the visiting schools must accept their joint responsibilities with the persons in charge for the supervision and maintenance of behavior on the part of students, spectators, and participants. This includes health and safety policies and procedures, good sportsmanship, exemplary behavior, and protection of property before, during and after each contest.
- D. Tournament Considerations - If a school/team must withdraw from the state tournament due to health related matters, the team scheduled to play next will receive a bye/forfeit and advance to the subsequent round. A school may not request a postponement of any tournament game because of illness, injury, or unavailability of some of its players or coaches.

II. HEAT ACCLIMATIZATION, EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS, AND AED REQUIREMENTS

- A. All member schools and school systems are required to be in compliance with Maryland House Bill 836 (2022 General Session) effective July 1, 2022.
 - 1. Each High School shall develop a venue-specific emergency action plan:
 - (a.) for the operation and use of automated external defibrillators that meets the requirements of Education Article 7-450;
 - (b.) for heat acclimatization that meets the requirements of Education Article 7-450;
 - (c.) for coordination of care for other emergent injuries, including cervical spinal injury, concussion and closed head injury, major orthopedic injuries, and severe weather for outdoor facilities;
 - (d.) that is posted at each athletic facility at the school;
 - (e.) that is available on the school's website;
 - (f.) that is distributed to the member school coaching staff; and
 - (g.) that is rehearsed in person and interactively by all of the coaching staff of each sport before each of their respective seasons.
 - 2. Local school systems shall adopt preseason-practice heat acclimatization guidelines consistent with the model policy found on page 7 of this document and listed on the MPSSAA health and safety page. These guidelines include ensuring each school is properly prepared and equipped to initiate cold water immersion for the treatment of exertional heat stroke.

3. Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is provided on-site and located within a brief walk from an athletic practice or event. An AED must be freely accessible during all school functions.
- B. All members of the coaching staff are to be trained in the operation and use of an automated external defibrillator, all members are trained in cold water immersion, and a trained member of the coaching staff is present at all athletic practices and events on school property.