SOFTBALL

GENERAL INFORMATION:

A. Fast Pitch Softball is a state championship event organized *as* a Region basis in *all* classifications. Beginning and ending dates for practice and competition can be found at the front of this publication.
B. All softball games will be played by the rules as published by the National Federation of State High School Associations.
C. The maximum number of softball games allowed (not including state tournament games) shall be: thirty (30) games either head-to-head competition or in invitational or region tournaments. *The PSR minimum number of games to qualify is twenty (20). Please refer to the PSR Appendix for additional information.*
    1. Region tournaments shall be structured so that no school will play more than eight (8) games in that tournament.
    2. Schools may not enter any softball tournament other than the region tournament or state elimination series unless such tournament has been approved by the GHSA Executive Director.
    3. Sub-varsity teams are allowed to play 70 percent of their respective varsity team's regular season games. Sub-varsity teams shall not schedule a tournament after they have reached their 70 percent game restriction.
    4. Contracts are required for all GHSA member school fastpitch softball games, including invitational tournaments.
D. All varsity softball games shall be played with officially-dressed officials who are registered under the GHSA plan for the registration of officials. The assignment of officials for regular-season games, invitational tournaments, and sub-region and region tournaments will be made by the GHSA office.
    1. The GHSA will assign one or more associations to each school for their games.
    2. The school and the local association(s) will sign a contract for the games that are assigned.
E. The use of WBGT for ALL Fastpitch Softball Contests is mandated as follows:
    1. WBGT must be measured 15 minutes prior to start of contest, coaches and umpires must be notified.
    2. If WBGT is equal or above 86.0 F, an ice immersion tub must be present and ready for use.
    3. If WBGT is equal or above 88.0 F, Umpires will take a 3-minute hydration break at the beginning and mid-point of inning 3 and continuing until the conclusion of the game.
F. The following rule "State Adoptions" have been approved for GHSA play in softball:
    1. The game will end when:
        a. a team has completed three turns at bat and is fifteen (15) runs behind.
        b. a team has completed four turns at bat and is twelve (12) runs behind.
        c. a team has completed five or more turns at bat and is eight (8) runs behind.
    2. The courtesy runner rule has been adopted. NOTE: Participation as a courtesy runner does not constitute entry into the game, and does not count as a game played.
    3. The use of a double first base is recommended.
    4. *The suspended game rule will be used in the event that a regular season game is suspended prior to becoming a legal game, or if it is suspended after becoming a legal game without a winner being able to be determined, it shall resume from the point of interruption on the next available date. If that date cannot be agreed upon by the competing schools, the GHSA Executive Director or appointee shall determine the playing date. If a regular season game is suspended at a point where it is a legal game and a winner can be determined, it shall be considered an official game. All playoff and state tournament games shall be played to completion of seven (7) innings, unless the applicable run rule takes effect.*
    5. Termination of the game due to weather, unplayable conditions, or mechanical malfunctions:
        a. The umpires may halt play for up to two (2) hours when conditions do not allow play to continue.
            i. The two-hour interruption(s) is cumulative
            ii. The game must be terminated when the two-hour time period has elapsed. If the first game of a doubleheader is terminated, the second game will be postponed.
            iii. The two-hour period does not include time needed to prepare the field for the resumption of play.
        b. Umpires must wait for at least 30 minutes before terminating a game for unplayable field conditions.
    6. In any softball game, if a team does not show up within 30 minutes of the scheduled game time, a forfeit shall be declared unless the delay is unavoidable and the visiting team notifies the home team. In emergency situations, the game may be started late, or may be rescheduled.
    7. In order to be used, the tie-breaker procedure shall be agreed upon by both teams during the pregame meeting with the umpires. If implemented, the procedure shall begin in the 10th inning (and any subsequent half-inning). Exception: In Invitational Tournament games with a "time limit" policy, the tie-breaker procedure would start in the subsequent inning after time had expired. All Varsity games must be played until a winner is determined.
    8. Only game-essential personnel are permitted within the confines of the team's dugout and shall be held to the same level of accountability as the coaching staff and players.

9. Sub-varsity games may have a time limit instead of playing seven innings as long as the guidelines are agreed upon before the start of the game.
10. Varsity games played in invitational tournaments may have time limits as follows:
    a. No game may be less than five innings regardless of the time limit (4.5 innings if home team is ahead.)
    b. No time limit may be less than 90 minutes.
11. Host schools are required to post the current USA SOFTBALL list of "Non-Approved" bats in both dugouts during GHSA sanctioned games.

G. Teams may have spring try-outs that are limited to a maximum of five consecutive school days between May 1 and the last day students are in school. Students must be academically eligible and enrolled at the school they are trying out for, or be an 8th grader at a feeder school for that school. Students currently in the 7th grade (rising 8th graders) may not participate in spring tryouts.

H. Schools must enter team schedules, rosters and weekly game/meet results during the season*in the GHSA MIS System* and be responsible for updates as needed. This information will support statewide media, event programs, broadcasts partners and GHSA Region Standings. *Deadlines for submitting information must met. All schools, regardless of classification, are REQUIRED to enter all game results into the GHSA MIS site immediately following their respective contest. This is imperative as it will affect all classifications in the Post Season Ranking System.* Teams are encouraged to maintain team/individual statistics on MaxPreps.

I. ***NFHS Pitcher One Way Communication:*** *Pitchers will now join catchers as the only players in high school softball permitted to receive one-way electronic communication from the dugout.*

1-9-6 EXCEPTION *- One-way electronic communication may be utilized by coaches to communicate from the dugout to the pitcher and/or catcher while the team is on defense. Previously, one-way electronic communication was permitted only to the catcher.*
This change reflects the continued evolution of technology within sport and provides coaches with an additional method to efficiently communicate defensive strategy and game management information. By expanding the exception to include the pitcher, coaches can deliver information directly to the two primary defensive leaders on the field, reducing the need for multiple signals and improving the pace and flow of the game.
This remains a permissive rule, allowing schools and teams to determine whether they wish to utilize one-way electronic communication technology. Teams may continue to use traditional communication methods, such as hand signals, wristbands, and/or play cards.
Regardless of the electronic devices capabilities, under this exception they must only be utilized for one-way communication from the dugout to the pitcher and/or catcher. Players are not permitted to use these devices to transmit information back to coaches or other team personnel. All other provisions regarding the use of electronic devices remain in effect. Pitchers may only use wrist devices; ***ear pieces and communication devices attached to the belt will not be permitted for pitchers.***

J. *Scrimmage (Bylaw 2.62 F) -One interscholastic scrimmage (two teams meeting head-to-head) is allowed in the sports of Baseball, Basketball, Football, Flag Football, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Volleyball and Wrestling (tri match allowed on days preceding school or quad match on days not preceding a school day).*
    1. *This scrimmage may be scheduled anytime between the beginning of practice as set by the GHSA and the first regular season game for each team.*
    2. *This scrimmage is for varsity teams only, and shall be played with normal timing and/or scoring rules except as noted in individual sports sections.*
    3. *Officials registered with GHSA must be assigned, and the GHSA "Fee Chart" must be followed.*
    4. *A school may not scrimmage another school that is counting the scrimmage as a regular-season contest.*

FAST PITCH REGION TOURNAMENTS:

A. The dates, times and sites will be determined by each Region and must be submitted to the Region Secretary.
B. The final play date is *Thursday, October 8*.
C. Region post-season games (play-in games, sub-region games, region tournament games) must have a minimum of two (2) games played on each field, each day, with the exception of a championship game.

FAST PITCH STATE TOURNAMENT:

A. *In all Classes, Regions will determine a Region Champion who will automatically qualify for the post season and host a first round game*
B. *In All Classes, the remaining qualifiers (non-Region Champions) for the Post Season will be determined by the Post*

Season Ranking Formula. Refer to Appendix "PSR" in the GHSA Constitution for detailed information.

C. For the First and Second Rounds, teams will play a best-of-three series at the site of the higher seed.

D. Dates for the 1st Round of the State Tournament: *October 12 -13 - A, 2A, 3A,& Private October 14 -15 -4A, 5A, 6A, & 7A*

   Dates for the 2nd Round of the State tournament: *October 19 -20 - A, 2A, 3A,& Private October 21 -22 - 4A, 5A, 6A, & 7A*

   1. There will be a doubleheader on the first day and an "if" game on the second day.
   2. The host team will be the "home" team for the first game of the series and the visiting team will be "home" team for the second game. The higher-seeded team will be the home team for a third game, if necessary.
   3. Teams that win the Second Round series will advance to the Elite Eight of the State Tournament.

E. The Elite Eight of the State Tournament will be a double-elimination tournament held in Columbus, Georgia on *October 28-31, 2026.*

F. **FINANCES:**
   1. Admission fees must be charged for all post-season games: *Fees will be posted on the GHSA website*
   2. Admission fee for State Championship Series at a neutral site will be posted on the GHSA web site. NOTE: All First Round, Second Round and and Elite Eight admission fees MUST be purchased through GoFan.
   3. The GHSA will receive 12% of the gross gate receipts at all state playoff games. If schools are not able to cover the required costs with gate receipts, this fee will be waived if validated by the GHSA office.
   4. In the First and Second Rounds, the umpires will be paid out of gross receipts (Note: If the gross receipts are not sufficient to pay the umpires, the host school will pay that cost.)
   5. The visiting teams shall be paid $.80 per mile (one way) for travel.
   6. During the State Playoffs and Elite Eight, each team is allowed free admission for a maximum of 25 players and team essential personnel. Schools desiring more than this number must pay the admission price or submit names on the "Excess Team Entry Form." Coaches will be admitted with their GHSA coaching passes.
   7. During the State Playoffs and Elite 8 Tournament in Columbus, teams are responsible for their own travel and housing expenses.

G. All umpires will be assigned by the GHSA.

H. Times posted with the brackets are approximate. Teams should be ready to take the field for play at the time indicated for each game.
   1. The top team in each bracket uses the first base dugout unless a team is playing consecutive games on the same field.
   2. The home team will be determined for each game with a coin toss.
   3. Lineups should be submitted to the official scorer at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time.
   4. Teams may not use game fields for batting practice.
   5. All teams advancing to the Elite Eight of the State Tournament are required to be present and in uniform at the Opening Ceremonies. Failure to comply with result in a $250.00 fine to the school.

I. The outfield fence will be set at 200' from home plate for the State Tournament in Columbus.

J. *Double first base will be used for the State Tournament in Columbus.*

K. All teams advancing to the Championship Finals shall be required to have all team bats inspected upon check-in at the championship venue.
   1. Bats that pass inspection will have an approved sticker placed on the bat.
   2. Bats that do not pass inspection will be confiscated and *available for the Coach to pick up at the conclusion of that team's final game.*
   3. Bats found to be used in a game that do not have the approved sticker shall be confiscated and the offending player and head coach shall be restricted to the dugout for that game.