



GHSA NEWSLETTER

January 2026 (Items of Interest - Vol. 45 No. 5)



Words from Dr. Tim Scott

Happy 2026 from the GHSA Office!

We hope everyone is off to a fantastic start to the new year! As we reflect on 2025, we are proud to celebrate an incredible year that concluded with our state championship football finals for both girls' Flag Football and tackle football, held December 15–17 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, as well as the 2025–26 Fall Esports State Championships and the 2025 Game Day Cheer State Championships. These events were truly memorable, and we couldn't be more excited about what our students have accomplished.

In football, we are deeply grateful for our ongoing partnership with the Arthur Blank Family Foundation and the Atlanta Falcons. Their support has been invaluable, and we are excited to share that the Arthur Blank Family Foundation and the Falcons will again be offering grants for schools interested in starting a girls' Flag Football team or expanding an existing program. Please be on the lookout for details on when these grants will be available.

As we celebrate these opportunities, please keep in mind that these grants are awarded year to year. We encourage each school to plan fundraising activities and work closely with school leadership to ensure your Flag Football program remains financially secure as the sport continues to grow. We look forward to seeing the continued expansion of girls' Flag Football across our member schools.

As we begin our journey into 2026, we are excited for the upcoming state championships in:

- Wrestling Team Duals: Boys – January 16–17 | Girls – January 24

- Traditional Wrestling: February 12–14
- Swimming: February 4–7
- Dance: February 11–12
- Basketball: March 11–14
- Riflery: March 14 • Literary: March 14 and March 21

We look forward to the journey ahead in 2026, and we thank you for all you do to support our students and schools. Here's to a great year!

Staff & Responsibilities

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Congratulations to the 2025 State Football Champions!

Congratulations to the 2025 GHSA/Tommy Guillebeau Football State Champions. The championships, presented by Alfa Insurance, were held on December 15-17 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

State titles were won by: Harris County (Flag Division 1), Greenbrier (Flag Division 2), North Oconee (Flag Division 3), Blessed Trinity (Flag Division 4), Pope (Flag Division 5), Bowdon (1A, Division 2), Worth County (1A, Division 1), Carver-Columbus (2A), Sandy Creek (3A), Creekside (4A), Thomas County Central (5A), Buford (6A) and Hebron Christian (Private A-3A).

Thanks to all the fans, teams, players, coaches, school administrators, bands, cheerleaders, Mercedes Benz Stadium staff, GHSA staff, Georgia Public Broadcasting, 680 The Fan radio, ScoreAtlanta, West GA SID Services, Ortho Atlanta trainers, officials, sponsors, media, and Alfa Insurance, who supported a successful three-day event..

RESULTS

Dec. 15

Flag Div 1, Harris County 32 | Washington County 0

Flag Div 2, Greenbrier 20 | Jenkins 13

Class A-Div II Bowdon 35 | Lincoln County 31

Class 4A, Creekside 42 | Benedictine 39

Dec. 16

Flag Div 3, North Oconee 31 | Whitewater 6

Flag Div 4, Blessed Trinity 21 | Milton 20

Class A-Div I, Worth County 17 | Toombs County 13

Class 2A, Carver, Columbus 24 | Hapeville 7

Class 6A, Buford 28 | Carrollton 21

Dec. 17

Flag Div 5, Pope 14 | McEachern 13

Class Private A-3A, Hebron Christian 28 | Calvary Day 21

Class 3A, Sandy Creek 27 | Jefferson 7

Class 5A, Thomas County Central 62 | Gainesville 21

Statistics

State final statistics by West Georgia SID Services. <https://ghsafootball.weebly.com/>

Video

Watch on-demand on NFHSNetwork.com/GHSA & GPB.org/sports.

Order digital copies on <https://www.nfhsnetwork.com/store/nfhs-network>

Merchandise

Order state championship merchandise at [PepWear](https://PepWear.com).

Event Fan Guide

[Download Digital Fan Guide](https://www.ghsafootball.com/digital-fan-guide) Produced by Score Atlanta.

Photos

Order action photography at [BPI Photography](https://BPIPhotography.com).

Brackets

[Championship Football Brackets](https://www.ghsafootball.com/championship-football-brackets)

[Championship Flag Football Brackets](https://www.ghsafootball.com/championship-flag-football-brackets)



PRESENTED BY:





Flag Division 1 - Harris County



Flag Division 2 - Greenbrier



Flag Division 3 - North Oconee



Flag Division 4 - Blessed Trinity



Flag Division 5 - Pope



A Division 1 - Worth County



A Division 2 - Bowdon



2A - Carver, Columbus



3A - Sandy Creek



4A - Creekside



5A - Thomas County Central



6A - Buford



Private (A-3A) - Hebron Christian

GHSA presents "THE FINAL COUNTDOWN" at Mercedes Benz Stadium



GHSA Media Director, Marvin James along with television crews from WALB (Albany), WJCL (Savannah-Hilton Head) and WRBL (Columbus) previewed the finals in girls flag football and tackle football. Three days of GHSA Championship football hosted at Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

Nearly 25K views between both December videos ([2025-26 GHSA Football Playoffs Bracket Reveal](#)) and the video below. ([GHSA](#)



Congratulations to the Fall 2025 Esports Champions!

Congratulations to the Fall 2025 Esports State Champions: Lambert (League of Legends), Trinity Christian (Mario Kart 8), Lowndes (Smash Bros. Ultimate 5A-6A), Northview (Smash Bros Ultimate 3A-4A) and Commerce (Smash Bros. Ultimate 1A-2A). Lowndes captured back-to-back fall title. Commerce and Northview were first time Fall Esports state winners. Thanks to facility and staff at Bartow County Esports Arena, teams, coaches, fans, GHSA staff and PlayVS, official eSports partner.



Results

League of Legends - Lambert 2, Northview 0

Mario Kart 8 - Trinity Christian 2, Lowndes 0

Smash Bros. Ultimate (5A-6A) - Lowndes 3, Discovery 2

Smash Bros. Ultimate (3A-4A) - Northview 3, Peach Co. 0

Smash Bros. Ultimate (1A-2A) - Commerce 3, East Jackson 2

[Previous GHSA Champions](#)

Photos

Order action photography at [BPI Photography](#).



**League of Legends -
Lambert****Mario Kart 8 - Trinity
Christian****Smash Bros. Ultimate
(5A-6A) - Lowndes****Smash Bros. Ultimate (3A-4A) -
Northview****Smash Bros. Ultimate (1A-2A) -
Commerce**

**HENRY COUNTY STUDENT ATHLETE MENTAL HEALTH AND
PERFORMANCE SEMINAR (FREE)**

Please sign in to register by clicking on the picture below. FREE ADMITTANCE!

***Winners of the 2025 GHSA Inspiration Award Presented by
OrthoAtlanta***

Since 2021, the GHSA Inspiration Awards have celebrated those who consistently exceed expectations—whether by inspiring student-athletes through their work or by setting an extraordinary example as student-athletes themselves. Nominations are submitted by peers, administrators, or coaches who recognize their remarkable impact. This year we have partnered with Piedmont Orthopedics by OrthoAtlanta to honor the following inspirational leaders.

Raylee Greeson Senior at Coahulla Creek HS

Nominated by Jordan Tate

“Raylee inspires not only her team and her coaches, but everyone around her. Before completing her junior year, Raylee was diagnosed with Non Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. She started her very rigorous treatment in the spring which began the journey of wishing, hoping and praying. She faced every round of treatment with impeccable courage and continues to carry that with her every day. Shortly after completing her treatment, Raylee was back on the cheerleading mat, more determined and more amazing than ever.

[Read More](#)





Maggie Norris Senior at North Gwinnett HS

Nominated by Coach Hayley Garner

After fainting while at a church camp, Maggie fractured her jaw in five places. Not only was her jaw wired shut for over a month, she could no longer do what she loved: cheer. She was in constant pain, had many doctor's visits, endured painful wires in her gums, and experienced major weight loss due to a restricted diet; all of it took an emotional toll that tested her more than anyone expected. But she was diligent in following her doctor's orders, still attended every practice and finally after 3 months she was released to resume activities. Oftentimes teenagers struggle immensely with

injuries that take them out of the sport they love; and, while this is also true for Maggie, she never once let the struggle win. [Read More](#)

Joseph Zetmeir Senior at Charlton Co HS

Nominated by Coach DeMario Jones

Joseph is the perfect example of what it means- and what it takes- to be a true student-athlete. He brings the highest level of commitment, integrity, and drive every single day. He is relentless in his pursuit of excellence in the classroom, on the field, or within the school community. Joseph maintains one of the highest GPAs in his graduation class, all while juggling the rigorous demands of varsity athletics, extracurricular commitments, and leadership responsibilities. He never complains or cuts corners but leans into challenges with maturity, grit and a humility that is rare in someone his age. Joseph says, "At the end of the day, I'm just an offensive lineman. I live my life just like I play football- holding the line, helping other people be successful. ADs, Coaches, Teachers, community supporters." [Read More](#)



Jessie Arnold English teacher and Cheerleading coach at Harlem HS

Nominated by Rodney Holder

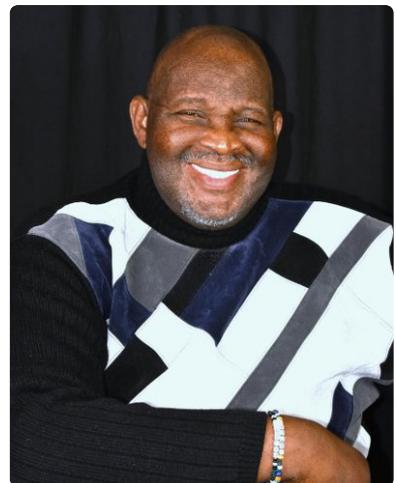
In the summer of 2024, Jessica was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer that had spread to her liver. At 35, with two young children, she was devastated. Despite exhaustion and frequent absences from school for chemotherapy appointments and scans, she did everything possible to keep life "normal" for her family, her students, and her cheerleaders. She wanted to show them that it is

possible to do hard things, to be brave and scared at the same time, and to adapt, overcome, and remain graceful even in the midst of fear and anger. Since her diagnosis, Jessica has undergone chemotherapy, a double mastectomy, and reconstruction—yet she has never missed a game or cheerleading competition. [Read More](#)

Rodney Gipson Music technology at Dalton High School

Nominated by Ryan Richards

For more than 20 years, Mr. Gipson has inspired students through the art of music—teaching not only melodies and rhythms, but also life lessons in perseverance, respect, and believing in oneself. His classroom is a place of belonging, where every student is seen, heard, and valued. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, he brings that same discipline, strength, and purpose into every area of his life. Despite living with renal failure and being a double amputee, he continues to show up and give his best—encouraging others and proving daily that no obstacle can stop a determined heart. [Read More](#)



Roger Jackson President Central HS Booster Club

Nominated by Andre Taylor

Roger Jackson, an alumnus of Central High School in Macon, has dedicated his life to giving back to the community that raised him. After a successful career in the NFL, he founded the Motivating Youth Foundation, which provides afterschool and summer programs for local children. Through partnerships with various companies, he consistently supplies clothing, equipment, donations, and other essential resources to kids and families in need.

He is also a strong advocate for all Bibb County schools, urging them to reinvest in the community that supported their beginnings. Roger has impacted countless lives across Macon and is known as a man who never says “no,” but instead says, “Let me see what I can do.” [Read More](#)

Kandice Mitchell Senior director of Athletics, Drew Charter

Nominated by Mario Allen

Kandice’s journey is one that defies every obstacle placed before her. She is a stroke, heart attack and breast cancer survivor, yet has never allowed those challenges to define her. She has juggled the demands of being an adult athlete, leading multiple sports programs, mentoring coaches, supporting student-athletes, and shaping the next generation of leaders. She doesn’t do it for the recognition. She does it because she genuinely believes in the power of education-based athletics to transform lives. Kandice took a bold leap into uncharted territory to help change the trajectory of flag football on a global scale, contributing to the sport’s pathway to collegiate play and its inclusion in the Olympic Games. Kandice is not just an inspiration because of what she has survived, she’s an inspiration because of how she continues to serve, lead, and love through it all. [Read More](#)





Hannah Nabors Teacher and Assistant Cross Country Coach, Armuchee HS, Girl's soccer for MS team

Nominated by Dawson Wehnt, Leah Anderson, Brock Holley

In February of this year, Coach Nabors was involved in a devastating car accident that resulted in the loss of a portion of her leg. In the months that followed, the Rome and Armuchee communities rallied around her, raising funds to help provide a prosthetic leg and offering unwavering support. Despite the life-altering challenges she faced, Coach Nabors returned to what she loves most—teaching and coaching cross country at Armuchee High School. Her determination hasn't stopped there; she is currently training for the Boston Marathon, embodying grit, resilience, and an unbreakable spirit. "She has been a HUGE inspiration to the runners in our community and portrays what it looks like to successfully persevere despite the circumstances around you." Coach Nabors' journey continues to uplift everyone around her and stands as a powerful example of courage, perseverance, and limitless strength. [Read More](#)

Dr. Rob Spencer Teacher and Head Competitive Cheerleading Coach, Seckinger HS

Nominated by Wayne Brooks

After a childhood marked by homelessness, hardship, and a lack of support and guidance, Rob Spencer credits football for changing the trajectory of his life. He says the sport saved him from a path of impoverishment, despair, and instability. Football gave him a foundation to stand on, a family he could count on, and coaches who became father figures. He remains especially grateful for his high school coach, Jack Ashby, who taught him that "you are stronger than the things around you." Years later, Rob has turned his experiences into purpose, using his background to positively shape the lives of young people as a coach. Kelli Poff, Athletic Director at Seckinger, shared: "He is one of the most decorated competition cheerleading coaches in the state, with 19 region championships and 10 state championships to his name. However, what truly sets him apart is his ability to build programs from the ground up. He has successfully established and led three different cheer programs, each time laying a strong foundation for long-term success. His ability to lead with empathy and fairness is a testament to his character." Rob Spencer has now become the very thing he once needed most—a steady, guiding father figure—for countless student-athletes throughout his career. [Read More](#)



Georgia High Schools Eligible for Grant Funding to Support Girls Flag Football

ATLANTA – Jan. 7, 2026 – Every high school in Georgia will be eligible to receive a grant from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, in partnership with the Atlanta Falcons, to either support its existing girls flag football program or launch a girls flag football program in 2026, the Foundation announced today.



In 2025, the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation provided grant funding to 305 Georgia high schools to support the growth of girls flag football, including 45 high schools that established new girls flag football programs for their student athletes this past year.

The Falcons have been at the forefront of growing girls flag football in Georgia over the past eight years, beginning with a pilot program for 19 high schools in Gwinnett County in 2018. Georgia became the fourth state to sanction girls flag football as an official high school sport in 2020, and last year, approximately 8,500 girls participated in girls flag football at more than 300 high schools throughout Georgia.

"The growth, energy and support for girls flag football in Georgia has been outstanding over the past several years and has provided a model to extend our support across the nation," said **Atlanta Falcons President and CEO Greg Beadles**. "Arthur Blank, his Family Foundation and the Falcons recognize the importance of providing girls the opportunity to play the game. We are honored to continue our support for girls flag football through camps and clinics, our annual college showcase at Mercedes-Benz Stadium and this grant opportunity. We are also fortunate to have a tremendous partnership with the Georgia High School Association and our elected officials in the Georgia House of Representatives who unanimously passed HR 347, encouraging all schools to establish girls flag football programs."

"We are deeply grateful to the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and the Atlanta Falcons for their continued support of flag football," said **Georgia High School Association Executive Director Dr. Tim Scott**. "The Georgia High School organization is thankful for the strong working relationship and partnership we share with these outstanding organizations. We look forward to another year of continued growth and success in flag football."

Georgia high schools interested in applying for grant funding to establish a girls flag football program or support their existing program can do so by visiting AtlantaFalcons.com/girls-flag-football.

Dates to Remember

January 2026

- (5) GHSA Opens from Break
- (6) Hardship/Appeal Meeting
- (9) Dual Wrestling - Region/Area Meets
- (15) State Dual Prelims
- (16-17) GHSA Boys Team Dual Wrestling State Championships
- (19) GHSA Office Closed
- (19) Earliest Date for Baseball, Soccer, Lacrosse and Track & Field practice
- (20) Hardship/Appeal Meeting



- (24) GHSA Girls Team Dual Wrestling State Championships
- (26) Earliest Date for Tennis, Golf and Gymnastics practice
- (27) Last Contest for Swimming/Diving
- (30-31) Traditional Wrestling Region/Area tournaments
- (31) Bass Fishing Qualifier - #1 Lake Seminole
- (31) Swimming and Diving State Championship



Marvin L. James II (GHSA Media Director)

"Good Marvelous New Year!" - January 2026