

2025

# GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL



## COACHES' HANDBOOK

Jay Russell, Assistant Director  
jayrussell@ghsa.net  
151 South Bethel  
Street Thomaston, GA  
30286  
O) 706-647-7473, ext. 23  
F) 706-647-2638



## 2025 GHSA Football



### Table of Contents:

P 3.....	Dates and Deadlines
P 5.....	GHSA Constitution and By Laws for Football
P 19.....	Post Season Ranking System (Overview)
P 21.....	GHSA Practice/Heat/Humidity
P 24.....	Concussion/Cardiac Information
P 25.....	GHSA Sportsmanship Statement
P 26.....	GHSA Constitution & By Laws General Regulations
P 27.....	NFHS Rule Changes and Equipment Guidelines
P 31.....	NFHS Points of Interest and GHSA Points of Emphasis
P 39 .....	GHSA Overtime Procedures and Penalty Enforcement
P 42.....	GHSA Football Forms
P 43.....	Official GHSA Footballs
P 44.....	GHSA Electronic Ticket Information
P 45.....	Sample Playoff Bracket (1A2,4A,5A,6A)
P 46.....	Sample Playoff Bracket (1A1,2A,3A, Private)
P 47 .....	Erkism's



## 2025 GHSA Football



3

### GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION BEGINNING AND ENDING DATES FOR 2024-25

#### SUMMER OF 2024:

Dead Week TWO-Summer **2025** is June30-July 6, 2025 (Monday-Sunday)

#### **2025 Football Season Information**

- Varsity Games may be played on the Thursday before the date of Week 1, or on the Saturday after the date ONLY, unless by special permission from GHSA. Remember only 1 varsity game per week during the season.
- The first contest date for Varsity Football is the WEEK 1 date. NO Sub-Varsity games are permitted before this date.
- Football weeks are 1-12, there is **NO ZERO** week anymore.
- You may play 10 Varsity Games in the 12 week season. (Two open weeks).
- Football weeks 2025 seasons are listed below:

<b><u>WEEK</u></b>	<b><u>2025 Season</u></b>
Week 1	August 15
Week 2	August 22
Week 3	August 29
Week 4	September 5
Week 5	September 12
Week 6	September 19
Week 7	September 26
Week 8	October 3
Week 9	October 10
Week 10	October 17
Week 11	October 24



## 2025 GHSA Football



4

Week 12	October 31
*Playoff Round 1	November 14
Playoff Round 2	November 21
Playoff Round 3	November 28
Playoff Round 4	December 5
Finals	December 15,16,17

- The GHSA will attempt to play all first-round games on Friday, November 14. However, if there are not enough playoff certified officials available, a classification may be moved to Thursday, November 13.



# FOOTBALL

## REGULAR SEASON:

- A. Football is a state championship sport in each classification, and schools are aligned on a Region basis.
1. In the reclassification year (see Article III of the GHSA Constitution), all regions will meet after reclassification has been finalized by the Executive Committee and after any sub-divisions have been finalized and cross-over games have been arranged.
    - a. No schedule is valid until the plans of all regions have been approved.
    - b. Plans for determining the ranking and breaking ties of the four region representatives for playoffs must be drawn by the regions before the football season begins.
    - c. All contracts should be drawn to coincide with the two-year reclassification period and show the day, date, time, opponent and game site.
  2. Each school must file its football schedule with the GHSA Executive Director no later than March 1, each year.
    - a. The schedule must show the day, date, time, opponent, and game site.
    - b. The GHSA Executive Director must be notified concerning any changes made to the schedule after the submission date.
    - c. Any changes made for a region game must be made prior to the date for beginning football practice.
      1. Any change of opponent after that date will cause the game not to count as a sub-region or region game.
      2. Limitations regarding schedule changes shall also be construed to prevent a school from canceling a game when such a game could affect the region and/or sub-region standings.
      3. A change in date or time with the same opponent is not considered a change affecting region or sub-region status.
    - d. Contracts with officials for varsity games must be signed by June 1 each year, and copies of the schedules must be submitted to the proper official's association(s).
    - e. Each school must have a signed contract for its football scrimmage, and a school may be fined for failure to comply with that contract.
    - f. There may be a \$250 penalty for schools that change their football schedules after June 1. (NOTE: Appeal procedures are available.)
- B. *All schools, regardless of classification, are **REQUIRED** to enter all **CORRECT** game results into the GHSA MIS site immediately following their respective contest. This is imperative as it will impact the Class 1A-1, 2A, 3A and Private Post Season Ranking System.* Schools are to enter team



## 2025 GHSA Football



6

schedules, rosters and weekly game results during the season on MaxPreps as well and be responsible for updates as needed. This information will support statewide media, event programs, broadcasts partners and GHSA Region Standings. Teams are encouraged to maintain team/individual statistics on MaxPreps.

- C. All GHSA football games must be played according to the rules as published by the National Federation of State High School Associations, and any other rules found in this section.
- D. The number of football games allowed (excluding state playoffs) is ten (10).
  - 1. No varsity football game may be played on a night preceding a school day without specific authorization from the GHSA Executive Director.
  - 2. Only one football game may be played per week (the schedule week is a traditional week - Sunday through Saturday) by the same level team (varsity/sub-varsity) except in the case of make-up games due to special circumstances that have been approved by the Executive Director.
  - 3. A single sub-varsity game played on a night before a school day may start no later than 6:30 p.m. The first game of two sub-varsity games played on a night before a school day may start no later than 5:30 p.m.
  - 4. Football players playing on both the varsity and one sub-varsity team are limited to six quarters of competition in any seven (7) calendar day period beginning with the date of the varsity game. The penalty for violation of this rule will be forfeiture of the game in which the violation occurred and a \$1,000.00 fine.
  - 5. The football season ends for a team or individual when that team, having completed its regular-season schedule, is eliminated from playoff competition or wins the State Championship.
  - 6. All JV games will be played with 10-minute quarters. If there is an 8th grade student(s) on the JV team, then 8-minute quarters must be played.
  - 7. Schools may play 10 Mini Games at the JV level, instead of seven (7) regular games, the combination of which cannot exceed the current 28 quarters allowed for sub-varsity play. Each Mini Game will be one-half of a regular game. Four (4) schools would meet at one site, with two schools playing a half and then the other two schools playing a half. Officials would be paid the regular fee for a single game.
  - 8. Any football contest MUST have an on-site WBGT monitor and take measurements 15 minutes prior to the start of the contest and again during halftime. The following requirements for hydration breaks must be followed:
    - a. Kick-off WBGT equal or above 87.0 F – referees will take a mandatory hydration break at or near the 6-minute mark of each quarter lasting three (3) minutes (change of possession or touchdown and PAT). All participants must remove their helmets and no coaches are permitted on the field at this time. It is recommended that players who are actively engaged in the competition and come to the sideline remove their helmets and hydrate until such time that they re-enter the field of play.
    - b. Kick-off WBGT equal or above 90.0 F – referees will take a mandatory hydration break at or near the 4-minute and 8-minute mark of each quarter lasting 3 minutes



## 2025 GHSA Football



7

(change of possession or PAT). All participants must remove their helmets and no coaches are permitted on the field at this time. It is recommended that players who are actively engaged in the competition and come to the sideline remove their helmets and hydrate until such time that they re-enter the field of play.

9. Regulation of 7-on-7 Contests Clarification of Terminology: 7-on-7 play between 2 or more teams where there are NOT any officials present will be viewed as a "PRACTICE" and therefore will fall under the GHSA Interscholastic Contests and Practices (Section 2.60) and the Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity (Section 2.67) along with the following guidelines:

- a. Teams that participate in back-to-back play periods lasting a maximum of 60 minutes, must be followed by a 30-minute break in a shaded area before resuming activity.
- b. It is recommended that medical personnel (athletic trainer or EMT) be present during said practice session.
- c. 7-on-7 play between 2 or more teams in the presence of officials will constitute a "CONTEST" and therefore will follow guidelines listed below:

1. WBGT Temperature will be taken and recorded prior to the start of all contests.
2. The host school will notify the Head Official and both Head Coaches of the WBGT reading prior to the start of the contest.
3. Hydration breaks will be implemented when the WBGT is equal or above 90.0 F. Referees will take a mandatory three-minute hydration break at the 10-minute mark of each contest.
4. Ice immersion tub on-site and ready for use when WBGT is equal or above 86.0 F.
5. Medical Time-out taken prior to start of contest to discuss procedures for possible heat exhaustion or heat stroke treatment.
6. Teams that participate in back-to-back play periods lasting a maximum of 60 minutes, must be followed by a 30-minute break in a shaded area before resuming activity.
7. It is recommended that medical personnel (athletic trainer or EMT) be present on each field during all contests.

- E. Football practice may begin five consecutive weekdays prior to *July 29th* (NOTE: Schools are reminded of the special Heat and Humidity Acclimatization restrictions listed in By-Law 2.67-b pertaining to football).

1. In the first five days of practice for any student, the practice may not last longer than two (2) hours, and the student may wear no other protective football equipment except helmet and mouthpieces. NOTE:



## 2025 GHSA Football



8

- a. The time for a session shall be measured from the time the players report to the practice or workout area until they leave that area.
  - b. During acclimatization practices, teams may hold a walk-through as long as there is at least a two-hour break between the two activities.
2. Beginning *July 29th*, any student may practice in full pads and may practice a maximum of two (2) times in a single calendar day under the following stipulations:
  - a. A student must have participated in five conditioning practices wearing no other protective football equipment except helmet and mouthpieces before being allowed to practice in full pads.
  - b. In a single calendar day:
    1. No single session may last longer than three (3) hours.
    2. If two (2) practices are held, the TOTAL time shall not exceed five (5) hours.
    3. There must be at least a three-hour time of rest between sessions if two (2) sessions are held.
    4. There may not be consecutive days of two-a-day practice sessions. All double-session days must be followed by a single-session day or a day off.
    5. A walk-through may not be held on days when two practices are conducted.
  - c. These procedures are derived from recommendations created by the Inter-Association Task Force for Preseason Secondary School Athletics Participants in the paper "Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines for Secondary School Athletes."
3. Full contact should be limited during practices as well as during activity outside of the traditional fall practice. (Note: No limitation is placed on activities defined below as "AIR, BAGS or CONTROL" contact.
  - a. For purposes of this by-law, the following definitions shall apply: AIR - Players run a drill unopposed without contact; BAGS - Players run a drill against a bag or another soft-contact surface; CONTROL - Players run a drill at assigned speed until the moment of contact and one player is pre-determined the "winner" by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet; THUD - Players run a drill at competitive speed through the moment of contact with no pre-determined "winner." Contact remains above the waist; players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill; LIVE ACTION - Players run a drill in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground; FULL CONTACT - Contact which meets the definition of Live Action or Thud.
  - b. Pre-Season & Spring Practice & Summer Contact Camps:
    1. Full contact shall be allowed in no more than 2 consecutive practice days per week.





## 2025 GHSA Football



9

2. Full contact during practice shall be limited to not more than 45 minutes per day.
  3. Full contact during practice shall be limited to not more than 135 minutes per week; and
  4. During any twice-daily practice, only one session per day shall include full contact.
  5. In Summer Contact Camps, the only form of Full Contact allowed is Thud.
  6. Schools will be limited to attending no more than two (2) padded Team Contact Camps per summer: one in June for two days during a three consecutive day period, and one in July for two days during a three consecutive day period (no more than four (4) days total). There must be at least four (4) participating schools or the camp cannot be held.
- c. Regular & Post Season Practice:
1. Full contact during practice shall be allowed in no more than three (3) practice days per week.
  2. Full contact during practice shall not be allowed on more than two (2) consecutive days.
  3. Full contact during practice shall be limited to not more than 30 minutes per day.
  4. Full contact during practice shall be limited to not more than 90 minutes per week.
- d. Written Practice Plans: A written practice plan in compliance with this by-law shall be prepared in advance by the head coach prior to every practice and maintained by the school for a period of at least twelve (12) months. Such practice plans shall be made available to the GHSA upon request.
- e. Violations: The penalty to be imposed upon any member school found to have violated this by-law in any substantial manner shall be as follows:
1. First Offense: A fine of not less than \$500 nor more than \$2,500 per violation at the discretion of the Executive Director.
  2. Second Offense: The school shall be placed on probation and shall not be eligible to participate in post season play.
4. From the end of school in the spring until the first day of preseason practice, players may wear no other protective football equipment except helmets and mouthpieces for all voluntary workouts and passing league games. Institutional heat policies are also in effect for voluntary workouts supervised by school personnel.
  5. All applications for team summer camps at GHSA schools or other facilities must be submitted to the GHSA office by May 1, and all subsequent correspondence to complete the application must be completed by May 15. Coaches for these players must verify that the participants have had acclimatization practices for five days immediately preceding the camp.



## 2025 GHSA Football



10

6. Equipment in summer (contact) camps is limited to helmets and mouthpieces, shoulder pads, and compression style shorts (girdles) that have thigh pads and/or girdle pads. NO FOOTBALL PANTS OR KNEE PADS CAN BE WORN AT ANY TIME DURING SUMMER.
- F. All varsity football games shall be played with a minimum of five (5) officially dressed field officials who are registered under the GHSA plan for registering officials. The officiating crew also shall have an electric clock operator whose only duty is to operate the game clock.
  1. In all games, the host school must provide some type of dressing facilities for officials at or near the game site that can also be used to hold the pre-game conference.
  2. During the regular season, the host school is responsible for providing a crew to work the sideline chains. These individuals must be responsible adults.
  3. In accordance with By-Law 2.71-c, the host school is responsible for providing security escorts for the officials at all regular season and playoff games.
- G. The following regulations are in place for GHSA football games.
  1. All GHSA football games will have a twenty (20) minute halftime unless both school administrators agree in writing by Thursday of game week to shorten the halftime period to fifteen (15) minutes, or unless NFHS weather-condition rules supersede.
  2. Artificial noisemakers, except airhorns and whistles, are legal at football games. Illegal noisemakers are to be confiscated when visible and/or used.
  3. Bands are not to play during live-ball situations. NOTE: This includes the situation in which there is no timeout, and the teams are in a huddle.
    - a. If, during a football game, a team claims interference with communications due to band noise, the Referee shall give a warning to one or both head coaches and the bands must cease playing.
    - b. If there is a second offense by the same school's band, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be imposed against that school's team.
  4. During the state playoff series, a crew of seven (7) field officials will be used.
  5. Fans shall not be allowed to enter the playing field either before the game or at halftime to form a tunnel for players to run through.
  6. In the regular season, a school may utilize a visible 25/40-second clock as long as the time is visible on both ends of the field and the clock is operated by a paid game official.
  7. Football stadiums may never be completely dark during the use of any flashing stadium lights. The ability to see from one endline to the opposite endline must be maintained at all times before, during and after the game, until the officials have left the competition area.
- H. Spring Football Practice for each school year may be held from February 1 until the end of the school year, consisting of 10 practices spaced over 13 consecutive school days. (Note: Spring and fall scrimmage games and jamborees are considered to be extensions of practice as far as eligibility rules are concerned.)



## 2025 GHSA Football



11

1. Schools must choose by February 1 each year as to whether they will have spring football practice.
  - a. If a school conducts spring practice, all preseason practice schedules remain the same (See item D. 3(b) for a listing of contact limitations).
  - b. If a school chooses not to conduct spring practice, the team will be allowed to hold an additional (second) scrimmage game or controlled scrimmage against another school, or a jamboree with three teams playing a half against the other two teams, in the fall.
  - c. Schools hiring a new coach may appeal to the Executive Director to change an earlier decision.
2. Schools that have scrimmage game/games canceled or suspended by inclement weather will have the following options:
  - a. Play on another night during the same calendar week (defined as Sunday to Saturday.) Sunday play is not allowed.
  - b. Play during another week when the school does not have another scrimmage or regular season game scheduled. (Note: No scrimmage game may be played after a school's first varsity contest.)
3. Schools which participate in Spring Practice are allowed to play a spring game/scrimmage with another school, a jamboree with three teams playing a half against the other two teams or a multi-team OTA in place of their last (10th) practice of the spring (Note: Restrictions under by-law 2.62 (f-2) & (f-3) will apply).
4. A football coach on the payroll of one school district, but under contract to another school district for the following year, may help with spring football at the new school, if the arrangement is satisfactory with both systems.
5. Students enrolled in grade 8 in a middle school or junior high school that is a feeder school to the high school may participate in Spring Practice at that high school.
6. No student (eighth grade or above) may participate in more than ten (10) days of Spring Practice and may participate for no more than one (1) school.
- I. In case of a game being terminated in the first half (suspended game), By-Law 2.93-c must be followed. NOTE: All varsity football games must be played to completion. Any interrupted game must be replayed from the point of interruption. The school that is behind in the score may choose not to continue the game and the score will be recorded as it was at the point of interruption. NOTE: Teams will not be allowed to play two football games in the same week, except when making up a suspended game with the permission of the Executive Director.
- J. During warmups before the game and at halftime there shall be a division of the field, and neither team shall enter the other team's portion of the field. That division shall be as follows:
  1. Before the game: each team shall occupy the space from their own 45-yard line to the endline of their goal line. Neither team shall occupy the area between the 45-yard lines. EXCEPTION: When kicking, each team shall have the area between the opponent's 45-yard



## 2025 GHSA Football



12

line and kicking team's end zone in the side zone area on the same side of the field as their bench. Kickers shall kick toward their end zone.

2. Re-entering the field before the game and at halftime: each team shall have the portion of the field between their bench and the near edge of each goal post - i.e., field divided lengthwise.

K. ***Overtime is mandated for all games between schools due to the implementation of the Post Season Ranking System.***

1. This procedure involves giving both teams opportunities to score from the 15-yard line until the tie is broken.
2. Overtime games are exempt from the 11:30 p.m. GHSA curfew.

L. When there is a competitive imbalance between teams, the coach of a team trailing by 30 points or more at halftime may choose to play the second half with a running clock. Quarters will remain at 12 minutes.

1. If the coach does not exercise the option of the running clock, the third quarter will be played with regulation timing.
2. If the point differential reaches, or remains, 30 or more points during the third quarter, the clock will still run according to rule for the remainder of the third quarter, but the fourth quarter will have a running clock mandated.
3. A running clock means the clock will be stopped only:
  - a. after a touchdown and until the ball is kicked off.
  - b. during deliberations for penalty administration.
  - c. during charged timeouts or official's timeouts
4. A game that is reduced in time by use of a running clock shall constitute a "completed" game to meet other by-law considerations.



## 2025 GHSA Football



13

### GHSA OVERTIME PROCEDURE

1. There will be a 3-minute intermission between the end of regulation play and the coin toss to start the overtime procedure.
2. The captains will meet for the coin toss, and the winner may choose one of the following:
  - a. Be on offense first
  - b. Be on defense first
  - c. Choose the end of the field on which to play
3. The ball is placed on the 15-yard line and the offense keeps the ball until:
  - a. The ball is turned over on downs (NOTE: The team on offense can gain a first down.)
  - b. The defense gains possession of the ball (ball is dead immediately)
  - c. The offense scores a touchdown or field goal
  - d. The offense misses a field goal
4. After the first offensive team completes its possession, the opposing team gets its opportunity from the 15-yard line.
5. If the game remains tied after each team has had an offensive possession, there will be a 2-minute intermission and the team that lost the first coin toss has the first option for the second possession.
6. For each additional overtime period (i.e., an offensive possession by each team) the original coin toss options are alternated.
7. Beginning with the second overtime period, a team must attempt a 2-point try after a touchdown.
8. *Subsequent to the first two series from the 15-yard line, if the game remains tied, the ball will be placed on the three-yard line and teams will alternate two-point conversions until the tie is broken.*
9. Each team is allowed one timeout per overtime period. Timeouts may NOT be carried over from regulation play.

### REGION PROCEDURES:

- A. To qualify for championship consideration in a region or sub-region, a school must play a minimum number of games with schools in its region as determined by the region and the GHSA Reclassification Committee.
  1. In any region or sub-region in which there are six (6) or less schools, if each school plays two (2) games, both games will count as region games. In any other case where two (2) schools have played more than once during the regular season, only the first game scheduled shall count in the region standings.
  2. Any school playing a non-region or non-sub-region schedule (i.e., not in consideration for a region championship) will not have its games count for or against any opponent.
- B. The GHSA Executive Director, upon presentation of evidence to show that a school cannot secure the required number of games in a region or sub-region, may authorize each school to substitute any number of games in any classification or region to qualify for championship consideration.

NOTE: A request for substitution of game(s) must be submitted prior to September 1.



## 2025 GHSA Football



14

C. In Classes 1A-2, 4A, 5A and 6A, four (4) representatives from each region will enter the post-season playoffs.

1. Each region will determine the way to designate the four representatives and their placement in the region (i.e., first place, second place, third place and fourth place).
2. In case there is a tie between teams and the region does not have a different written tie-breaker plan, the following procedures will be used (NOTE: The use of mini-games to break ties is no longer allowed):
  - a. If two teams tie, and one of the teams has defeated the other in a regular schedule region game, the winner shall have the higher placement. Three or more tied teams shall first be considered in sets of two-way ties. NOTE: If three or more teams are tied, use head-to-head record among the tied teams to break ties for seeding. Only utilize points to break ties among teams when the ties are a perfect triangle, with each team having the same record among the tied teams.
  - b. If two teams tie and the tied teams split or have not played each other in a region game (no round robin), the team with the greater sum of winning margin using the following Point System, shall have the higher placement.
  - c. If more than two teams remain tied after applying "a" above, the following Point System shall be used to eliminate all but two teams. Tabulate the sum of the winning margins of each team's region games as indicated in the following:  
POINT SYSTEM:
    1. If the margin of victory is more than 13 points, only 13 points shall count.
    2. Losses shall be tallied as 0 (zero) points.
    3. Forfeited games: Offended teams shall receive 13 points when tabulating the sum of the winning margins for breaking region ties.
  - d. After tabulating the sum of the winning margins, all teams except the two (2) with the greater sums shall be eliminated, and the selection process shall begin again with paragraph "a" above.
  - e. If teams remain tied after the above procedures are applied, the playoff representatives shall be determined by a coin toss. The coin toss, supervised by the REGION OFFICERS, shall be used to eliminate all but two (2) teams, and then the process shall begin again with paragraph "a" above.
  - f. In the event the region is eligible for more than one playoff representative, each subsequent playoff representative shall be chosen by reapplying the procedure above.
  - g. All regions will use the adopted procedures for breaking ties that occur in the order of standings when round robin schedules are completed.

*D. In Classes 1A-1, 2A, 3A and Private (1-3) Playoff Qualifiers and Seedings will be determined by the GHSA Post Season Ranking Formula (PSRF). Refer to Appendix PSR in the Constitution and By-Laws for formulas, explanations and examples.*





## 2025 GHSAA Football



15

### STATE PLAYOFFS:

- A. All rounds of games after the end of the regular season are considered part of the state playoff structure.
1. In ALL Rounds except the Finals, the higher-seeded team will host. In the Quarterfinal Round in Classes 1A-2, 4A, 5A and 6A, if both teams have the same seeding, a “universal” GHSA coin flip (see By-Law 4.39), will determine the host site.
  2. In ALL Rounds except the Finals, game date and time will be set by mutual agreement. If that agreement is not possible, the GHSA Executive Director will finalize the arrangements. If an administrator does not attend the meeting at which the playoff contract is negotiated, the coach shall be authorized by the principal to negotiate and sign a binding contract.
  3. In ALL Rounds except the Finals, one half of all permanent and temporary seats shall be offered to the visiting team, and it is the responsibility of the home team to regulate the seating so as to guarantee designated seating to the visiting team's supporters.
  4. In ALL Rounds except the Finals, there should be adequate parking space with a recommendation of one (1) space for every four (4) spectators.
  5. In ALL Rounds except the Finals, security shall be provided at the site in the ratio of at least one officer per 500 spectators.
  6. In ALL Rounds except the Finals, facilities for officials to dress, shower, and/or hold meetings shall be made available at the site or nearby.
  7. It is mandatory to have emergency medical personnel at the site of all football playoff games.
  8. *Playoff ticket prices are as follows (NOTE: Only babies in arms do not need a ticket.):*  
First Round: \$10.00 (All classes)  
Second Round: \$12.00 (All classes)  
Quarterfinals: \$14.00 (All classes)  
Semifinals: \$16.00 (All classes)  
Championships: TBA
    - a. Through the semifinal round, high school level students of the participating schools may purchase presale tickets at a discount of \$2 off regular price. Students may purchase one (1) ticket each from their schools at this discounted price.
    - b. Certified staff members who work at the participating schools ONLY will be allowed free admission through the semifinal round with proper identification.
- B. In order to host a Semifinal Round playoff game, a school must meet the following site requirements:
1. Permanent seating requirements:
    - a. One seat equals 24 inches in width. Exception: each theatre style seat (with back and arm rests) will count as one seat regardless of the width of the seat.
    - b. All seats must be at least 15 feet from playing field.



## 2025 GHSA Football



16

- c. Total seating capacity for each class is as follows:
    - Class A & Private.....2,000 seats
    - Class 2A .....2,500 seats
    - Class 3A & 4A.....3,000 seats
    - Class 5A & 6A.....3,500 seats
  - d. Each principal of a school in the playoffs shall certify that the school stadium meets or does not meet football playoff requirements. If a principal certifies such information falsely, then \$2,000.00 of such school's share of the gate receipts of the contest held in the non-complying stadium shall be paid to the opposing team.
  - e. The GHSA will mediate with both teams involved when there are concerns about the safety of a venue in regard to seating limitations.
  - f. The higher-seeded team in the Semifinal Round will be the host team. If they do not have a stadium that meets GHSA minimum standards, they may secure a suitable site.
  - g. The higher-seeded team may use portable seating to bring its home stadium seating capacity up to the GHSA minimum in order to host the game as long as (NOTE: Any portable seating brought in for games in earlier rounds also must meet these specifications):
    - 1. The seating meets the standards of the industry and is installed by professional installers.
    - 2. All seats provide clear sight lines to the field of play.
    - 3. No costs for the temporary seating are taken out of game receipts.
    - 4. Seating requirements for a semifinal game may be waived upon written agreement of the principals of the competing schools that the host's stadium will be adequate and with the approval of the GHSA Executive Director.
  - h. In Classes 1A-2, 4A, 5A, and 6A, if both teams in the Semifinal Round have the same seeding, the "universal" GHSA coin flip (see By-Law 4.39), will determine the host team under the following procedure:
    - 1. The winner of the coin flip will have the opportunity to bring its stadium up to specifications as outlined in item "g" above, or to secure a suitable stadium (if their stadium doesn't meet GHSA specifications.)
    - 2. The winner of the coin flip will have until 4:00 p.m., on the Monday before the game to commit to bringing their stadium up to specifications or to secure a suitable site.
    - 3. If the winner of the coin flip can't secure a suitable site, or bring theirs up to specifications, the opponent will then be awarded the home game, assuming their stadium meets requirements.
    - 4. If neither school meets or exceeds GHSA standards, and the winner of the coin flip can't find a suitable stadium or bring its stadium up to the specifications, the Executive Director will designate a neutral site.
    - 5. *Above seating requirements apply to all Classifications for semifinal games.*
  - i. The GHSA will provide a supervisor at all semifinal games.
2. The stadium shall have adequate working space in the press box as follows (NOTE: the first priority for access to the press box after the clock operator and the PA announcer is





## 2025 GHSA Football



17

the working media):

3. Classes A, 2A, Private: 30 linear feet  
Classes 3A, 4A: 40 linear feet  
Classes 5A, 6A: 50 linear feet
- C. All Championship Round games will be played December 16-18 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. These games will be known as the "GHSA/Tommy Guillebeau Football Championships."
  1. *The expense and revenue shares by classification will be as follows:*  
6A - 17.5%, 5A - 15%, 4A - 15%, 3A - 13.5%, 2A - 12%, 1A1- 9%, 1A2- 9%, Private- 9%
  2. A "Video Review" system will be used in all championship games, the procedure for which will be published on the GHSA web site.
  3. The exact schedule for the championship games will be published on the GHSA web site.
- D. Financial Procedures:
  1. Total game receipts will include all revenue from ticket sales plus any payments for radio or television broadcasting and will not include money from the sale of programs and concessions.
  2. All band chaperones and other support personnel must have tickets.
  3. The division of game receipts will be handled as follows:
    - a. From the gross receipts:
      1. Twelve percent (12%) will be sent to the GHSA Office along with a financial report. Each Football Financial Report Form shall include the number of spectators admitted with a GHSA pass, along with a copy of the sign-in sheets listing the names and numbers of the passes used.
      2. The visiting team shall receive reimbursement for travel expenses in the amount of \$5.00 per mile (one way) taken from the game receipts and guaranteed by the host school. NOTE: If the game is played at a neutral site, both teams will be reimbursed for mileage.
      3. FOR ALL ROUNDS OF THE PLAYOFFS: The game officials will invoice GHSA and GHSA will pay the officials.
      4. The HOST school shall receive a fee of 7% of the gross gate receipts.
    - b. After items in Section "a" have been paid, the remainder shall be divided equally between the two teams.
    - c. Local service charges, stadium charges, lights, cost of operating personnel, etc., are not to be deducted prior to the division of funds and are considered a part of the expenses of the host school.
  4. Broadcasting procedures are handled as follows:



## 2025 GHSA Football



18

- a. The GHSA office will process radio contracts in all rounds of the playoffs. The fee schedule and regulations for radio broadcasts may be found in the Broadcast section 2.80.
  - b. Outlets wishing to televise or webcast football games must contact the GHSA office for contract terms
- E. Game officials will be assigned by the GHSA Office in all playoff rounds. Officiating crews shall include seven (7) field officials, clock operators, and three (3) chain crew member



## 2025 GHSA Football



19

### POST SEASON RANKING FORMULA

Public and Non-Public Schools in Classes A DI, 2A and 3A will play in their assigned regions during the regular season, but private member schools will compete in a combined championship bracket of private member schools only. Public schools in Class A DI, 2A and 3A will participate in a separate championship bracket by assigned classification. The following format will be used for playoff seeding sports where the ranking formula is required.

#### **Public & Private School State Playoff Qualification**

Seed all of the Region Champions (1-8, or the number of region champs) by the school's post season ranking formula totals and all of the Region Runner-Up's (9-16, or starting at the seed below the lowest region champ) by the school's post season ranking formula totals and then seeding the remaining 3rd & 4th finishing place schools and At Large seeds strictly by the school's post season ranking formula (starting with the seed below the lowest region runner-up).

#### **GHSA Post Season Ranking Formula will contain:**

- **Winning Percentage (WP)** is calculated by taking a team's wins divided by the number of contests played.
  - Home win equals 0.9, Away win equals 1.1, neutral site and non GHSA win equals 1.
  - Private Schools will use the same Home, Away, Neutral and non GHSA win equals from above.
  - For sanctioned tournaments and play dates, if an opponent plays against the host at the host site, a home win equals 0.9 and an away win equals 1.1. All other contests, not involving the host, would be considered a neutral site and a win equals 1.
  - All Region tournament contests will be considered a neutral site and a win equals 1.
- **Opponents' Winning Percentage (OWP)** – is calculated by taking the average of the WP's for each of the team's opponents with the requirement that all contests against the team in question are removed from the equation.
- **Opponents' Opponents' Winning Percentage (OOWP)** – is calculated by taking the average of each Opponent's OWP. Note that the team in question is part of the team's OOWP.
- MIS system would calculate the ranking using the evaluation formula for each Class A DI-3A team by sport.
- GHSA Post Season Ranking Formula will be published on the GHSA website for public viewing.
- Tiebreakers for equal ranking
  - Head-to-Head Result
  - GHSA Tiebreaker in By Laws



## 2025 GHSA Football



20

### **GHSA Post Season Ranking Formula: (Public and Private Schools)**

$$\text{PSRF} = (\text{WP} * 0.35) + (\text{OWP} * 0.35) + (\text{OOWP} * 0.30)$$

WP – Winning Percentage

OWP – Opponents' Winning Percentage against all opponents

OOWP – Opponents' Opponents' Winning Percentage against all opponents

WP – is calculated by taking a team's wins divided by the number of contests it has played. Home win equals 0.9, Away win equals 1.1, neutral site and non GHSA opponents win is 1.

OWP – is calculated by taking the average of the WP's for each of the team's opponents with the requirement that all contests against the team in question are removed from the equation.

OOWP – is calculated by taking the average of each Opponent's OWP. Note that the team in question is part of the team's OOWP.

Team A loses to Team B at home

Team A wins against Team B on the road Team A loses to Team C on the road Team A is 1 – 2

#### **Examples:**

Team A loses a home game, wins an away game, and loses an away game.

$$\text{WP} = 1.1 \text{ (away win)} / (1.1 \text{ (away game)} + 1.1 \text{ (away game)} + 0.9 \text{ (home game)}) = 0.35483$$

Team A has played Team B twice and Team B WP would be counted twice. Team A has played Team C once and Team C WP would be counted once.

$$\text{OWP} = (0/1 + 0/1 + 2/2) / 3 \text{ (number of opponents- Team B, Team B, Team C)} \text{ OWP} = 0.3333 \text{ OOWP} = (\text{Team B's OWP} + \text{Teams B's OWP} + \text{Team C's OWP}) / 3.$$

$$\text{OOWP} = (0.000 + 0.000 + 0.500) / 3 = 0.1667$$

$$\text{Team A's PSRF} = (\text{WP} * 0.25) + (\text{OWP} * 0.50) + (\text{OOWP} * 0.25) \text{ Team A's PSRF} = (0.35483 * 0.35) + (0.33333 * 0.35) + (0.16667 * 0.30) = 0.29086$$

**Example - Public Bracket** - 4 public schools win the region and 5 public schools finish as the region runner-up; 15 public schools finish as #3 or #4 in the region; that's a total of 24 schools guaranteed a state playoff seed; the 8 remaining seeds are determined using the PSRF. All 3rd, 4th & At Large state playoff participants will be seeded based on PSRF.

**Examples of PSR may be found in the PSR Appendix near the back of the GHSA Constitution and By Laws.**



## 2025 GHSA Football



21

### **2.67 Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity:**

- (a) Schools must follow the statewide policy for conducting practices and voluntary conditioning workouts (this policy is year-round, including during the summer) in all sports during times of extremely high heat and/or humidity that will be signed by each head coach at the beginning of each season and distributed to all players and their parents or guardians. The policy shall follow modified guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine in regard to:
  - (1) The scheduling of practices at various heat/humidity levels.
  - (2) The ratio of workout time to time allotted for rest and hydration at various heat/humidity levels.
  - (3) The heat/humidity levels that will result in practice being terminated.
- (b) Football Only: Acclimatization and Re-Acclimatization (prior to October 1st)
  - (1) Acclimatization
    - a. Football practice may begin five consecutive weekdays prior to the start date for football.
      - 1. In the first five days of practice for any student, the practice may not last longer than two (2) hours, and the student may wear no other protective football equipment except helmet and mouthpieces. NOTE:
        - (a) The time for a session shall be measured from the time the players report to the practice or workout area until they leave that area.
        - (b) During acclimatization practices, teams may hold a walk-through as long as there is at least a three-hour break between the two activities.
  - (2) Re-Acclimatization – Required for any athlete who misses five (5) consecutive days of practice for any reason.
    - a. Day 1 (Only COVID related quarantine can begin on last day of quarantine): 1.5 hours conditioning - helmets only
    - b. Day 2: 2 hours practice - helmets only
    - c. Day 3: 2.5 hours practice with helmets and shoulder pads
    - d. Day 4: 2.5 hours practice with full pads
    - e. Day 5: 2.5 hours practice with full pads or play a game
- (c) A scientifically-approved instrument that measures the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature must be utilized at each practice (prior to October 1) to ensure that the written policy is being followed properly. WBGT readings should be taken at a minimum of every 30 minutes, beginning 30 minutes prior to the start of practice. All WBGT monitors shall be calibrated, at a minimum, every two (2) years or earlier if recommended by the manufacturer.



## 2025 GHSA Football



22

### WBGT ACTIVITY GUIDELINES AND REST BREAK GUIDELINES

Under 82.0	Normal Activities - Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 minutes each during the workout.
82.0 - 86.9	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; watch at-risk players carefully. Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.
87.0 - 89.9	Maximum practice time is 2 hours. For Football: players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice, and all protective equipment must be removed during conditioning activities. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing football pants without changing to shorts. For All Sports: Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 minutes each.
90.0 - 92.0	Maximum practice time is 1 hour. For Football: no protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. For All Sports: There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
Over 92.0	No outdoor workouts. Delay practice until a cooler WBGT level is reached



## 2025 GHSA Football



23

- (d) Practices are defined as: the period of time that a participant engages in a coach-supervised, school approved sport or conditioning-related activity. Practices are timed from the time the players report to the practice or workout area until players leave that area. If a practice is interrupted for a weather-related reason, the "clock" on that practice will stop and will begin again when the practice resumes.
- (e) Conditioning activities include such things as weight training, wind-sprints, timed runs for distance, etc., and may be a part of the practice time or included in "voluntary workouts." Conditioning activities are not permitted to be used as punishment.
- (f) A walk-through is not a part of the practice time regulation, and may last no longer than one hour. This activity may not include conditioning activities or contact drills. No protective equipment may be worn during a walk-through, and no full-speed drills may be held.
- (g) Rest breaks may not be combined with any other type of activity and players must be given unlimited access to hydration. These breaks must be held in a "cool zone" where players are out of direct sunlight.
- (h) When the WBGT reading is over 86, ice towels and spray bottles filled with ice water should be available at the "cool zone" to aid the cooling process AND cold immersion tubs must be available for the benefit of any player showing early signs of heat illness. In the event of a serious EHI, the principle of "Cool First, Transport Second" should be utilized and implemented by the first medical provider onsite until cooling is completed (core temperature of 103 or less).



## 2025 GHSA Football



24

### **GHSA Concussion Policy and SB 60, Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act**

(a) **GHSA Concussion Policy:** In accordance with Georgia law and national playing rules published by the NFHS, any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion shall be immediately removed from the practice or contest and shall not return to play until an appropriate health care professional has determined that no concussion has occurred. (NOTE: An appropriate health care professional may include: licensed physician (MD/DO) or another licensed individual under the supervision of a licensed physician, such as a nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or certified athletic trainer who has received training in concussion evaluation and management).

(1) No athlete is allowed to return to a game or practice on the same day that a concussion (1) has been diagnosed OR (2) cannot be ruled out.

(2) Any athlete diagnosed with a concussion shall be cleared medically by an appropriate health care professional prior to resuming participation in any future practice or contest. The formulation of a gradual return to play protocol shall be a part of the medical clearance.

(3) It is mandatory that every coach in each GHSA sport (including Community Coaches, Student Teachers, and Interns) participate in a free, online course on concussion management prepared by the NFHS and available at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com) at least every two years.

(4) Each school will be responsible for monitoring the participation of its coaches in the concussion management course, and shall keep a record of those who participate.

(5) Each school must distribute to every athlete and his/her parent/guardian an information sheet that includes: the dangers of concussion injuries, the signs/symptoms of concussion, and the concussion management protocol outlined in this by-law. This sheet must be signed by the parent/guardian of each athlete and a copy kept on file at the school.

(b) **SB 60, Jeremy Nelson and Nick Blakely Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act:** In accordance with Georgia law:

(1) *Each school must distribute to every athlete and his/her parent/guardian an information sheet that includes: the Early Warning Signs, How to Recognize Sudden Cardiac Arrest, and Learn Hands-Only CPR outlined in this by-law. This sheet must be signed by the parent/guardian of each athlete, each athlete and a copy kept on file at the school.*

(2) *Each school must hold an informational meeting twice per year regarding the symptoms and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest. At such informational meeting, an information sheet on sudden cardiac arrest symptoms and warning signs shall be provided to each student's parent or guardian. In addition to students, parents or guardians, coaches, and other school officials, such informational meetings may include physicians, pediatric cardiologists, and athletic trainers.*





## 2025 GHSA Football



25

Please make sure that the following statement is read as a public address announcement prior to the start of every

GHSA sanctioned contest:

### GHSA SPORTSMANSHIP STATEMENT

"The GHSA and its member schools have made a commitment to promote good sportsmanship by student/athletes, coaches, and spectators at all GHSA sanctioned events. Profanity, degrading remarks, and intimidating actions directed at officials, competitors, or other spectators will not be tolerated, and are grounds for removal from the event site. Spectators are not allowed to enter the competition area prior to, during, or after the conclusion of the contest. Violators are subject to removal from the venue. Thank you for your cooperation in the promotion of good sportsmanship at today's event."



## 2025 GHSA Football



26

### General GHSA Constitution and By Laws

It is your responsibility to read and have a working knowledge of the information presented in the GHSA Constitution and By-Laws tabled below and can be found at:

<https://www.ghsa.net/sites/default/files/documents/Constitution/Constitution21-22completecx1.pdf>

#### BY-LAW SECTION 1.00

##### STUDENT

- By-Law 1.10 - Certification of Eligibility
- By-Law 1.20 - Enrollment and Team Membership
- By-Law 1.30 - Age
- By-Law 1.40 - Limits of Participation
- By-Law 1.50 - Scholastic Standing / Scholarship
- By-Law 1.60 - School Service Areas / Transfer / Migrant Student
- By-Law 1.70 - Recruiting / Undue Influence
- By-Law 1.80 - Financial Aid
- By-Law 1.90 - Amateur Status / Awards

#### BY-LAW SECTION 2.00

##### SCHOOL

- By-Law 2.10 - School Membership to GHSA
- By-Law 2.20 - Administrative Responsibilities
- By-Law 2.30 - Eligibility Reports Filed By The School
- By-Law 2.40 - Student Retention for Athletic Activities
- By-Law 2.50 - Qualifications to Coach
- By-Law 2.60 - Interscholastic Contests and Practices (Heat and Concussion policies)
- By-Law 2.70 - Sportsmanship
- By-Law 2.80 - Media and Filming Regulations
- By-Law 2.90 - Regulations of Competitions

#### BY-LAW SECTION 3.00

##### REGION

- By-Law 3.10 - Region Authority
- By-Law 3.20 - Region Responsibilities to State Association
- By-Law 3.30 - Region Financial Obligations to State Association

#### BY-LAW SECTION 4.00

##### STATE

- By-Law 4.10 - GHSA Administrative Responsibilities to Member Schools
- By-Law 4.20 - Reclassification
- By-Law 4.30 - State Association Contest / Event Responsibilities
- By-Law 4.40 - State Passes to GHSA Events
- By-Law 4.50 - Certification of Athletic Officials
- By-Law 4.60 - Special GHSA Policies



## 2025 GHSA Football



27

### NFHS Rule Changes: 2025

#### 2025 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES:

Committee Clarifies and Restricts Attachments on Tooth and Mouth Protectors Effective with the 2026 Season [1-5-1d(5)a - 4, 5 (NEW)] – Items that are attached to the tooth and mouth protector that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth will not be allowed. Items that are a part of the tooth and mouth protector that are a health or risk issue to the player and can pose a danger to themselves or other players, will not be allowed.

Arm Sleeve Specifications Developed to Guide Manufacturers, Players and Coaches Effective with the 2027 Season [1-5-2d (NEW), 1-5-3c(6)] – The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), in working with the football arm sleeve manufacturers and the NFHS, has developed new football arm sleeve performance specifications to be effective with the 2027 playing season. These new specifications closely align with the current rules for football gloves.

Electronic Equipment Approved to Permit Non-Audio and Still Images to Assist with Relaying Plays from the Sideline to Players [1-5-3c(2)] – This change allows for the use of some additional equipment, but continues to preclude in-helmet communication. This would allow for fixed electronic signs with play signals as well as non-audio methods but still would not permit the players between the numbers to watch video. Rules Additions Further Prohibit the Use of Video and Audio Devices by Players [1-5-3c(3) (NEW)] – No player participating in the game will be allowed to wear any type of audio or video device in order to record or transmit audio or video.

Forward Fumbles Out of Bounds to be Returned to the Spot of the Fumble [3-4-2d (NEW), 3-4-3a, 4-3-1 EXCEPTION (NEW), 8-5-2a EXCEPTION] – A situation potentially giving an unfair advantage to a fumbling team was revised. When a forward fumble goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball shall be returned to the spot of the fumble. Further Clarifications Made to Rule 10-4 in Specific Situations [9-6 PENALTY, 10-4-4b (DELETED)]

The committee continues its revisions and clarifications within the penalty enforcement rules to ensure consistency, particularly among illegal participation fouls.

The committee clarified that as long as there is a change of possession from the snap receiver to another player on offense, the ball can be advanced beyond the line of scrimmage.

2025 EDITORIAL CHANGES 1-5-1b(2)b(1); 1-5-1b(3)b(1); 2-32-16d; 2-33-1a, 2; 2-41-9b; 2-41-9c; 6-1-9; 7-2-5b EXCEPTION 2; 9-4-3p (NEW); 9-4 PENALTY; 9-5-1g; 9-8-1g; 9-8-1j; 10-3-1, 2; 10-3-3c; 10-4-2b; 10-4-2d; 10-4-4a; 10-5-3;



## 2025 GHSA Football



28

### 2025 NFHS FOOTBALL JERSEY and PANT RULES

(April 2025)

RULE 1-4-3:

ART. 3 . . . Each player shall be numbered 0 through 99 inclusive. Any number preceded by the digit zero is illegal. See 7-2-5.

RULE 1-5-1:

ART. 1 . . . Mandatory Equipment. Each player shall participate while wearing the following pieces of properly fitted equipment, which shall be professionally manufactured and not altered to decrease protection:

b. Jersey:

1. A jersey, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, and which shall be long enough to reach the top of the pants and shall be tucked in if longer. It must completely cover the shoulder pads and all pads worn above the waist on the torso.
2. Players of the visiting team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
  - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) shall all be white.
  - (b) The body of the jersey shall contain only the listed allowable adornments and accessory patterns in a color(s) that contrasts to white:
    - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1c or as the school's nickname, school logo, school mascot, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,
    - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches,
    - (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or
    - (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any non-white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

NOTE: One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.

- (c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.



## 2025 GHSAA Football



29

3. Players of the home team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:

(a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) may not include white, except as stated below.

(b) The jerseys of the home team shall all be the same dark color(s) that clearly contrasts to white. If white appears in the body of the jersey of the home team, it may only appear:

(1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1c or as the school's nickname, school logo, school mascot, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,

(2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches,

(3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or

(4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

NOTE: One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.

(c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.

c. Numbers:

1. The numbers shall be clearly visible and legible using Arabic numbers 0-99 inclusive and shall be on the front and back of the jersey.

2. The numbers, inclusive of any border(s), shall be centered horizontally at least 8 inches and 10 inches high on front and back, respectively.

3. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) exclusive of any border(s) shall be approximately 1½-inches wide.

4. The color and style of the number shall be the same on the front and back.

5. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the body color of the jersey.

d. Pads and Protective Equipment – The following pads and protective equipment are required of all players:

1. Hip pads and tailbone protector which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.

2. Knee pads which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, which are worn over the knee and under the pants and shall be at least ½ inch thick or 3/8 inch thick if made of shock absorbing material.

3. Shoulder pads and hard surface auxiliary attachments, which shall be fully covered by a jersey.

4. Thigh guards which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.

e. Pants - which completely cover the knees, thigh guards and knee pads and any portion of any knee brace that does not extend below the pants.



## 2025 GHSA Football



30

### RULE 1-5-3:

ART. 3 . . . Illegal Equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

- a. The following items related to the Game Uniform:
  1. Jerseys and pants that have:
    - (a) A visible logo/trademark or reference exceeding 2¼ square inches and exceeding 2¼ inches in any dimension.
    - (b) More than one manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference on the outside of either item. (The same size restriction shall apply to either the manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference).
    - (c) Sizing, garment care or other non-logo labels on the outside of either item.
  3. Tear-away jerseys or jerseys that have been altered in any manner that produces a knot-like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey.
  4. Any transverse stripe on the sleeve below the elbow.
- c. The following items related to Other Illegal Equipment:
  1. Ball-colored helmets, jerseys, patches, exterior arm covers/pads, undershirts or gloves.
  6. Jerseys, undershirts or exterior arm covers/pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent (through 2026). Effective 2027, jerseys or pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent.
10. Equipment not worn as intended by the manufacturer.



## 2025 GHSA Football



31

### 2025 NFHS FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

#### ILLEGAL AND IMPROPERLY WORN PLAYER EQUIPMENT

In high school football, players must adhere to specific equipment standards for safety and fairness concerns. Illegal equipment refers to items that are prohibited such as: jewelry; tinted visors; non-compliant eye shade; bands worn around the upper arm, neck or legs; back pads not covered; and sweatbands and uniform adornments, including towels, that do not conform to the rules.

On the other hand, improperly worn equipment pertains to all equipment that is otherwise legal but not worn as intended. Examples include pants not covering the knees as required, tooth and mouth protectors not being worn as play starts, and shoulder pads not properly covered by the jersey. Incorrectly wearing these items can diminish their protective effectiveness and potentially endanger players.

Despite the lack of enforcement at the college level, the NFHS is proud of the work high school players, coaches, and game officials have done to properly enforce all rules that reduce the risk of injury. The rules and regulations governing high school football are designed to reduce the injury risk of players while maintaining the integrity and fairness of the game. These rules, often overlooked by casual spectators, play a crucial role in protecting the athletes and preserving the uniformity of team's appearance. Despite the negative influences by levels of play beyond high school, coaches and game officials must remain vigilant with enforcement of the equipment rules currently in place at the high school level.

Non-compliance with these rules can result in various penalties, ranging from removal of a player for one play for improperly worn equipment, to an unsportsmanlike penalty on the head coach when players are illegally equipped following the pre-game certification. Chronic violations of the rule for properly worn equipment can significantly impact the game's fairness and safety. Repeated offenses not only jeopardize the individual player's well being but also negatively impact the pace of the game, and fairness to the opposing team.



## 2025 GHSA Football



32

When players persistently disregard the equipment guidelines, there are several administrative options within current NFHS rules:

- A delay-of-game penalty would be a logical consequence for persistent offenses that significantly impact the pace of play.
- Chronic violations of equipment rules by players could result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul being assessed under Rule 1-5-3c(9) and 9-8-1h, for equipment not worn as intended by the manufacturer.
- Finally, a coach who demonstrates a lack of interest in supporting these important rules of our sport could be easily judged to be acting in an unsportsmanlike manner.

Coaches play a pivotal role in addressing chronic violations of equipment rules. They must instill the importance of proper equipment use through consistent reinforcement and education. Additionally, fostering an environment where players hold each other accountable can help minimize infractions.

Game officials must also remain vigilant and enforce penalties consistently to deter chronic violations. Issuing temporary removals from the game and escalating penalties for repeated offenses are necessary measures to uphold the integrity of the game.

The high school football player equipment rules are a testament to the sport's commitment to player safety and team unity. This unity extends beyond aesthetics; it reinforces the idea that each player is part of a larger whole, working together toward a common goal. A team's integrity is maintained when no player stands out for the wrong reason. While it may seem like a minor detail, these regulations play a significant role in reducing injury and maintaining the integrity of the game.





## 2025 GHSA Football



33

### **Sportsmanship**

Unsportsmanlike conduct is incompatible with the values of education-based athletics. As unsporting acts increase at the college and professional levels, all stakeholders must work together to ensure high school football embodies the highest principles of sportsmanship and fundamental ethics of competition.

The focus of high school football is on the team – not the individual. The “individual over team” emphasis is contrary to the mission of education-based sports.

High school football is a game of extreme emotion played by exceptionally talented teenagers. Game officials should not be overly technical in applying the rules, but they should always be aware of conduct that does not exemplify sportsmanship. In determining whether an action rises to the level of a foul, game officials should allow for brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of a play. However, game officials should penalize acts that are prolonged, choreographed, and directed at an opponent.

The following actions are unsportsmanlike conduct that should be penalized without warning: demonstrations of violence such as brandishing guns and throat slashes, rehearsed poses, gestures with sexual connotation, dunking the ball over the crossbar, removal of helmet to celebrate or protest, dancing, somersaults or flips, and spiking or spinning the ball. Any act that is clearly intended to taunt, demean or show disrespect to an opponent or the game should be penalized.

The actions noted above are unsporting and contrary to the values of education-based athletics. The focus must remain on student-athletes, the values of team success, celebrating victory with class, and enduring loss with dignity.



## 2025 GHSA Football



34

### **DEFENSELESS PLAYER / TARGETING**

A defenseless player is a player who, because of physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury. The player remains defenseless until the player's physical position and focus of concentration allows the player to have a chance to protect themselves or brace, at least partially, for contact.

The most common types of defenseless players include passers, receivers, sliding runners, runners whose forward progress is stopped, players out of the play and players who are illegally blocked from the blindside. For added defenseless player clarifications, please refer to 2.32.16 COMMENT and CHART in the 2025 NFHS Football Case Book.

A player is defenseless based on the player's own position and concentration. It is not determined by another player's actions. When the wrap-up tackle was added to the definition of defenseless player as it relates to contact on a defenseless receiver, it created confusion because this highlighted action by another player. Thus, the forceful contact against a defenseless receiver portion of Rule 2 (definitions) has been relocated to Rule 9 (conduct of players/penalty). By moving the wrap-up tackle portion of the defenseless player guidelines to Rule 9, it clearly limits the contact to a defenseless offensive or defensive receiver, to incidental contact that is a result of making a play on the ball, contact initiated with open hands, or an attempt to tackle by wrapping arm(s) around the receiver.

A major focus of the NFHS Football Rules Committee is to promote uniform enforcement of illegal contact on defenseless players across the country. We urge all coaches and game officials to study the rules, watch and share video, and have discussions with one another about what constitutes legal and illegal contact. Furthermore, a review of targeting provisions is crucial for minimizing risk for all players.

It is imperative that players clearly comprehend what contact is acceptable and be able to recognize when an opponent is considered defenseless. Players must realize that the responsibility for making legal contact resides with the person initiating the contact. Game officials must demonstrate a broad awareness of what contact is necessary to make a legal block or tackle and contact considered excessive and, in some cases, flagrant. Forceful contact that is avoidable should not be tolerated by coaches or officials. When in doubt, game officials should throw a flag for illegal personal contact and should be supported in doing so.



## 2025 GHSA Football



35

The long-term success of high school football is linked to risk minimization. Coaches, game officials, players and administrators share the responsibility to eliminate targeting and illegal contact against defenseless players from our great game.



## 2025 GHSA Football



36

### **GHSA Points of Emphasis:**

#### **GAME MANAGEMENT**

Each school community must take pride in hosting an athletic contest or event. Proper advance planning is key to an orderly, secure, safe and enjoyable activity. Planning begins with clearly defined tasks for game administration and event personnel. Beginning with the arrival of players, game officials and spectators, each school must have a purposeful plan to address any and all expected issues, as well as the unforeseen.

Preparation begins with clear and concise communication between the host and the competing school regarding the logistics of arrival and departure. Meeting and greeting the visiting team is certainly the beginning of good sportsmanship. Clearly communicated information, such as parking information, location of ticket booths and entry gates, when given to the visitors is another step in assuring a great experience for all participants.

Game officials should be afforded the same communication considerations given the visiting school community. Host administration must provide accurate information for the officiating crew so as to ease any pre-game apprehension or uncertainty. Clear, concise communication is of utmost importance. Having assigned personnel to greet game officials and address all their pre- game and post-game needs is a bare minimum for the host school. Security of game officials must be an absolute priority. Make sure the locker room is properly supervised and access is limited to proper personnel only.

During the game, security of game personnel begins with ensuring that the sideline is properly secured and the playing field is restricted to essential game personnel. For safety and security reasons, essential game personnel would include game participants, reporters, photographers and game administration. All other, non-essential personnel should be located in the bleachers. All non-participants on the event level should be credentialed and restricted to being no closer than 2 yards from the sideline. Game officials are responsible for securing the team boxes and coaches' area. Sideline management begins with the consistent enforcement of game rules pertaining to the restricted area and the team box. The restricted area is designated to make the sidelines safe for all participants and to give game officials ample space to work. Game administration should be alert to requests of game officials in addressing problems beyond the team box and coach's area.

Expectations for the behavior of spectators and other attendees should be clearly, and repeatedly, communicated to all attendees. The reading of a sportsmanship script before the game is one method of communicating expectations. Good sportsmanship must become part of the culture of any school community. Behavior not acceptable in the school's hallways should not be acceptable on the courts or playing fields.

Appropriate conduct of the public-address announcer is vital to the game atmosphere. The public-address announcer must be the first line of sportsmanship and must exemplify expected and acceptable conduct. The goal of the public-address announcer is to inform and not entertain. Giving play-by-play of game action and/or critiquing game officials is unacceptable. The public-address announcer must be positive and respectful to all involved in the game. The conduct of non-participants is the domain of game and school administration.



## 2025 GHSA Football



37

### MINIMAL GAME ADMINISTRATION EXPECTATIONS

- Clearly communicated event itinerary
- Required field markings and game equipment
- Clock operator(s)
- Line-to-gain crew
- Game Official accommodations
- Visiting team accommodations
- Support personnel
- Medical personnel
- Security personnel
- Hospitality for game personnel and administration, inclusive of game officials

### **Verifying Officials:**

Coaches and Athletic Directors: Please verify and re-verify with the official's association who handles your games each week to make sure they know who, when and where you are playing. The weekly varsity football schedule contains an average of 190 games. GHSA attempts to track and confirm all games but needs assistance from its member schools. Invariably, there are a handful of "no show" games each season. Communication is the key. Check and re-check to make sure that your school has coverage. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.



## 2025 GHSA Football



38

### **Sportsmanship:**

Profanity of any kind, inappropriate language,  
Racial or Ethnic slurs, Sexist or Homophobic comments, directed at an official or opponent are not representative of the positive values of an education-based education. **Penalty will be DEADBALL UNS-15 yards, Cumulative for each player/coach. If they receive a second UNS for any reason, that coach or player will be ejected. (NFHS Rule 9-8)**

### **Sideline Etiquette:**

Coaches must stay behind the restricted zone on the sidelines during the game unless during timeouts or dead ball periods, once the game begins until it has been completed. **If a coach repeatedly stands across the restricted zone on the sideline, the first violation will be a sideline warning. The 2<sup>nd</sup> violation will be a 5-yard penalty, and any further violations will result in a DEADBALL UNS-15 yards, cumulative for the HEAD COACH. (NFHS Rule 9-8)**

### **Game Administrators and Security for Officials:**

When the Game Officials arrive at the game site, the host school: GHSA Constitution and By Laws, page 33, Section 2.71, C, 1-5:

(c) It shall be the responsibility of the home or host school to take the following precautions at all interscholastic athletic events:

- (1) Take proper steps and precautions to monitor crowd and spectator control, including having an administrator (or designee) from the host school to function as "Game Manager" at all GHSA sanctioned events. EXCEPTIONS: Golf and Tennis.
- (2) Take steps to insure the comfort and security of all players, coaches, and officials.
- (3) Have in place sufficient security personnel to handle any crowd-control problems that might reasonably be expected.
- (4) Security escorts must be provided to game officials by the host school at all GHSA sanctioned contests, before, during and following the contest - including to their vehicles.
- (5) Provide a safe and secure changing area for contest officials, free from traffic by school staff, students and spectators.



## 2025 GHSA Football



39

### OVERTIME PROCEDURE

1. There will be a 3-minute intermission between the end of regulation play and the coin toss to start the overtime procedure.
2. The captains will meet for the coin toss, and the winner may choose one of the following:
  - a. Be on offense first
  - b. Be on defense first
  - c. Choose the end of the field on which to play
3. The ball is placed on the 15-yard line and the offense keeps the ball until:
  - a. The ball is turned over on downs (NOTE: The team on offense can gain a first down.)
  - b. The defense gains possession of the ball (ball is dead immediately)
  - c. The offense scores a touchdown or field goal
  - d. The offense misses a field goal
4. After the first offensive team completes its possession, the opposing team gets its opportunity from the 15-yard line.
5. If the game remains tied after each team has had an offensive possession, there will be a 2-minute intermission and the team that lost the first coin toss has the first option for the second possession.
6. For each additional overtime period (i.e., an offensive possession by each team) the original coin toss options are alternated.
7. Beginning with the second overtime period, a team must attempt a 2-point try after a touchdown.
8. *Subsequent to the first two series from the 15-yard line, if the game remains tied, the ball will be placed on the three-yard line and teams will alternate two-point conversions until the tie is broken.*

Each team is allowed one timeout per overtime period. Timeouts may NOT be carried over from regulation



## 2025 GHSA Football



40

### **GHSA Penalty Enforcement in Overtime 2025**

This document outlines how penalties are enforced in GHSA Overtime. The driving desire behind this is for **all overtime possessions to begin at the 15-yard line if at all possible**. This policy overrides existing NFHS rules in remarkably rare situations which are outlined below.

#### **Types of Fouls**

In high school football there are three types of fouls:

1. Live ball fouls- those that occur while the ball is live
2. Dead ball fouls- those that occur prior to the ball becoming live during a down or those that occur after the down ends and prior to the ball again becoming live
3. Fouls that are always enforced as dead ball fouls (succeeding spot)- unsportsmanlike conduct, non-player fouls such as sideline interference

#### **GHSA Overtime**

Whenever possible each overtime possession is to begin on the 15-yard line and in nearly all instances that will be the case. There are NFHS rules (8-2, 8-3 and 8-4) which outline carryover penalties on scoring plays of live and dead ball fouls and those fouls always enforced as dead ball fouls (USL, non-player). **GHSA policies of enforcement supersede these NFHS rules**. As such, it is possible for a head coach or team to experience a different enforcement choice or outcome in regulation play versus overtime even in the same game.

#### **Going into Overtime**

A game tying score with time expiring for the fourth quarter or a subsequently successful try of one or two points could send the game into overtime. We will begin our examples of overtime enforcement with live ball fouls.

- A. Team K kicks a game tying field goal. During the kick there is a live ball foul by the defense – most commonly a personal foul such as roughing the kicker, holder or snapper. In regulation play Team K could accept and have a replay of the down after a yardage penalty plus in some instances an automatic first down. Or they could accept with enforcement from the succeeding spot. In nearly all instances a kickoff. This comes under Rule 8-4-3. **In GHSA overtime this would not be allowed**. Team K may only choose to replay the down after penalty enforcement or take the results of the play (points) by declining the penalty.
- B. Team A scores a touchdown tying the game as time expires for the fourth quarter. During the play there is a live ball defensive penalty such as pass interference. In regulation play Team A would be allowed to enforce this penalty on the try or carryover to the subsequent kickoff. Rule 8-2-2. The obvious problem is that there is no kickoff in overtime so the **only option is to enforce on the try**.
- C. Team A scores a touchdown as time expires for the fourth quarter leaving them behind by one or two points. A successful try for one or two points ties the game. During the try a live ball foul on Team B occurs. Rule 8-3-5 would allow acceptance with enforcement on a replay of the down or acceptance with enforcement from the succeeding spot. **In GHSA overtime this would not be allowed. In accepting the points the penalty must be declined**.

#### **Where Do Problems Arise? Non-player or unsportsmanlike fouls**

These are always enforced from the succeeding spot. Going into or while in overtime that would not be an





## 2025 GHSA Football



41

option under GHSA policy in most instances. There are rare instances where they would. Below is an example. Coaches the burden of avoiding these types of fouls- especially sideline interference- falls on you and your staff. Let's look at a play.

- A. During a game tying field goal by Team K as time expires or while in overtime the head coach of Team B (defense) calls the Line Judge a profanity laced expletive. Even though this occurred during the live ball kick it is still enforced as a dead ball foul from the succeeding spot. This will be on the subsequent overtime possession. It cannot be declined. Here a team will face the consequences of an illegal act affecting the succeeding overtime possession.
- B. There are existing NFHS rules regarding the timing of USL fouls that are in regulation or while in overtime. An example is a USL prior to the ready for play for the try but after the score during the dead ball period. **Whether in GHSA overtime or regulation this can only be enforced on the try.**

### Dead Ball Fouls

In many respects the enforcement of these is easier to understand. They occur after a down is over. After a touchdown with regulation time expiring during the down, the dead ball foul must be enforced on the try. Even multiple dead ball fouls. After a successful or unsuccessful try or field goal and a dead ball foul occurs these may be enforced from the succeeding spot. This is another rare instance where the starting point of overtime may not be the 15-yard line.

- A. Team A scores a game tying touchdown with time for the fourth quarter expiring during the down. After the score a Team B player pushes a Team A player to the ground. This will be enforced on the try.
- B. Team A scores a game tying field goal. As time expires for the fourth quarter. As the teams head to the sideline a Team A player shoves a Team B player to the ground. This will be enforced in overtime and the next possession will not start at the 15-yard line.

### Summary for Officials

- A. Going into overtime live ball fouls which would alter the subsequent possession from starting at the 15-yard line must be declined or enforced on a replay of the down
- B. Dead ball, unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls are from the succeeding spot and **may** change the 15-yard starting point. This is a very rare event.
- C. Dead ball fouls between a touchdown and a try-even multiple fouls- must be assessed on the try.
- D. Remember there is no PSK enforcement in overtime

### Summary for Coaches

Officials will guide you as to which penalties must be declined unless a replay ensues. The list is short but includes all live ball fouls on scoring plays that tie the game and no other scoring attempt will be made such as a try. Dead ball, non-player or unsportsmanlike fouls between a touchdown and the try must be enforced on the try. Any dead ball foul after the down is over, unsportsmanlike or non-player foul that happens after a game tying score and no other scoring play will be attempted will be penalized in overtime and **may** affect the 15-yard starting point. These are avoidable penalties.



## 2025 GHSA Football



42

### **Reminder:**

*Schools must enter team schedule & roster on MaxPreps prior to season and be responsible for updates as needed. This information will support statewide media and event programs & broadcasts partners. Game results must be entered on MaxPreps Coaches app or [MaxPreps.com](https://www.maxpreps.com) following each game to maintain GHSA Region Standings. Teams are encouraged to maintain team / individual statistics on MaxPreps, who maintains compatibility with a wide range of partners.*

**All of the below forms can be found  
at <https://www.ghsa.net/forms>**

### **FOOTBALL FORMS**

Contract - Football Games  
Contract - Football Playoff Games  
Football Playoff Financial Report  
Football Quarterfinal Financial Report  
Football Semifinals Financial Report  
Football Schedule Form  
Football Schedule Information  
Instruction Sheet for Football Playoffs  
Football Stadium Review Form  
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Form  
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Meeting Sign-In Form  
Preparticipation Physical History and Evaluation Form  
Preparticipation Physical History and Evaluation Form (Spanish)  
Preparticipation Physical History Supplement - Athletes with Disabilities  
Unsatisfactory Officiating Report

### **ELIGIBILITY FORMS**

(Note: Paper Form A and Form B submissions are no longer accepted - please submit online on the GHSA MIS website)  
Form A (PDF) (Word)  
Form B (PDF) (Word)  
Form C (PDF) (Word)  
Form D (PDF) (Word)  
Form MT (PDF) (Word)  
Hardship Application / Hardship Application from Sending School  
Foreign Exchange Programs- Approved List  
Withdrawal List  
Welcome Notice



## 2025 GHSA Football



43

### OFFICIAL GHSA FOOTBALLS

#### Football



#### WILSON

Model F1003, F1005, Omega, GST

Prime

[Wilson Website](#)



## 2025 GHSA Football



44

### GoFan Digital Ticket Sales

In preparing your financial reports for **GHSA State Playoffs in all sports**, this is a reminder to you that **GoFan Digital Ticket sales are part of your total gate**. The playoff forms for all sports have a separate line item for you to show the # of digital tickets sold and the resulting gate income. GoFan furnishes a report to GHSA for all playoff games at all member schools showing the # of digital tickets sold – please make sure your financial report reflects that information.

If for any reason, the # of GoFan tickets are not shown on your playoff financial reports and included in the total gate revenue, GHSA will invoice you for the GHSA portion of the gate proceeds relating to digital tickets and a notice to pay your visiting team their portion of the omitted gate proceeds as well. **It will be easier for all if you include your digital tickets on the original financial report sent to GHSA.**

Please do not hesitate to contact the GHSA office if you have questions concerning the digital ticket program.



## 2025 GHSA Football



45

**Brackets for 1A2, 4A, 5A and 6A will be posted by June 27 in Appendix B in the GHSA Constitution and By Laws.**



## 2025 GHSA Football



46

**Brackets for 1A1, 2A, 3A and Private are identical to the 2024-2025 Brackets in Appendix B in the GHSA Constitution and By Laws**



2025 GHSA Football



47

# DO RIGHT!



2025 GHSA Football



48

# GATA





2025 GHSA Football



49

# TEAM

ME